

Teachers' Strategies in ESP Learning Program in Indonesia: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This research article examines various strategies utilized by English teachers in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning programs in Indonesia, focusing on the Social and Science study programs. The study used a qualitative research design to conduct in-depth interviews with 25 English teachers, which aim to investigate and compare the pedagogical approaches used to satisfy the unique linguistic and contextual requirements of these two academic disciplines. Through purposive sampling, English teachers from both Social and Science study programs participate in semi-structured interviews, providing rich insights into their instructional methods. The purpose of the qualitative analysis is to reveal trends, similarities, and differences in the strategies used, providing a detailed understanding of the complexities of ESP teaching methods. The findings reveal illumination on the specific strategies employed by English teachers in the Social and Science study programs, demonstrating how these strategies are shaped by curriculum complexity and the backgrounds of the learners. The comparative study highlights the significance of pedagogical techniques tailored to individual contexts and serves as a basis for making well-informed decisions in curriculum development and teacher training. This study has wider implications for improving English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning programs in Indonesia and adds to the continuing discussion on effective language teaching. This study also provides helpful recommendations for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers aiming to enhance language learning experiences in ESP environments.

Key words

English for Specific Purposes (ESP), teacher's strategy, comparative study

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INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has gained significant attention in educational settings worldwide, aiming to equip learners with language skills tailored to their professional or academic needs. In Indonesia, the integration of ESP into tertiary education has become increasingly crucial, considering the country's diverse academic landscape and the growing demand for English proficiency in various specialized fields. The adoption of ESP within Indonesian educational institutions reflects a global trend towards enhancing language education to meet specific professional demands. With Indonesia's emergence as a key player in regional and international arenas, proficiency in English for specialized purposes has become indispensable across various sectors, including business, technology, medicine, and academia. Consequently, universities across the archipelago have incorporated ESP courses into their curricula to address the specific linguistic needs of students pursuing diverse disciplines.

English is a required course for higher education students in Indonesia, which emphasizes four basic skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. English is a very important subject that must be taught in every department of university level in Indonesia since globalization has a great impact on education. Coleman (1988) stated that more than 80% of the books in university were written in English. We can see that most of the references suggested for the University students were written in English. Only some specific books which are written in Indonesian or both English and Indonesian. In this case, English has become urgently needed by university students.

Unfortunately, English learning in higher education is not yet satisfying since students learn English in limited time and there is no definite program for the English teaching program at higher education level (Ang et al., 2021; Evans & Morrison, 2011; Macaro et al., 2018; Sadeghi & Richards, 2021). As a result, it cannot make students use English to compete in the global world (Rokhyati, 2013). On the other hand, the implementation of the ESP program in higher education in Indonesia still needs significant improvement to adjust to the higher education situation.

In higher education in Indonesia, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is vital for promoting efficient communication and improving career prospects. Proficiency in English, customized for various sectors including business, tourism, technology, and healthcare, is essential for persons in Indonesia to succeed in their careers due to the country's increasing involvement in the global economy and wide array of industries. ESP provides learners with the language skills needed to operate in specific environments, work with foreign partners, and access information and resources across boundaries, thereby enhancing the country's economic growth and worldwide competitiveness. English is commonly used as a lingua franca in academia and business. ESP acts as a connection for Indonesian professionals to participate in global collaborations, share ideas, and keep abreast of developments in their industries.

The exploration of ESP teaching strategies represents a vital aspect of language education research, facilitating a deeper understanding of effective pedagogical approaches tailored to learners' specific contexts and objectives. Existing literature in the

field has examined various aspects of ESP instruction, ranging from curriculum design and materials development to classroom methodologies and assessment practices. However, the specific focus on the comparative analysis of teaching strategies between Social and Science study programs within the Indonesian context remains relatively underexplored.

