

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains a brief description of the research background. It includes the rationale, research questions, research objectives, and scope of the research, and the last one is the significance of the research.

1.1 Rationale

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) plays a crucial role in vocational high schools in Indonesia, where English is not taught as a general subject but as a means to support students' future professional skills. Students in vocational schools are enrolled in various majors, such as automotive, hospitality, and business, each requiring English tailored to their specific fields. Accordingly, English instruction must be contextualized to meet the communicative demands of students' vocational areas. Fadlia et al., (2020) emphasize that teachers preparing for ESP-based learning should refer to clear instructional guidelines, design well-structured syllabi, and select teaching resources relevant to students' professional contexts. Hidayat, (2024) also emphasizes the importance of aligning ESP instruction with learners' vocational fields by using student-centered and career-oriented approaches, particularly in material selection and classroom methods.

The urgency of ESP implementation in vocational schools arises from their core mission to prepare graduates for the world of work. Unlike general education institutions, SMKs are designed to equip students with practical, job-oriented skills, including language competencies aligned with specific industries. Therefore, vocational education is the most suitable environment for contextualized ESP implementation. As vocational students are expected to engage in technical communication, such as reading manuals or explaining procedures to clients, ESP becomes not only relevant but essential. This makes SMKs an appropriate and strategic setting to investigate how ESP is planned and delivered. In addition, according to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology

(Kementerian Pendidikan Riset dan Teknologi, 2023) Indonesia had more than 14,000 vocational high schools (SMK) with over 5 million active students. Among these, technical programs such as Motorcycle Business Engineering (TBSM) are among the most popular. The large number of students in vocational education highlights the need to strengthen job-related competencies, including ESP, to prepare graduates for workplace communication and industry demands.

Vocational high schools (SMK) serve as a pivotal platform in Indonesia's education system by directly preparing students to enter the workforce after graduation. Unlike general high schools, SMKs are structured to equip students with job-ready competencies, including the ability to communicate in specific occupational contexts. This makes SMKs a strategic site for implementing English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as students are required to master technical and workplace-related communication in English. As noted by Wahyudi & Jufrizal, (2023), ESP instruction in vocational education must go beyond general language teaching by providing students with functional English relevant to their industry. Thus, studying ESP instruction in SMKs provides valuable insights into how English can be tailored to meet real-world job demands, especially in technical programs like Motorcycle Business Engineering.

To achieve effective teaching and learning outcomes, teachers must also demonstrate appropriate competencies. Arifin, (2021) defines competence as a combination of knowledge, skills, talents, and attitudes required to perform specific tasks. Complementing this, the Republic of Indonesia, (2005) outlines four core competencies for teachers: pedagogical, professional, personal, and social. These competencies are essential in ensuring that teachers can plan, deliver, and evaluate ESP instruction effectively.

Despite these ideals, implementing ESP in vocational schools poses several challenges. Amirovich et al., (2020) identify three major barriers to effective ESP instruction. First, teachers often struggle to engage students who are frequently absent during English classes due to a lack of interest in the subject. Second, limited instructional time becomes a significant obstacle, particularly when teachers are

required to explain English material to students who do not understand English. Third, there is often a misalignment between General English (GPE) and ESP instruction. While some students may perform well in general English assessments, they still struggle with basic vocational texts, indicating inconsistencies in teaching strategies and outcomes. These problems remain evident in more recent studies. Rohmah & Yufriзал, (2024) found that ESP teachers in vocational schools often face difficulty engaging students due to a lack of contextualized materials and limited collaboration with vocational subject teachers. Dwinalida & Setiaji, (2022) similarly highlighted a significant mismatch between General English and ESP instruction, which causes students to underperform when dealing with vocational content. Rihatmi et al., (2025) further observed that English teaching under the Merdeka Curriculum still relies heavily on general English materials, limiting students' exposure to domain-specific vocabulary needed for their future careers.

Similar challenges were also identified during a preliminary observation conducted in vocational high schools in Kuningan. English teachers reported difficulties in motivating students, adapting materials to suit vocational needs, and managing classroom engagement. One specific concern was the difficulty in building meaningful interaction with students who lacked both motivation and a sufficient English background. These findings suggest a disconnect between the intended goals of ESP instruction and the actual classroom dynamics.

