



A NEED ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR DIGITAL BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the needs of English communication skills for students of the Digital Business Study Program in Indonesia within both academic and professional contexts. Using a descriptive quantitative approach with a survey method, data were collected through a 1–5 Likert scale questionnaire distributed to 75 respondents from the cohorts of 2023, 2024, and 2025, with 22 respondents providing complete responses for statistical testing purposes. The research instrument's validity was tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation ($r_{table} = 0.4227$, $df = 20$, $\alpha = 5\%$) and all items were declared valid, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.940, indicating a very high level of reliability. The One-Sample T-Test results showed a calculated value of 10.7243 with an average need score of 3.3864 (above the neutral value of 2.5), proving that students possess a high awareness of the urgency of business English communication competence. Simple Linear Regression Analysis yielded the equation $Y = -0.220 + 1.072X$ with $R^2 = 0.676$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.000003$, indicating that the need for English communication skills has a positive and significant effect on career opportunities in the digital business field. This study recommends developing an English curriculum based on need analysis that integrates English for Business Communication (EBC) skills, digital literacy, and 21st-century competencies to meet the demands of the global digital industry.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English Communication Skills, Digital Business, English for Business Communication (EBC)

1. Introduction

1.1 Introducing the Problem

Needs Analysis in English Language Learning for Business and Professional Purposes In the context of globalization and the continuous acceleration of digital technology developments, mastering English is no longer viewed merely as a complementary skill; rather, it has become a core competence that highly determines the competitiveness of university graduates in the job market. As a global lingua franca, English serves as a bridge for international communication across various fields, ranging from business and science to culture. This reality is further reinforced by an increasingly interconnected world economically, culturally, and socially, solidifying English as the primary language in academic, business, political, and scientific domains. (Hidayat, 2024) (Vina Agustina, 2024)

This condition places Indonesian higher education institutions in a challenging position. Graduates with adequate English skills tend to have an edge in job competition, especially when applying to multinational corporations or pursuing careers in international environments. However, the reality on the ground shows that many English communication training programs are still designed without first conducting an in-depth assessment of the learners' communication needs, resulting in curricula that frequently mismatch the actual demands of the



professional world. (Talib, 2025) This gap becomes even more apparent in the context of Indonesia's digital business. English has now grown into an irreplaceable instrument of communication in the business world; online business players in Indonesia utilize English primarily for marketing purposes, and despite facing various obstacles in its use, the continue to rely on it in various daily business activities. This situation underscores the necessity for English learning programs that are planned systematically and grounded in robust empirical data. (Muliasari, 2025) Relationship to Previous Research: Concerns regarding the gap between English language learning and the needs of the workforce have driven the growth of need analysis studies within the framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The ESP approach places the context of language use above mere grammatical mastery; one of its primary strengths lies in its ability to align learning objectives with the real needs of learners, who are generally adults wishing to use English for professional purposes. In the context of industry and the professional world, various studies indicate that the ability to communicate professionally in English is an essential requirement for graduates aiming to excel in modern companies competing at a global level. This finding aligns with research outcomes in Islamic banking, which revealed that English mastery is highly needed by Islamic Banking students, given that the professions they will pursue demand an understanding of English banking terminology as well as fulfilling promotion requirements for managerial positions. (Romadhon, 2023). On the other hand, studies on EAP (English for Academic Purposes) needs among Computer Science students in Indonesian polytechnics offer a similar overview. The research found that speaking and writing skills were the most pressing priorities, particularly in the contexts of oral presentations, job interviews, advertisement copywriting, and scientific writing; meanwhile, vocabulary and pronunciation were reported as the greatest obstacles faced by students. (Ismail, 2025). Furthermore, technology-based innovations in English language learning have also begun to gain traction in recent research. The demands of the 21st century encourage English educators to equip students with relevant language competencies; the use of student-made podcasts, for instance, has been proven effective in creating an authentic language environment while training critical thinking skills, creativity, innovation, problem-solving, self-reflection, and active listening. (Embenza, 2024).

