Teachers' Teaching Strategies in ESP: A Descriptive Study at Malahayati University

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ABSTRACT

This study explores teaching strategies employed by English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers at a private university in Lampung, focusing on two faculties: Medical and Economics. Using a qualitative research design, six English teachers were interviewed to examine their practices in delivering ESP instruction. The study aimed to understand how teaching strategies are tailored to address the differing academic backgrounds and English proficiency levels of medical and economics students. Data were analyzed using the framework outlined by Miles et al. (2018), focusing on themes such as teaching materials, subject matter, classroom activities, and the use of students' native language. Findings reveal that medical English instruction often integrates specialized content, such as medical terminology, authentic texts, and professional communication tasks, with teachers systematically introducing technical vocabulary and employing task-based learning. Conversely, economics instruction emphasizes real-world scenarios through case studies, simulations, and group discussions, but teachers face challenges in adapting resources due to the lack of standardized materials. Both groups of students displayed distinct learning characteristics, requiring teachers to adopt flexible approaches, such as code-switching to ensure comprehension and incorporating digital tools like Quizizz and Kahoot to enhance engagement. The study highlights the critical role of contextualized and adaptable teaching strategies in ESP, emphasizing the need for specialized materials, professional development for teachers, and greater collaboration between language educators and subject-matter experts. These findings provide valuable insights for improving ESP instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners in higher education.

Keywords: *English for Specific Purposes (ESP); teacher's strategy; descriptive study*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most pressing issues in teaching strategies for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is the challenge of tailoring instruction to meet the diverse and dynamic needs of learners. ESP students often come from varied academic or professional backgrounds, each requiring specialized language skills relevant to their fields (Apriyanto & Nurhayaty, 2019). Teachers must design strategies that balance

general language instruction with discipline-specific content, a task that demands both linguistic expertise and knowledge of the target discipline. However, many educators lack sufficient training in the specific technical or professional areas they are teaching, making it difficult to deliver effective, context-relevant lessons.

Another critical issue is the selection and development of appropriate teaching materials. ESP courses often require resources that align closely with learners' real-world tasks, such as industry-specific terminology, workplace scenarios, or academic writing conventions (Wicaksono, 2023; Yuskar et al., 2023). Unfortunately, such materials are not always readily available, and generic textbooks may not address the specific needs of all learners. Teachers frequently need to create or adapt materials, which can be time-consuming and require a deep understanding of both language pedagogy and the specialized content area.

The integration of technology into ESP teaching strategies also presents both opportunities and challenges. While digital tools and online platforms can enhance engagement and provide access to authentic resources, they also require teachers to be proficient in using these technologies effectively (Ngwenya et al., n.d.). In many contexts, limited access to technology or a lack of digital literacy among educators and students can hinder the successful implementation of tech-based teaching strategies. Moreover, identifying and integrating appropriate digital resources that align with specific learning objectives remains a significant challenge.

Assessment in ESP is another area that poses difficulties for teachers. Evaluating students' performance requires methods that reflect both language proficiency and their ability to apply the language in discipline-specific contexts (Williams, 2014). Standardized tests often fail to capture the nuanced skills required in ESP, such as writing a business proposal or interpreting scientific data. Teachers must develop tailored assessment strategies, which can be demanding and require continuous refinement to ensure they are fair, reliable, and valid for diverse learners.

The lack of collaboration between language teachers and subject-matter experts is a persistent issue (Bassetti & Cook, 2011). ESP teaching often benefits from an interdisciplinary approach where language instructors work closely with professionals or faculty from the learners' fields of study. However, such collaboration is not always feasible due to institutional constraints or a lack of awareness about its importance. Without input from subject-matter experts, ESP teachers may struggle to align their teaching strategies with the practical needs of their students, potentially limiting the effectiveness of the learning experience. Addressing these issues requires innovative approaches, professional development, and institutional support to ensure the success of ESP programs.

Malahayati University, as a significant educational institution in Indonesia, is likely to have implemented ESP programs to cater to the evolving needs of its students. However, the effectiveness of these programs hinges on the pedagogical strategies employed by its faculty. A comprehensive understanding of the teaching methodologies utilized in ESP courses at Malahayati University is essential to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. Coleman (1988) stated that the

overwhelming majority of university textbooks are written in English. Most of the recommended reading materials for university students are also in English, with only a limited number of books available in Indonesian or bilingual formats. As a result, proficiency in English has become an essential requirement for university students.

This study aims to investigate the strategies employed by English teachers in ESP learning programs at Malahayati University. By conducting a descriptive analysis of teaching approaches, this research seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on ESP pedagogy and inform the development of more effective language teaching practices within the university. Effective teaching strategies are crucial for student success. Teachers must employ a variety of teaching methods to enhance learning outcomes and student motivation. As supported by the research (McEnroe-Petitte & Farris, 2020; Parker & Welch, 2021; Kuo, 1921), a teacher's approach significantly impacts student achievement.