The diversity of study program of both Social and Science, brings the complexity of the ESP program implementation. Students from those two different faculties, have different characteristics and point of view with the other students from different faculties regarding their motivation in learning English. Some materials and approaches which are effective to be applied in specific departments, cannot facilitate the needs and motivation in another study program. However, in some cases, teachers still treated their students from different backgrounds in common. Teachers also still use the same English textbook and materials for different students from different study programs. This situation leads to the ineffectiveness of the English teaching and learning process.

Teacher as the facilitator of the English teaching and learning process in this context, needs to consider this diversity as the challenge that must be faced. As the teacher is the key of the teaching and learning process, his/her roles and strategy have a great impact on the effectiveness of the English learning process. Teachers cannot treat the students with the same treatment in their learning process. Classroom will just be a jail for the student without motivation to learn English. Teachers' strategy in teaching play's crucial part to help the students maximize their result in learning activity (McEnroe-Petitte & Farris, 2020; Parker & Welch, 2021; Yang & Kuo, 2020). Teachers need to consider the various teaching strategies in order to improve the quality of their teaching as well as in motivating the students.

Teaching strategy is clearly important for the successful of English teaching learning process in higher education, especially in ESP context. Given that this research focuses on how English teachers utilize the strategy implemented in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning programs in Indonesia, focusing on the Social and Science study programs. The findings are essential for the design of customized training program for ESP teachers facing challenges in designing ESP program for their specific students. This study also provides helpful recommendations for the policy makers aiming to enhance language learning experiences in ESP environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The incorporation of English as a crucial instrument for achieving academic excellence has resulted in the extensive use of ESP in diverse academic disciplines at institutions globally. In Indonesia, where English is not the major medium of teaching but plays a significant role in international collaboration and knowledge exchange, ESP has grown increasingly relevant. Previous studies have provided valuable insights into the diverse methods and techniques employed by instructors to facilitate language learning in specialized contexts (Komarnytska et al., 2019; Mauludin, 2021; Maya et al., 2019; Zare-Behtash et al., 2017).

Tuzlukova et al (2020) demonstrated that effective teaching of highly desirable abilities necessitates teachers taking the lead in implementing learner-centered teaching methods and including language learning activities that emphasize interactive and experiential education in ESP program. This involves implementing effective strategies in integrated language skills, particularly in speaking, utilizing various innovative teaching tools and techniques, and fostering positive attitudes towards aligning skill areas. The emphasis is on idea development, content knowledge, critical thinking, and creative thinking.

Numerous studies have underlined the value of contextualized learning environments, realistic materials, and task-based activities in boosting students' English proficiency while concurrently acquiring discipline-specific skills. Integrating real-world scenarios and collaborative assignments led to a notable enhancement in students' motivation and understanding of subjects in teaching and learning activity (Hwang et al., 2018). Incorporating interactive digital tools and multimedia materials can also boost students' enthusiasm and participation in ESP classes (Amaliah et al., 2022).

Despite the progress made in implementing innovative teaching techniques, numerous challenges remain when it comes to optimizing ESP methodologies in Indonesia. Investigation of the challenges and opportunities in implementing ESP courses in Indonesian universities has been conducted both in offline and online circumstances (Iswati, 2021; Nasution et al., 2023; Poedjiastutie, 2017; Rachmawati et al., 2022; Ridwan & Athena, 2023; SS Adi, 2018). One such challenge involves balancing the development of general English proficiency alongside discipline-specific language requirements. To address these issues, educators must continue exploring new ways to integrate English language learning objectives seamlessly into course curricula without compromising subject matter expertise or student interest. Additionally, fostering interdisciplinary cooperation among faculty members can help develop cohesive and comprehensive ESP frameworks that benefit all students regardless of their chosen majors

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, researchers apply a qualitative approach in order to get the data. Qualitative and descriptive research is well suited to the study of L2 classroom teaching (Nassaji, 2015). This research was conducted in one of the Private Islamic Universities in Indonesia after the researcher obtained formal permission from the institution. This university was selected since the researcher has the connection with the representative of the institution which is really important for the access in collecting the data and also it has the diversity background of the study program of this university.