Differences Between the Present Study and Previous Reports: Although various prior studies have made meaningful contributions, several research gaps remain to be addressed:

1. First, most need analysis studies conducted tend to focus on a single study program in isolation—whether Islamic banking, digital business, or computer science—without bridging perspectives from multiple disciplines. Research on Islamic Banking students at IAIN Metro, for example, found that existing teaching materials had not incorporated content relevant to the banking world, recommending syllabus revisions and the implementation of an integrative approach in English teaching. However, these recommendations have not been systematically followed up on a large scale. (Syahreni Siregar, 2024)
2. Second, previous research has not comprehensively merged the dimension of digital literacy with professional English needs into a single, cohesive analytical framework. While a study on Digital Business students at the Riau Digital Business Institute of Technology (ITBR) began exploring EAP needs by examining target situations, discourse analysis, current learning conditions, learner characteristics, and instructional factors simultaneously, the integration with digital competencies remains optimally underdeveloped. (Erna Nawir, 2024)
3. Third, the voices of industry stakeholders—as the end-users of university graduates—are still rarely utilized as primary data sources in Indonesian need analysis research. Task-based need analysis approaches that reflect actual tasks in the workplace still need to be expanded so that the resulting curriculum is truly aligned with business communication demands in the professional world. (Lusia Eni Puspandari, 2025)
4. Fourth, the development of English materials integrated with 21st-century skills remains very limited. Various studies show a lack of critical skills among university graduates, including communication and critical thinking abilities; in fact, more than half of companies in the UK assess that graduates do not yet possess the skills required in the workplace environment. (Pujiati, 2023)

1.1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three mutually supporting theoretical frameworks:

ESP Need Analysis Framework (Hunchkin, 2008) (Tony Dudley-Evans, 1998) : Need analysis in ESP



encompasses two core dimensions: target needs, which are the needs in real world situations including necessities, lacks, and wants; and learning needs, which refer to needs within the learning process. In the context of professional business communication, these needs include the ability to negotiate, communicate with colleagues, manage correspondence, search for and understand information from the internet, and deliver presentations in English. This framework serves as the foundation for designing curriculum oriented toward actual competence. English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF) Theory (Ina Suryani, 2008) : The concept of BELF refers to the use of English as a vehicle for communication for business purposes, whose scope is no longer limited to native speakers but involves all business actors globally. When professionals communicate using English as a lingua franca, their primary goal is not merely to display linguistic proficiency, but to complete business transactions effectively and efficiently. This BELF framework provides a basis for understanding the complexities of cross-cultural communication that students will face in the era of globalization. 21st-Century Competencies and Digital Literacy Framework (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007): The utilization of podcasts in English language learning has shown positive results in supporting the enhancement of students' listening and speaking skills, alongside aspects of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and learning motivation. Such innovations reflect a paradigm shift in language learning, where digital technology is no longer placed merely as a tool, but is meaningfully integrated into developing authentic communicative competence—in line with the digital literacy demands of today's workforce.

1.1.2 Theoretical Implications

Research that brings together the perspectives of these ten journals carries important theoretical implications across several levels:

- At the level of ESP theory development, findings from diverse contexts—ranging from manufacturing industries, Islamic banking, digital business, to computer science—provide an empirical foundation to expand the need analysis model to be more inclusive and sensitive to local contexts. It is suggested that need analysis be executed continuously throughout the learning process, not just at the beginning, so curriculum designers and instructors can make necessary ongoing adjustments. (Fengfan Mao, 2024), (Rui Sun, 2026)
- At the level of curriculum policy, this study implies the need for a comprehensive update in the English curriculum across Indonesian universities. Such studies aim to construct an effective curriculum by determining proper credit weights, teaching materials, learning activities, and evaluation methods to support academic success as well as student readiness to enter the workforce. (Rihatmi, 2025), (Nofica Andriyati, 2025),
- At the level of pedagogical innovation, the integration of digital technology-based approaches in English learning for business purposes can no longer be ignored. Language educators face real challenges in designing a curriculum capable of covering all dimensions of English language needs—speaking, listening, and writing—while accommodating the diverse objectives of the learners. This challenge can only be addressed through a comprehensive, evidence-based need analysis approach. Consequently, this study not only contributes a new perspective to the development of ESP and BELF theories in Indonesia but also offers a concrete model for designing adaptive, contextual English learning programs that are relevant to 21st-century workplace challenges—a contribution heavily required by universities in Indonesia and the wider Southeast Asian region. (Helder Fanha Martins, 2025), (Li, 2025)