The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by ESP teachers at Malahayati University and offer recommendations for enhancing the overall quality of ESP education at the institution. This paper is a qualitative approach using interviews result of six teachers. The participants were chosen from the Economic and Medical Faculties due the different academic backgrounds of students and their presumed English proficiency levels. Teaching methods significantly impact student success in higher education, especially in specialized English courses like ESP. This research examines how English teachers apply different teaching strategies in ESP programs for social and science students in Indonesia. The findings will inform the development of targeted training programs for ESP teachers and provide recommendations for improving English language learning experiences in these fields.

Literature Review

English has become essential for academic success worldwide, leading to a widespread use of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) across various fields of study. While not the primary language of instruction in Indonesia, English is crucial for international academic collaboration. As a result, ESP has gained importance in the country. Previous research has explored different teaching methods used to help students learn English for specific academic purposes (Komarnytska et al., 2019; Wicaksono, 2023).

Tuzlukova & Heckadon (2020) stated that successfully teach advanced language skills, teachers must adopt student-centered approaches that involve active learning and real-world experiences within the ESP curriculum. This includes using a variety of engaging teaching methods, especially for speaking, and encouraging students to develop ideas, critical thinking, and creativity while connecting language skills with subject matter knowledge.

Research has shown that using real-life examples, practical materials, and hands-on tasks can significantly improve students' English language skills while also helping

them learn subject-specific content. When students work together on projects related to real-world situations, their motivation and understanding of the subject matter increase (Hwang et al., 2018). Additionally, incorporating technology and multimedia resources can make ESP classes more engaging and interactive (Nurul Amaliah et al., 2023).

METHOD

This paper employed a qualitative research design to gather data on English language teaching practices. Given the nature of classroom-based language studies, a qualitative approach was considered most appropriate (Nassaji, 2015). The research was conducted at a private university in Lampung after obtaining institutional approval. The university was selected due to the researcher's existing connections and the diverse range of academic programs offered.

The participants of this paper were six English teachers from the medical and economic faculties. The medical faculty comprised the departments of general Doctor, Pharmacy, Nursing, while the economics faculty include Management and Accounting Development.

The medical and economics faculties were purposefully selected for this study due to significant differences between their student populations. Medical students generally have stronger science backgrounds, while economics students come from a social science background. These differing academic preparations often result in disparities in English language proficiency, with science students typically demonstrating higher levels of English competence.

The Medical and Economic Faculties were deliberately selected for this study due to several factors. Based on student input, these faculties exhibit significant differences as medical students typically have a science background from high school, while economic students come from a social science background. This distinction in academic preparation leads to contrasting characteristics, particularly in English proficiency. Generally, science students demonstrate a higher level of English language ability compared to their social science counterparts.

The researchers conducted interviews the participants to describe their ESP teaching strategies. Open-ended questions were used to elicit detailed descriptions of their experiences (M. B. Miles & Huberman, 1994). Participants were cooperative and knowledgeable, providing comprehensive answers. Interviews were flexible in terms of location and time, scheduled based on teachers' availability. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and adhered to ethical guidelines.To analyze the collected data, the researchers employed a framework outlined by M. Miles et al., (2014). The steps of analyzing the data are collecting the data, reducing the data, displaying the data and drawing and verifying conclusion. This involved categorizing data into themes or patterns to identify common teaching methods used in ESP programs.Essentially, the study aimed to understand how English teachers approached ESP instruction by examining their experiences and strategies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers examined teacher's strategies through four lenses: teaching materials, subject matter, classroom activities,and the use of the students' native language. By analyzing these elements, they identified both similarities and differences in how teachers approached their classes for economics and medical students.

Teaching strategies

Teachers explained that they need appropriate teaching materials. Medical English requires a specific approach due to the complex and specialized nature of the language. The teachers focus on specific language skills like medical terminology, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking and writing. Meanwhile, the medical technology teachers introduce medical terms systematically, explaining their etymology (Greek and Latin roots) to aid retention. In reading comprehension teacher use authentic medical texts (journals, case studies) and focus on understanding complex sentence structures and specialized vocabulary.

> *"…Our institution provides a handout from a well-known publisher, but I need to choose some appropriate materials suitable for the condition of our students. In addition, I also need to add some articles or journals related to medical fields. My students and I usually discuss these articles in a certain topic." (AFI)*

In listening comprehension, teacher exposes students to medical lectures, patient consultations, and medical conferences. In speaking, teacher creates opportunities for role-plays, case discussions, and presentations to develop fluency and accuracy. And writing skill they can practice writing medical reports, case summaries, and patient histories.