The participants of this study were 25 teachers who teach English in two different faculties, which are medical and economic faculty. The research participants of this research were the English teachers in the Medical and Economic faculty. Medical faculty consists of four departments, which are General Doctor, Dentistry, Pharmacy, and Nursing. Meanwhile, the Economic faculty consists of three departments, those are Management, Accounting, and Economic Development.

Using purposive sampling, Medical and Economic Faculty were chosen as the subject of this research because of many reasons. From the input of the students, these two faculties have big differences since the medical students were the graduates of science students in senior high school. Meanwhile, the economic students were from the social students in senior high school. Those two types of students, science and social students, have different characteristics, especially in their English proficiency. Science students tend to have higher English proficiency rather than social students.

In data collection, the data were gathered through semi-structured interview with open-ended questions developed by the researchers which asked participants to describe their teaching experience in ESP programs. The interview was focused on teacher strategy in conducting ESP programs in both faculties. During the interview session, most teachers were very well informed, and they gave the answer from the questions given cooperatively. Researchers made the record of the interview process entirely. In this research, the interview did not follow some specific location and time. Researchers made the schedule of interviews with the English teachers based on their availability. The interview also took place whenever the participants were approachable and was conducted for about 30 minutes for each participant. Ethical perspectives have been maintained throughout the interview session. For data analysis technique, the author adopted the framework developed by Miles et al. (2018) to describe the major phases of data analysis: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The data was categorized by the researchers into nodes or themes during this stage. The method used by English teachers to teach the ESP program was then made clear by the data display and interpretation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this finding, researchers explained the strategy of the teacher in four different aspects. Those aspects were teaching media, teaching topic, teaching activity, and mother tongue. These aspects showed the commonalities and the differences of the strategy of the teacher, applied in different students, economic and medical students.

Teaching Media

Teachers in both Economic and Medical faculty agree that they need to use various teaching media in teaching to attract students' attention to be more motivated in learning English. One of the teaching mediums that is quite popular to teach English in this university was multimedia. Teacher tend to use picture to attract student's attention and make the teaching activity more fun:

"...I usually use media like computer and I usually used picture which is related to the topic, like few weeks ago, we discussed about movie and I showed them several movies with the pictures, and then I asked them some opinion about the movie" (DT)

Another media that was used during the classroom activity was related to the technology. In this case, one of the teachers in the medical class used a powerpoint to

deliver the lesson. Also, she tends to maximize the development of some application, such as Drop Box. According to the them, drop box can be quite efficient to share the materials which is not covered during the classroom activity:

“...I mostly use powerpoint, and video to teach them pronunciation. I use the book but not like the main aid. And I also provide them with my dropbox account, so they can download the source of the materials and book that I already have” (SN)

This also happened in Economic class, where some teachers utilized the development of internet usage to teach in the class. This media was quite effective to get students attention:

“...Usually, I combine various materials. Sometimes I used some video that I took from YouTube. And I also use Facebook or Line and then we interact, and I sometimes give them some quizzes...” (RO)

Teaching Topic

In this study, the topic also became the focus on the teacher strategy to get students attention during the classroom activity. Topic given during teaching and learning process still following the course book since the English given is General English. However, the teacher still tried to correlate or improvise the lesson to be matched with students' background. One of the teachers in Economic class, used this strategy to make the situation of the lesson match with their background:

“...Well English in this university is General English and not ESP, and in the module and lesson plan, it already has some topics here. But, when I relate it to their real life for example, I sometimes ask them to be a banker or to be a manager, so I ask them how you request something from someone or maybe you are what it is...” (FM)

Correlating the topic with their daily life also becomes one of the strategies of the teacher to manage the gap between the topic and their study background. Teacher tends to ask for the students to imagine the situation in their daily life or their future career:

“...I usually give some examples about how this will be useful for their daily life, and for their future. For example, when we talked about personality traits, I asked about a profession that needs to have certain traits or personality like a policeman, and what personality that a policeman should have. Or as an accountant, what kind of personality that they needed, and any other of it, so I tried to relate it to their daily life or future career...” (WRB)

