
Authentic Materials for Integrated Skills at Mechanical Engineering Students

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Abstract

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is one of the obligatory courses in universities, and all undergraduate students are required to pass these courses. The main aim of ESP courses is to enhance students' knowledge to meet their academic requirements and future career needs in the global trend. This research used a mixed-method design that integrated both quantitative and qualitative data. Furthermore, the researchers used observations, questionnaires, and interviews to collect the data. The results of the students' need assessment about authentic materials were obtained through interviews with experts and stakeholders from academic institutions. In addition, the data showed that students required authentic materials, stakeholders supported their learning activities to enhance their communicative competence in English skills, and experts had positive responses toward using authentic materials for teaching ESP courses.

Keywords

Authentic materials, integrated skills, mechanical engineering, needs analysis

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Introduction

English is one of the mandatory courses in universities, and all undergraduate students are required to pass these courses. The main goal of these courses is to enhance students' knowledge to meet their academic requirements and future career needs in the global market. Students need to improve their English competence and performance.

Unfortunately, many students are dissatisfied with their competence and performance. One of the factors affecting students' ability to practice and develop English skills is the quality of materials used. Materials play a crucial role in the language classroom as they are utilized by teachers to facilitate learning inside and outside the classroom (Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014). Therefore, teaching materials must be engaging and motivating to enhance foreign language learning and increase student interest. The selection of materials should consider the learners' level, goals, and appropriateness to ensure effective learning.

Researchers suggest that using authentic materials is essential to raise students' interest and expose them to real-world language use. Ruiz-Garrido and Palmer-Silveira (2015) have shown that authentic materials in the classroom help learners succeed in their future professional environments. Authentic materials also benefit teachers by enriching their teaching practices with communicative activities that provide real-life information about the target language, customs, traditions, and culture (Castillo Losada et al., 2017) and encourage students to engage in communicative activities, increasing motivation and enhancing language skills (Anjarani, 2017).

Authentic materials refer to texts from real-life applications for interaction and transaction, produced by native speakers or writers (Maroko, 2010). Additionally, authentic material is a pedagogical strategy that places learning tasks in the context of real-life situations. By implementing this strategy, students can experience solving challenges as they would in their daily lives (Herrington et al., 2014). However, authentic materials used should be selected based on the students' level to avoid confusion, frustration, and demotivation (Sabet & Mahsefat, 2012). Authentic materials provide real-life situations that help increase language skills.

Authentic materials can integrate skills and activate schemata, starting with short texts and progressing to longer ones. They employ a top-down (content-oriented) approach first and then a bottom-up (language-oriented) approach. Using material-based examples prepares students for subjects they are likely to encounter in their careers, studies, and research. Students are encouraged to decide, use, and present their materials (Mulholland et al., 2014). Considering the materials, the school's educational context, the teacher's experience with these materials, and pedagogical support, the appropriate and effective implementation of authentic materials in foreign language learning contexts positively impacts students' linguistic and affective domains (Castillo Losada et al., 2017).

Some scholars argue that authentic materials have a positive impact on teaching and learning a foreign language, while others claim they are not valuable. Teachers must carefully select authentic materials to avoid demotivation and negative effects on students. According to McGrath (2016), there are eight criteria to consider when choosing appropriate authentic texts, including matching them with the course book and learners' needs, topic interest,

cultural relevance, logistical considerations, cognitive and linguistic demands, quality, and exploitability.

Teachers should realize the importance of including materials in designing and planning approaches and learning activities in the classroom. Teachers can enhance students' language learning, problem-solving skills, teamwork, and knowledge development with authentic materials (Ali, 2019). Authentic materials have a positive impact on teaching and learning a foreign language, improving language skills (Akbari & Razavi, 2016). In brief, teachers should prioritize authentic materials to enhance students' language learning. This research focuses on the English course as a compulsory subject for mechanical engineering students. English is offered in two terms each semester, with two credit points taken in the first and seventh semesters. However, English classes face challenges in attracting learners' attention and interest, hindering teachers' efforts to increase student motivation.