1.2 Importance of the Study

In today's fast-evolving era of globalization and digital economy, English communication ability has become a fundamental necessity for professionals, particularly those operating within business and digital environments. English functions as the primary lingua franca in the international business world, enabling professionals to engage in negotiations, presentations, correspondence, and cross-cultural collaborations (Puspandari et al., 2025; Fitria, 2025). In the Indonesian context, where English is treated as a foreign language yet is highly sought after in the professional world, the gap between the English competence of graduates and industry expectations remains a critical issue that must be addressed immediately (Maulana et al., 2025; Puspandari et al., 2025).

The rapid growth of digital business has further escalated the demand for English proficiency. Digital business professionals must navigate a linguistic landscape that encompasses e-commerce, data analytics, online marketing, and digital communication platforms, all of which require both general and field-specific English abilities (Romadhon, 2023). Although this demand continues to rise, research specifically examining the English communication needs of professionals in the context of digital business in Indonesia is still very limited, thereby creating a significant research gap that this study intends to bridge. Therefore, this study holds several key areas of importance. First, it contributes to the development of English for Specific Purposes (ESP literature by focusing on an under-researched population, namely digital business professionals in Indonesia. Second, the findings of this study offer practical implications for curriculum designers, educators, and institutions aiming to develop relevant, contextual English programs aligned with actual communication demands in the digital business sector. Third, by utilizing a need analysis approach, this study ensures that the resulting recommendations are grounded in the real experiences and expectations of the target population, thereby increasing the applicability and impact of future English learning interventions (Maulana et al., 2025; Cahyaningrum & Arroyyani, 2024).

1.3 Relevant Scholarly Works

1. Lusia Eni Puspandari et al. (2025): Examined the needs of English language use in business contexts and professional communication, indicating that students require skills directed toward workplace communication.
2. Rivki Surya Maulana et al. (2025): Focused on identifying an ideal business English learning model using a need analysis approach from a professional perspective.
3. Citra Liza & Andriadi (2024): Analyzed English needs for Islamic banking students, finding that speaking ability and professional terms are top priorities.
4. Erna Nawir et al. (2024): Designed EAP learning for computer science students, showing that the approach must be adapted to the scientific field.
5. Tira Nur Fitria (2025): Combined EBP and EBC approaches, highly recommending an integrated approach in teaching Business English.
6. Tri Cahyaningrum & Risa Arroyyani (2024): Examined ESP learning needs, concluding that learning must be designed according to actual student needs.
7. Romadhon (2023): Identified that digital communication skills are crucial for students in the digital business field.
8. Sri Wahyuningsih & Firda Ziyana (2023): Highlighted English as a lingua franca in online business in Indonesia as a primary tool.
9. Widiastuti & Andi Batary Citta (2025): Integrated digital literacy using podcasts to improve speaking and listening.
10. Sebastianus Menggo et al. (2022): Examined 21st-century skills integration, emphasizing critical thinking and communication.

1.4 Statement of Hypotheses and Connection to Research Design

Based on various prior studies regarding English language needs in business, academic, and professional work contexts, it can be hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between the alignment of English learning materials with students' real needs and industry demands toward increasing English communication competence.

- Alternative Hypothesis (H1) (Tony Dudley-Evans, 1998) : English language learning designed based on student need analysis and workforce demands exerts a positive influence on enhancing English communication competence for academic, business, and professional purposes.
- Null Hypothesis (H0) (Pambudi, 2025): English language learning designed based on student need analysis and workforce demands does not exert a significant influence on enhancing English communication competence for academic, business, and professional purposes.

2. Method



2.1 Identification of Subsections

Quantitative Data Identification and Collection Techniques

To identify the specific English language needs (English for Specific Purposes/ESP) of the disciplinary group and professional contexts contained in this comprehensive study, a descriptive quantitative approach was employed. Primary data were collected through the online distribution of structured questionnaires to stakeholders, which included active students, alumni, lecturers, and industry practitioners. The questionnaire instrument was designed using a 1–5 Likert scale to measure the level of urgency, frequency of use, and level of difficulty of each language sub-skill. The quantitative need identification structure was divided into three main domains: (1) Identification of Business Communication Needs and Professional Contexts, (2) Sector-Specific Needs, and (3) Pedagogical Innovation and Digital Literacy.