> *" … We held such as a plenary session for students. They practice to be a moderator, to present the material and to try to answer some questions from their friends."(SA)*

Teacher usually gives the integrated medical content like, real-world scenarios, patient interaction, and medical professionals. Teachers also give tasks by employing effective teaching methods like, task-based learning, cooperative learning by encourage group work and peer teaching. They use formative assessment by using regular quizzes, assignments, and presentations to monitor progress (Asif et al., 2020). They provide summative assessments as like conducting exams, projects, or oral presentations to evaluate overall achievement.

> *"… Unfortunately, we don't have a specific book and guidelines for teaching economic. So I combine some sources… I also plan some role-plays for them to practice."(A)*

Teaching English in economics can be challenging but rewarding subject. Usually, teacher using the active learning strategies (Keser & Semerci, 2019). Case

studies and simulations to present real world economic scenarios for students to analyze and problem-solve. Group work and discussions for encourage collaboration and critical thinking through group activities and debates (Carli, 1989; Romano, 1994). Role-playing allows the students to take on different economic roles, such as consumers, producers, or policymakers. Teacher also using incorporating technology by data analysis, online resources, and presentation and visual aids. Assessment methods that teacher used are projects allow the students to apply economic knowledge to real-world problems, make a portfolios to track the student progress and development over time, and presentations to develop oral communication skills and confidence.

> *"Each group of students from different major usually bring different characteristic too. Medical students usually become faster and active in mastering material for learning rather than other majors in our university so we can provide more material for them."(S)*

Teachers adjust their teaching methods based on the unique characteristics of different student groups. These groups are classified according to their academic program, academic year, and English language level. The specific needs of each group determine the most suitable teaching approaches.

> *"…Our economic students are quite passive in the learning process. They tend to like reading activity or writing. I try to boost their confidence in speaking too by role-play and presentation. I also try to help them by starting practice from the easier ones to the harder level of practice."*

Economics students, typically quieter and less outgoing, benefit more from activities focused on reading and grammar. On the other hand, medical students, who are generally more confident and have stronger English skills, thrive in a variety of activities such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Mirela (2017) stated that selecting appropriate materials is crucial for ESP teachers as they aim to provide learners with language resources closely aligned with their professional needs. Teachers often adapted instructional materials to align with their students' specific backgrounds, even when the textbooks didn't perfectly match their needs. Teachers are able to adjust the level of difficulty in their teaching to enhance students' confidence. By doing the easier task successfully, the students will believe that they are able to strive the harder task.

> *"We have different type of students in a classroom. Especially they have different level of ability in English. Some students have much better acquisition of English and other students still have lower ability. They also have different learning styles such as visual learner, auditory learner and audiovisual learner. To deal with this condition, I usually try to provide PPT and projector as visual source, explanation and records as audio source and video as audiovisual source. Of course, the material types depend on the topic of learning.(H)*

Both economics and medical educators modified their teaching approaches to suit the specific requirements of their students. Although these student groups share common ground, their differences make it difficult to use a single teaching method for both. Successful ESP instructors must be flexible in their teaching style to meet the varied needs of their students.

"…I used Quizzi to teach my students. I provide some games with laptop connected to projector and an external keyboard to help them answer the questions live. In order other students can see their friends' trick in answering questions. They were really enthusiastic in learning process and they can memorize new words and terms in their field unconsciously. (H)

To overcome boredom in the classroom teaching, some teachers try to provide a game especially online platform such as Quizzi and Kahoot. This strategy successfully decreased students' anxiety and promoted relaxation. Students could enjoy the teaching and learning process well and they could memorize some terms in medical unconsciously.

In teaching process, teachers also mix Bahasa Indonesia and English when explaining material. Because there are some terms or phrases need more explanation in their native language. The code-switching process from English to their native language can ensure that they really comprehend the material.

"I usually translate some words or expressions in Bahasa Indonesia to make sure that my students grab my explanation. I explain in English first and for specific terms or difficult topics, I need to switch in Bahasa Indonesia."

The purpose of translating and mixing English and their native language is only for ensuring students' comprehension in teaching and learning process. The students usually practice the material in full-English as the result of learning process. The statement highlights the strategic use of code-switching as an instructional tool in ESP teaching. Code-switching, the deliberate transition between two languages, is particularly valuable in environments where students are still developing proficiency in the target language. In this context, the teacher uses Bahasa Indonesia to clarify specific terms or complex topics that may be challenging for students to comprehend fully in English.