Correlating the topic with their daily life also happens in medical students. Teacher in dentistry class uses the specific topic related to the health problem to correlate the materials with their students' background:

“... In general, I still follow the topic in the textbook, but sometimes I also add some specific activity related to their life. Also, in the movie, maybe

it is not so specific about dentistry, but there is a movie about some certain diseases and how they react to the disease...” (T1)

Talking about one of the favorite topics which attracts students to be more motivated is Describing things. Students tend to be more interesting to do the assignment given, even though it is in General English which is not quite dealt with their background:

“... Any topic related to the descriptive essay is really interesting for them because in that essay, students are challenged to use some figurative language like things visually so that they can attract the audience or it gives the real imagination to the readers for example how they are able to describe unliving things to be attracted paragraph so in this thing they are pretty excited...” (BI)

Almost the same with T5, the teacher in Dentistry class also observed that describing things is the most interesting topic for the students. Specifically, it was the topic about physical appearance, since they tend to discuss it also in their faculty:

“... And the topic that interests the students the most is about physical appearances. We discussed some phenomena like plastic surgery, and I picked up the news about plastic surgery that is done by one of the famous actresses, Rihanna. And it is related to their medical life I think...” (PAJ)

Teaching Activity

Teachers provided various teaching activities to make students more motivated in learning English. Games and roleplaying are the most common activities that trigger students' interest in Economic faculty. Teachers from this class use this approach frequently to get the students' attention. It can be seen from the interview transcript:

“...I prefer some active activity. This is like I don't like to be the center of the learning. I usually give them an activity that they can do by themselves. I just give them a roleplay, or probably a topic to discuss and then they dig for some information then they ask me for some confirmation after that.” (EL)

In Accounting class, speaking is also one of the most favorite activities which triggered students' motivation to learn. However, this is only specifically in group discussion activity. Student like to do speaking activity in a group rather than in front of the class, such as presentation:

“... Because in group discussion, they only speak in a small group. And then they tend to be more active when they discuss the topic in small groups than in big groups. Like, in presentation, because students need to perform in front of the class, in which everyone is looking at and paying attention to them, they tend to be nervous and they usually make more mistakes...” (NIB)

“...Mostly I use interactive activities to enable students with differences to interact and get benefits or help each other. E.g in group discussion.” (AK)

Students also tend to be not interested in reading activity. They tend to get bored easily during the classroom when teacher gave reading activity:

“... I use different approaches in every different type. Like, I don't push my students to have a lot of text which is difficult for them, and some are too long. And there are some questions that must be answered. So, they get bored easily...” (FD)

Listening skills also became one of the topics that students were not really interested in. They tend to think that listening is quite difficult and hard to be understood:

“... It depends on the characteristics of the students. As an example, I don't really use listening activities in my class since it is the least favorite for them. They are really afraid of listening because it is quite hard for them to understand what the native says in the audio or in the video, so we need extra effort to make students understand the content of the listening activity...” (AS)

In Medical faculty, speaking activity became one of the students most favorite activity Teacher said that by doing some speaking activities, students can express themselves freely and it was also quite interesting and motivating for the students:

“... The most favorite activity in most of my class is speaking. Students really love to speak too much. I prepared a lot of speaking activity from many sources, from the internet and books. In this case, they can express their feelings, they can share their ideas and most of my students prefer to speak rather than to do some writing tasks or listening...” (RW)

“...For senior med students, I usually force them to speak more by playing games and if it works, I will continue with more complex spoken practice, like a group discussion or presentation.” (HA)

There are also some teachers who just focus on the course book, without using any additional teaching media during their classroom activity. The reason for them is because of the big coverage of the materials that should be covered in their class for one semester. This situation became the difficulty of the teacher to explore themselves with their own ideas or media. They just focused on the materials in the textbook:

“...considering we have only limited meeting, and at the same time we have to cover a lot of materials, which are four types of essays in half semester, and then I do not use some specific teaching aid to teach because of the coverage of the materials which consist of a lot of written exercises and also the production of writing itself so I rarely use the teaching aid...” (KNF)