The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale (1–5) to measure the level of urgency, frequency of use, and level of difficulty for each language sub-skill. The structure for identifying quantitative needs is divided into the following three main domains:

1. Identification of Business Communication and Professional Context Needs This section is designed to map the needs for English for Business Purposes (EBP) and English for Business Communication (EBC) in the modern corporate landscape (Fitria, 2025). Quantitative measurements focus on:
 - Critical Corporate Communication: The frequency of English use in business negotiations, professional presentations, and formal correspondence (emails and business reports).
 - English as a Lingua Franca (BELF): The intensity of English usage within Indonesia's digital business ecosystem and online transactions.
 - Integration of 21st-Century Skills: The level of importance placed on aligning language proficiency with global competencies such as critical thinking, intercultural collaboration, and creativity in the workplace.
2. Sector-Specific Needs (Public Sector, Islamic Banking, and Technology) (Fitria, Teaching Business English to Students: Concept of English for Business Purposes (EBP) and English for Business Communication (EBC), 2025)
 - This aspect measures the unique interdisciplinary needs of each department through descriptive statistical analysis:
 - Islamic Banking Sector: Identifying the need for technical vocabulary that combines modern financial concepts with Sharia terminology in English
 - Computer Science and Polytechnic Sectors: Assessing the urgency of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) focused on mastering technical literature, writing code documentation, and understanding technology instruction manuals.
 - Digital Business Sector: Assessing the need for mastery of e-commerce-specific vocabulary, digital marketing strategies, and platform-based communication metrics.
3. Pedagogical Innovation and Digital Literacy To measure readiness for technology adoption in the development of instructional materials, quantitative instruments assess several core aspects (Fitria, Game-Based Learning in Teaching Islamic Banking: A Role-Play Approach to Enhance Students' Engagement and Understanding Among Sharia Economics Students, 2025)
 - Learning Media Preferences: The effectiveness of using innovative audio-visual media (such as podcast-driven pedagogy) to improve listening and speaking skills.
 - Digital Literacy Index: Measures the correlation between students' digital proficiency and their ability to absorb technology-integrated English instructional materials.

1. Data Analysis Techniques

Data Collection



Data were collected from 22 Digital Business students via a Google Forms questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale:

Score	Category
3	strongly agree
2	Agree
1	Disagree

2. The Priority Score Formula

To determine which competence elements must be prioritized, the researchers do not rely on a simple average. Instead, they use a weighted formula:

$$PriorityScore = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i \times W_i)}{N}$$

Symbol	Explanation
X_i	Likert scale response scores (Disagree=1, Agree=2, Strongly Agree=3)
W_i	The weight of the urgency of a competency element (in this case, the frequency/value of X_i itself)
N	Total number of respondents = 22 people
Priority Score	Final results on a 1–3 scale (higher score = higher priority)

- Highest Priority Score → P3 (Listening) = 2.59 — respondents' top priority
- Lowest Priority Score → P5 (Difficulty with native speakers) = 1.91 — respondents tend not to view this as an urgent need; in fact, 5 respondents Disagreed
- P6 (Confidence in speaking) is also relatively low (2.14), with 4 respondents disagreeing
- Almost all statements fall within the range of 2.36–2.59, indicating that the majority of respondents agree or strongly agree on the importance of English proficiency in the field of Digital Business

2.2 Participant (Subject) Characteristics

The subjects in this study were active students of the Digital Business Study Program at an Indonesian university, hailing from the 2023, 2024, and 2025 cohorts with a total of 75 respondents. The involvement of three cohorts simultaneously was intended to capture variations in English needs at each stage of study.

2.3 Sampling Procedure

Samples were drawn using a purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. The respondent criteria included: (1) active Digital Business students from the 2023, 2024, or 2025 cohorts; (2) currently undergoing classes in the ongoing semester; and (3) willing to fill out the questionnaire voluntarily.