By using authentic materials, teachers can help students improve their integrated language skills and language competence naturally by exposing them to miscellaneous genuine and real-life situations. This research aims to investigate language skills assessment with authentic materials to design the English course for mechanical engineering students and develop authentic materials for teaching integrated language skills at Tridinanti University. The research focuses on identifying the specific needs of students about their language skills, technical knowledge, and problem-solving abilities. Students can improve their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in a real-world context by utilizing authentic materials such as technical reports, manuals, and articles. This research aims to provide valuable insights into the benefits of incorporating authentic materials into the curriculum to better prepare mechanical engineering students for future career opportunities.

Methodology

This research used a mixed-method design. Mixed method is a design where the researcher combines or integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis in research (Creswell, 1999). In collecting the data, the researchers used observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The subjects of this research were students classified into three groups. The first group consisted of 40 mechanical engineering students who took a two-credit English course in their first and seventh semesters. The second group included four stakeholders from the academic institution of the engineering faculty at Universitas Tridinanti. The third group comprised experts who had been teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses at Universitas Sriwijaya for over a year and had experience implementing authentic materials in their teaching.

Some steps in collecting the data of this research: (1) conducting observations to describe classroom activities, (2) preparing instruments, (3) distributing questionnaires to students, (4) conducting interviews with stakeholders and providing an open-ended questionnaire with four questions to design the objectives of the ESP course, (5) distributing a second open-ended questionnaire with seven items, (6) analyzing the data, (7) interpreting the data, and (8) reporting the results.

A needs analysis questionnaire was distributed to the students in the classroom to determine their need for authentic materials. The questionnaire consisted of five sections,

including students' material preferences (5 items), authentic materials for reading skills (5 items), writing skills (5 items), speaking skills (5 items), listening skills (5 items), and vocabulary (5 items). The total number of items on the questionnaire was 29. The questions were in Indonesian to make it easier for students to respond. Interviews were conducted with experts, consisting of seven questions, and stakeholders from Universitas Tridianti, consisting of four questions. The interviews aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the answers and gather more detailed information. The interview session with the experts aimed to uncover the stakeholders' hopes and expectations for producing skilled and knowledgeable graduates from the mechanical engineering study program.

In the data analysis process, the researchers used the questionnaire results as the primary data to answer the first and second research questions regarding students' needs for authentic materials. The questionnaire was designed to assess students' preferences for authentic materials in speaking, reading, listening, and vocabulary. The responses from the students were quantitatively analyzed using frequencies and percentages for each questionnaire item. Open responses were analyzed thematically, with significant points noted and a list of main points created (Bartlett et al., 2005).

Findings

The questionnaire consists of 29 items divided into six sections: (1) students' preferences, (2) listening materials, (3) reading materials, (4) writing materials, (5) speaking materials, and (6) vocabulary materials. The results of each section are presented as follows:

Authentic materials for listening skills

Students showed a greater interest in using authentic materials to improve their listening skills. It was assumed that authentic materials like news, broadcasts, films, and songs were the preferred media for most students.

Table 1. *Authentic materials for listening skill*

| No | Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|------------------|--|----------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| Listening | | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1 | Input for listening, I want in the form of authentic material such as news, radio broadcasts, films, and songs | 45% | 41% | 14% | 0% | 0% |
| 2 | I often listen to the media, phone calls, etc. in English. | 20% | 46% | 30% | 1% | 3% |
| 3 | I am more interested in listening to conversations on recordings | 8% | 32% | 51% | 1% | 7% |
| 4 | I would like to learn how the conversation will be used later in my job. | 19% | 32% | 27% | 0% | 12% |
| 5 | I prefer my lecturers who provide resources or tasks for listening | 31% | 54% | 14% | 0% | 2% |

Authentic materials for reading skills

The students preferred authentic materials for improving their reading skills. They chose authentic materials to enhance their reading ability. Authentic materials are the preferred input for reading among students.