Another teacher explained that they use public speaking activity in medical students. It was because he analyzed that students from this faculty already have high proficiency in English, so he needs to challenge the students with some activity that will accommodate their needs, in this case public speaking. It can be seen from the statement of the teacher:

“... I always prepare the material well before teaching. I usually prepare the activity based on their proficiency. For example, I applied for Public Speaking activity in medical class since they have good speaking skill., I have a Door-to-Door Campaign with students with these students who have high proficiency. However, I prefer to practice more in the class with another class with the low-level students.” (PAJ)

In Medical class, the teacher also has no problem in applying both individual and group work activity. It was quite balance since the students can adapt with this activity quite well:

“...In the whole semester I create various activities promoting different learners' preferences. Some of them may be individual activities while some others may be in the form of group work. The variety also occurs in regard to English skills.” (AB)

“Beside individual work, such as presentation or writing, sometimes I grouped them into some group so that they can help each other increase their English ability.” (WE)

The Use of Mother Tongue

The use of mother tongue is another aspect of teacher strategy in dealing with the students in English lessons. Teachers in both faculties, Economic and Medical, use Indonesian during the classroom. However, the frequency of the usage is different. In Economic class, Indonesian is frequently used to deliver the materials since the students get more difficulties if the teacher uses English during the explanation:

“... I guess it is still necessary to use L1 in the classroom, especially in low level classes, like in management class. As we know, students from this class mostly have low English proficiency. In addition, sometimes it helps to use L1 to explain certain concepts of English.” (DI)

“... When teaching grammar and I apply the Grammar Translation Method, it will be easier for the students to know the pattern in L1 since it's closer to them. Moreover, when students can create a correct sentence in L1 it will be easier for them to create a correct sentence in L2.” (IWR)

On the other hand, teachers in medical class prefer to use English mostly during the class even though they still believe that the use of L1 is still needed. They think that students need more input of English rather than Indonesian:

“... Somehow, we need to preserve our language but during English class I prefer to use English rather than L1. As students only get exposure to the use of English in the class, it is better to show them the use of English, so they can be familiar with it.” (YSP)

Also, another teacher uses L1 when it is necessary to explain the instructions that students do not really understand. Some projects in English were explained in some complicated instructions. In this case, teacher tend to use L1 to make the instruction more understandable:

“... sometimes the students find it hard to understand instruction in English. As a result, the students' work is not as good as what the teacher expects. Other than that, sometimes it is difficult for the students to understand teachers' explanations in English. Therefore, to make them understand, the use of L1 is needed. The example is when the students are given a task or project to do but they seem confused about the explanation and they still do not understand what they need to do. In that case, I usually switch the language to help them understand.” (AL)

Teachers come up with some strategy to facilitate the needs of the students itself. Those strategies were based on three categories of the students, those are Study program, Academic year, and proficiency level of the students. Each category was resulting in some specific characteristics of the students. Those characteristics decide what type of the approach or methodology which is suitable to be applied during the English teaching learning process.

In economic students, reading and grammar activity were more effective than speaking and writing activity. It is because of the characteristics of the economic students which are more passive and tend to be shy during the classroom activity. It was opposite with the medical students who were more active and had higher levels of English proficiency. In Medical students, teachers have no problem with every activity given. It can be reading, writing, listening and writing activity.

In terms of the topic, both students from economics and medical faculty have the common interest which is they tend to like to study English with the topic related to their background, such as being a clerk or bank manager for teaching in economics. In medical students, teachers used some topics related to health issues such as plastic surgery. In this case, teachers were always trying to adapt the materials to match with their background, even though the textbook itself sometimes does not match with their background. Thus, the topic of the materials in ESP has become the crucial part for the teachers since they need to provide learners with materials that are as close as possible to their professional world (Mirela, 2017).

Teachers also tend to use some fun activities with economic students. It can be understood that students were easily given up with difficult assignments. While in medical students, teachers can use some more challenging activities such as writing essays, presentations, and public speaking. It was correlated with the background of the students of medical faculty who have higher levels of proficiency rather than students from economic faculty.