Fitria, (2023) asserts that the role of an ESP teacher is multifaceted, involving responsibilities such as planning instruction, setting learning goals, creating a supportive environment, and assessing students' progress. Brown, (2007) adds that successful language learning is influenced by a range of variables, including learner characteristics, instructional approaches, the learning process itself, and the learning context.

In light of these challenges, this study seeks to investigate the problems faced by English teachers in teaching ESP, particularly in the Motorcycle Business Engineering (TBSM) program in vocational high schools in Kuningan. The research is motivated by two main considerations. First, prior studies such as those by Solihah et al., (2023) and Muliyah & Aminatun (2020) have highlighted

persistent challenges in ESP classrooms, including material development, time constraints, and student engagement. Second, preliminary observations reveal that English teachers in the TBSM program encounter specific challenges in delivering relevant ESP content and motivating students with low English proficiency.

The study by Solihah et al., (2023) examined ESP challenges in a private university in Cirebon, where lecturers reported difficulties in independently designing materials due to limited resources and lack of training, while students struggled with limited technical vocabulary. Similarly, Muliya & Aminatun, (2020) found that mismatches between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices were common, often influenced by large class sizes, limited time, and diverse student needs.

While previous research has mostly focused on general vocational or university settings, this study specifically examines the Motorcycle Business Engineering (TBSM) program. According to Zakwana et al., (2023) the TBSM program is part of the Automotive Engineering Skills group and aims to equip students with technical expertise in motorcycle maintenance, inspection, and business operations. As such, the program demands students to comprehend technical manuals, follow standard operating procedures, and communicate with clients regarding vehicle maintenance and repair. These tasks often involve English terminologies, especially as many instructional materials, spare part specifications, and service protocols are presented in English. Therefore, ESP instruction for TBSM students is not merely supplementary but essential. As emphasized by Zakwana et al., (2023), integrating English proficiency with technical content is crucial to support students' career readiness and industry alignment. Considering these issues, this study addresses the following research questions and is expected to provide practical recommendations for improving ESP instruction in vocational education.

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1.2 Research Questions

Based on the rationale described above, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What problems do English teachers encounter in teaching English for the Motorcycle Business Engineering (TBSM) program at vocational high schools?
2. What strategies do English teachers implement to address these problems?

1.3 Research Objectives

In line with the research questions, the objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the problems encountered by English teachers in teaching English for the Motorcycle Business Engineering (TBSM) program at vocational high schools.
2. To identify the strategies implemented by English teachers to overcome those problems.

1.4 Scope of the Research

Some limitations need to be considered regarding this study. This study focuses on analyzing teacher problems in teaching English for motorcycle business engineering. Specifically, this research will assess two aspects, first, the problems faced by the teachers, and second one the solutions made by the teachers in overcoming the problems. In this research, the respondents would be limited to English teachers who teach English for specific purposes, especially for motorcycle business engineering students. In Kuningan, two vocational high schools are SMK Auto Matsuda and SMKN 4 Kuningan, so the respondent's teachers are in those schools.

1.5 Significance of the Research

Based on the research objectives, the findings of this study are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions for various stakeholders:

1. **Theoretical contribution:** This study is expected to enrich the body of knowledge in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly within the context of vocational education. It may also serve as a reference for future research exploring ESP instruction in technical or occupational domains.
2. **Practical contribution:** The results of this study are intended to offer valuable insights for English teachers, vocational schools, and educational policymakers in identifying and addressing instructional challenges in ESP classrooms, particularly those related to the Motorcycle Business Engineering (TBSM) program. Furthermore, the findings may inform the development of professional training programs for English teachers in vocational schools, particularly in areas such as ESP curriculum design, materials adaptation, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

To ensure consistency with the theoretical framework, this study analyzes the instructional challenges based on seven components of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course development: Needs Analysis, Syllabus Design, Course Design, Material Development, Methodology, Implementation, and Evaluation. Six of these components are adapted from the model proposed by Hutchinson & Waters, (1987), while the Implementation phase is added based on the framework by Graves (2000) to reflect actual classroom practices. Although Implementation is an additional component, it is logically placed before Evaluation, as the teaching process must occur before being assessed. This comprehensive framework enables a structured exploration of how English teachers plan, deliver, and evaluate ESP instruction for TBSM students in vocational high schools.

Having outlined the background, rationale, and objectives of the study, the next chapter presents the theoretical foundations that underpin this research. It elaborates on key concepts of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), the components of ESP course design, teacher roles, and relevant previous studies that inform the analysis of the findings.