Table 2. *Authentic materials for reading skill*

| No | Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----|--|----------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| | Reading | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1 | I want to read authentic texts more. I am interested in pictures or directions to help me understand the text faster. | 14% | 44% | 37% | 0% | 6% |
| 2 | Input for reading, I want authentic material that can be found easily in everyday life (e.g. magazines, newspapers, tags, ads, schedules). | 33% | 53% | 13% | 0% | 1% |
| 3 | Input for reading, I want a text describing the context of my field of work later. | 25% | 57% | 18% | 0% | 0% |
| 4 | I am more interested in reading articles about issues around the world. | 28% | 47% | 20% | 3% | 2% |
| 5 | I am more interested in reading Mechanical Engineering articles. | 25% | 38% | 35% | 1% | 1% |

Authentic material for writing skill

Most students had positive perceptions of writing skills by using authentic materials. It was assumed writing input was better to use authentic material, which most students preferred.

Table 3. *Authentic materials for writing skills*

| No | Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----|---|----------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| | Writing | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1 | I need to learn how to arrange sentences by giving examples that reflect my daily activities. | 35% | 50% | 14% | 0% | 2% |
| 2 | I am interested in using the examples in the book to make sentences. | 21% | 52% | 26% | 0% | 1% |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 3 | I am interested in using media (photos, images, etc.) to write sentences. | 24% | 50% | 18% | 0% | 7% |
| 4 | I am very interested in learning the language structure (tenses), for example, simple present tense. | 25% | 43% | 31% | 0% | 0% |
| 5 | Despite media support, I cannot make simple sentences. | 20% | 43% | 25% | 1% | 12% |

Authentic material for speaking skill

The students agree with authentic materials as their materials for speaking input. Most students chose the media, such as TV and video conveyed by native speakers (language experts) regarding their studies and daily activities.

Table 4. *Authentic materials for speaking skills*

| No | Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----|--|----------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| | Speaking | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1 | The input that I want in learning to speak is in the context of my field of study. | 26% | 52% | 18% | 0% | 4% |
| 2 | When used in the field, I want to learn English directly. | 31% | 51% | 17% | 0% | 1% |
| 3 | I prefer to learn English daily | 25% | 62% | 13% | 0% | 0% |
| 4 | I want to use English with Native Speaker (Language expert) | 18% | 49% | 30% | 0% | 3% |
| 5 | I understand the media (TV, video) or news conveyed by native speakers (linguists) | 13% | 40% | 40% | 1% | 6% |

Authentic material for vocabulary

Most students had positive responses toward authentic materials for vocabulary input. The use of media, such as images, photos, audio) was better to apply for the students to better understand the words.

Table 5. *Authentic materials for vocabulary*

| No | Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----|---|----------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| | Vocabulary | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1 | I am more curious about the meaning of English used in commercials, posters, or directions to use English in a product. | 18% | 52% | 27% | 0% | 3% |
| 2 | I am more interested in the daily use of English. | 31% | 46% | 23% | 0% | 0% |
| 3 | I want to use media (photos, images, audio) to better understand technical terms in English. | 29% | 55% | 15% | 0% | 1% |
| 4 | I do not know a lot of English words. | 19% | 48% | 28% | 0% | 5% |
| 5 | I find it difficult to memorize the words. | 16% | 39% | 37% | 0% | 9% |

The results of interviews

In this research, four interviewees were involved to support the data obtained from the questionnaire. The interviewees were the institution’s stakeholders and the experts of the ESP course. Therefore, to keep the interviewees anonymous, an initial would be used in presenting the information source. The questions t asked to the interviewee were divided into two questionnaires for stakeholders and the experts of the ESP course. The questions for stakeholders include The Dean of Engineering (S1), The Head of the Mechanical Engineering Study Program (S2), The Secretary of the Mechanical Engineering Study Program (S3), and the Lecturer of the Mechanical Engineering Study Program (S4). The questions consisted of 4 items of questions. The first question was the objective of English class referring either to the field of the mechanical engineering or to General English. The second asked about English for future jobs. The third question asked whether the English curriculum should be aligned with academics or their occupation. The fourth question asked about the stakeholders’ opinion on the design of the mechanical engineering study course. The questions for the experts of the ESP course (S5) consisted of eight items of questions. The questions were related to their perceptions based on their experiences with authentic materials for the ESP course.

Stakeholders of institutions, the first question of the interview was about the objective of English class referring either to the field of mechanical engineering or to General English. The answer to the question given by stakeholders of the institution is in Table 6.