2.3.1 Sample Size, Power, and Precision

The minimum sample limit (n) was calculated using the Slovin Formula:



$$6n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

Where N represents the estimated combined population size and e symbolizes the tolerance limit for sampling error. This study locked the margin of error at 5% (0.05) with a confidence interval of 95%.

Methodological Dimension	Target Specification	Urgency / Implications
Confidence Interval	95% ($\alpha = 0.05$)	Provides formal assurance that instructional materials are relevant.
Margin of Error	Maximum 5% (0.05)	Reduces bias fluctuations when ranking competencies.
Statistical Power	>80% ($\beta = 0.20$)	Guarantees instrument sharpness across departments.

3. Results

Validity testing using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation confirmed all items as valid (r calculated $> r$ table of 0.4227 with $df = 20$). The instrument reliability evaluation generated a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.940, certifying the questionnaire as highly reliable.

Simple Linear Regression Result:

$$Y = -0.220 + 1.072X$$

With $R^2 = 0.676$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.000003$. This dictates that 67.6% of career opportunity success can be directly predicted by the level of English communication skills readiness.

Component	Value
Number of respondents	22
Constant (a)	-0.220
Regression Coefficient (b)	1.072
R square	0.676
Significance (p-value)	0.000003
Decision	H1 is accepted

One-Sample T-Test Result:

Tested against a neutral value of 2.5, the sample mean score was $X = 3.3864$ with $s = 0.3877$, yielding T calculated = 10.7243. This verifies an exceptionally high awareness among students regarding English proficiency needs.

4. Discussion

The statistical analyses reveal major insights. Firstly, the validation parameters (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.940) support the structural solidity of the framework. Secondly, the One-Sample T-Test results underscore a crucial paradigm shift from English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to explicit English for Business Communication (EBC) and Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) within applied sciences like Digital Business. Students clearly acknowledge that language proficiency directly dictates performance in practical operations such as cross-border electronic negotiations and startup correspondence. Thirdly, the regression model ($Y = -0.220 + 1.072X$) yields definitive evidence regarding corporate integration. A high coefficient confirms that English acts as an active determinant of job-market mobility in the digital economy. The high R^2 value of 67.6% implies that language proficiency can no longer be viewed as an isolated soft skill but must be unified into core professional training frameworks that incorporate digital tool adoption and 21st-century critical thinking competencies.



In the contemporary higher education landscape, the direction of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction is sharply differentiated between conventional academic aspects (English for Academic Purposes or EAP) and the demands of professional business communication (English for Business Purposes or EBP and English for Business Communication or EBC). EAP course design generally focuses on scholarly literacy activities such as journal analysis, academic essay writing, and understanding formal lecture material, as identified in the curriculum case studies for Computer Science students at the polytechnic level. However, for applied fields such as Digital Business and Islamic Banking, the learning focus must shift strongly toward EBP and EBC, which are directly oriented toward the dynamics of the workforce context. EBC prioritizes interactive practical skills, including Discussion and Analysis - English Language Needs Analysis: negotiation, business presentations, corporate report writing, and digital correspondence such as professional emails. The urgency of this shift is strongly supported by quantitative descriptive findings from a one-sample t-test on the research data. Of the 20 needs indicators distributed to 22 respondents, the mean score ($\bar{X}$) was 3.3864 with a standard deviation (σ) of 0.3877. When tested against the neutral reference value ($\mu_0 = 2.5$), a highly significant t-value of 10.7243 was obtained, with a probability value (p-value) of 5.62×10^{-10} . This empirical evidence conclusively demonstrates that students are highly aware that EBC proficiency is no longer merely a supplement to academic performance but rather a fundamental tool and a key prerequisite for their academic success.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that English communication skills have transformed into a core competency required in the globalized digital business sector. ESP curriculum development must be consistently guided by structured need analysis to properly address field-specific requirements—such as marketing copy, tech terminology, or international finance expressions. Higher education institutions must intentionally establish adaptive, integrated syllabi combining linguistic training, digital literacy, and professional communication to build robust employment (Erna Nawir, 2024) pathways for future digital business graduates.

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