This practice serves multiple pedagogical purposes. Firstly, it ensures comprehension of challenging concepts, reducing the risk of misunderstandings that could hinder learning progress. By initially presenting material in English and then providing explanations in Bahasa Indonesia, the teacher scaffolds the learning process, enabling students to build a stronger foundation in English while maintaining clarity. This approach aligns with Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Gray & Klapper, 2009), where the teacher acts as a mediator, bridging the gap between what students can understand independently and what they need support to grasp.

Additionally, code-switching addresses the linguistic diversity often present in ESP classrooms. Students may vary in their levels of English proficiency, and the use of their native language provides an inclusive strategy to meet diverse needs. It also helps to alleviate the cognitive load associated with processing complex information in a non-native language, thereby fostering confidence and reducing anxiety in learners.

However, while effective, excessive reliance on code-switching can potentially limit students' exposure to the target language. It is crucial for teachers to maintain a balance, ensuring that code-switching is employed as a supplementary tool rather than the primary mode of instruction. Over time, students should be encouraged to engage more extensively with the target language to develop the communicative competence required for professional contexts.

In conclusion, the teacher's practice of code-switching reflects a thoughtful and adaptive approach to addressing students' immediate learning needs while gradually guiding them toward greater proficiency in English (Sales, 2022). This strategy, when used judiciously, can significantly enhance the effectiveness of ESP instruction in diverse and multilingual classrooms.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the multifaceted strategies employed by ESP teachers to address the diverse needs of medical and economics students. By analyzing teaching materials, subject matter, classroom activities, and the use of native language, it becomes evident that successful ESP instruction requires a nuanced and adaptive approach.

One of the key insights from the study is the significance of context-specific teaching materials (Shih et al., 1997). For medical students, the use of authentic resources like journals, medical case studies, and technical texts aligns with their professional needs, fostering an immediate connection between language learning and real-world application. Conversely, economics students often face challenges due to the lack of tailored ESP materials. Teachers mitigate this gap by incorporating simulations, case studies, and collaborative projects, which enhance critical thinking and practical application of economic concepts. These findings echo Mirela (2017) assertion that instructional materials should closely reflect the professional contexts of learners.

Another crucial aspect is the role of classroom activities in bridging the gap between academic preparation and language proficiency. Medical students, with their science-focused backgrounds, often display greater confidence and adaptability in tackling complex language tasks. In contrast, economics students, generally more reserved, benefit from incremental and confidence-building exercises. This differentiation in instructional strategy underscores the importance of tailoring activities to match the learning styles and academic readiness of each group.

Technology integration emerged as an effective tool for enhancing student engagement (Amalia Solikhah, 2023). Platforms like Quizizz and Kahoot not only reduce classroom anxiety but also transform language learning into an interactive and enjoyable experience. These tools help students unconsciously retain specialized

terminology and improve participation, especially among less confident learners (Rahmadani et al., 2022).

The strategic use of native language, particularly Bahasa Indonesia, further demonstrates how teachers bridge comprehension gaps. Code-switching ensures clarity, particularly when explaining complex terms or technical content. However, the gradual transition to full-English practice fosters language proficiency and prepares students for real-world professional communication.

Overall, the discussion emphasizes that effective ESP teaching strategies require flexibility, resourcefulness, and a deep understanding of students' academic and linguistic needs. Addressing these needs not only enhances language acquisition but also equips students with the skills necessary to excel in their respective fields. This study reinforces the importance of developing specialized resources, fostering teacher innovation, and ensuring institutional support to optimize ESP instruction in higher education contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that effective ESP teaching strategies are rooted in adaptability, contextual understanding, and student-centered approaches. Teachers of medical and economics students employ a variety of methods tailored to their students' academic backgrounds and linguistic needs. Medical students benefit from specialized content, authentic materials, and task-based activities that align with their professional goals, while economics students gain from active learning strategies, such as case studies and simulations, which build critical thinking and practical skills.

The integration of technology, including tools like Quizizz and Kahoot, emerges as a vital strategy for enhancing engagement and reducing classroom anxiety. These tools not only make learning more interactive but also help students retain specialized vocabulary more effectively. Additionally, the use of bilingual instruction, through strategic code-switching between English and Bahasa Indonesia, ensures comprehension while gradually transitioning students to full-English practice.

The findings highlight the challenges posed by the lack of standardized ESP materials, particularly for economics students, and underscore the importance of resource development and institutional support. Teachers' ability to adjust instructional strategies based on the unique characteristics of their students—ranging from English proficiency to learning styles—proves critical for successful outcomes.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of flexibility, innovation, and tailored strategies in ESP instruction. By addressing students' specific needs and leveraging modern teaching tools, educators can better prepare learners for the linguistic demands of their respective fields, contributing to their academic and professional success.

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