The use of First language or mother tongue during the classroom activity was also one of the issues that were quite relevant to discuss. Teachers tend to use their mother tongue during the classroom discussion in order to allow more effective teaching and learning activity (Perfecto, 2022). Teacher was more frequently using mother tongue during the classroom in economic students since some students in economic faculty were difficult to understand the materials when it was delivered in full of English. On the other

hand, students from the medical faculty can understand English more easily since they have a high level of English proficiency.

In terms of assignments, teachers tend to use group work assignments more often in economic students. Group work or group assignments provide the opportunity to create more complex dialogues, explore relationships between characters, pool knowledge together, and have a more social learning environment (Irkinovich, 2021). It was related to the characteristics of the students which is more sociable and easily interact with their colleagues. Oppositely, students from medical faculty have no problem doing both individual and group work assignments. The characteristics of the students which are competitive was the reason that they can work individually quite well.

Multimedia devices were also one of the approaches that were frequently used by the teacher in dealing with the development of the technology. As millennials, students in university now were quite familiar with multimedia devices such as laptops, smart phones, the internet, and social media. In this case, the teacher always tried to adapt with the technology in delivering the materials to the students. Using multimedia in teaching ESP, can make the educational process dynamic; attracting and raising attention to the lesson's topic and English language as a whole (Tsai, 2012).

The last aspect was rewards and punishment. The rewards and punishment are able to increase students' interest in a particular subject and also lead to a situation where rewards can motivate students to have good performance (Sidin, 2021). In this case, this approach was more effective to be applied in medical students than the economic students. It is because the students from the medical faculty were more critical thinkers than students in the economic faculty. In that case, they can understand the consequences of every behavior they make.

Teachers in both the economic and medical groups were demonstrating the similarities and distinctions. This occurred because they needed to adapt the teaching-learning process to align with the students' characteristics. Teaching medical students with economic students is challenging due to their distinct qualities, despite certain commonalities between them. ESP program teachers must possess the ability to adjust their teaching styles and strategies to cater to the diverse range of ESP students.

CONCLUSION

The main result of this study was that teaching strategy is the crucial part in higher education with various characteristics of the students. In terms of topic, English teachers in higher education preferred to connect the materials with the students' specific background of study program. For medical students, teachers tend to use some materials related to medical life, such as medical surgery. While in economics students, the topic was also specific to economic life, such as the life of a banker, stock exchange, etc. In that case, an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbook can be an option for the future since there were so many students with many different backgrounds in the study program. Textbooks need to be made based on the need's analysis of students from different study programs. Students with different study programs will have their own characteristics and

special needs. It cannot just be treated in common. Discussing some specific topic related to the workplace or entrepreneurship is suitable for teaching students in both faculties, since their focus is already set up especially related to their future career.

Students with a high level of English proficiency tend to be given some challenging activity, such as Public Speaking, Academic Writing, and Door to Door Campaign. On the other hand, students with low proficiency will be more effective with some fun activities, such as games and roleplay. At a low English proficiency level, teachers are more eager to conduct some activities which trigger their motivation to love learning English, such as games, movie discussion, etc. Those types of activities were also important to improve student's confidence. Teachers still believe that L1 is still necessary to use in conducting the English lesson. However, the frequency of the usage depends on the student's characteristics.

This study has wider implications for improving English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs in Indonesia and adds to the continuing discussion on effective language teaching. This study also provides helpful recommendations for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers aiming to enhance language learning experiences in ESP environments. Future research endeavors should focus on developing English learning material for ESP focusing on technology and 21st century skills.

Due to the limited number of participants, this study does not claim that it represents the perspectives of all ESP teachers in Indonesia. Further studies with a larger number of participants are recommended using various methods to enhance knowledge and provide more information into this phenomenon. Even though this study offers limited insight of a small sample size, it presents teachers with key considerations to enhance the quality of English teaching and learning in an ESP program, providing many approaches to participate effectively in the classroom.

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