Table 6. *Their perspectives toward the objective of the English course*

| No | Initials | Statements |
|----|----------|--|
| 1 | S1 | It should be aimed at English mechanical engineering because it will enable students to understand mechanical engineering literature and terminology |
| 2 | S2 | For the mechanical engineering unit, the material provided should be English-language mechanical engineering, which is more closely related to the whole and with the right terms. |
| 3 | S3 | At least for mechanical engineering, we should use English. It is designed to help students concentrate more on their profession. In contrast, most of the engineering sector literature uses English. |
| 4 | S4 | GE has already discovered when they were junior high school and senior high school. Students would learn English for their field of engineering at university. |

The second asked about English for future jobs. The questions were asked to the four stakeholders of the institution concerned their views on English for the graduate's future career. The answers are in Table 7.

Table 7. *English for graduates' future career*

| No | Initials | Statements |
|----|----------|---|
| 1 | S1 | The availability of jobs is essentially very high and almost every company requires graduates of the mechanical engineering competition are very strong so that those who have superior skills will be admitted. Good English language skills are one of the tests and mechanical engineering graduates, therefore, need English to a great extent. |
| 2 | S2 | The availability of jobs in the mechanical engineering industry involves factories, hospitals, stores, restaurants, independent businesses, businesses, and manufacturing industries. English is therefore important for students to support their future career and willing to compete with others. |
| 3 | S3 | Essentially, engineering-based job openings are abundant in both companies and entrepreneurships. Graduates in mechanical engineering should have additional skills because they will perform in a number of other companies |
| 4 | S4 | The availability of job opportunities is extremely abundant and has the requisite potential for all manufacturing industries and factory trading. |

The third question asked whether the English curriculum should be aligned with academics or their occupation. The questions were answered by the four stakeholders. It is in Table 8.

Table 8. *English for graduates' future career*

| No | Initials | Statements |
|----|----------|---|
| 1 | S1 | English is closely related to the student career and educational field of study. |
| 2 | S2 | English courses are very relevant to one's profession, particularly in improving their knowledge and communication. |
| 3 | S3 | In the future, English course should be relevant to the academics of the students and their profession. |
| 4 | S4 | English would apply to the area of specialization. |

The fourth question asked about the opinions of the stakeholders on the design of the English course for the mechanical engineering study program. The four stakeholders answered the question. It is in Table 9.

Table 9. *Designing of the English course*

| No | Initials | Statements |
|----|----------|---|
| 1 | S1 | The materials will cover anything relevant to the needs of the students and the update information provided. |
| 2 | S2 | I hope the teachers should know the level of skills of the students so that the materials are suitable for the students ' level and the TOEFL prediction test is better to measure the level of the students before and after graduation. |
| 3 | S3 | Ideally, when designing English course, the teacher allows the stakeholders to decide the materials are needed and suitable for the purposes. English is more concise in order to focus on English words so that students understand what they are learning and can be active learners. |
| 4 | S4 | The material content should be linked to the engineering terms. By using the appropriate material for their profession to help them individually grasp their subject-related textbooks. |

The experts of ESP course, the total of experts in ESP was 12 participants who have taught ESP courses ranging from 1 – 14 years of teaching experience. With a total of 8 items, the questions were open-ended. The researchers use thematic analysis to explain the findings of authentic materials for ESP from the experts ' perspectives. There are some steps to analyse the exact data as follows: (1) familiarization, (2) coding, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing up. After analysing the data, the writers described the results as follows:

Question 1 : *What do you know about authentic materials?*

Responses : Authentic materials are the materials taken based on the real situation in our life, The Materials that you get from the situation by the native. Teaching materials (written/oral) are taken from real-life sources. Authentic material is the material that is related to the student's major, and it is taken from original sources. The authentic materials usually used were: Print authentic materials: Newspapers such as the New York Times, recipe book, news report, novel, magazine. Authentic auditory materials are such as *VOA, BBC*, video, movies, TV. Authentic listening materials, such as radio broadcasts, songs, etc.

Question 2 : Do you use them in an English language classroom? If 'yes', what kind of authentic materials do you use in teaching English? Give an example.

Responses :

- Speaking activity: Watch a short video, and after that, they have to tell me the summary of the video orally. listening to the conversation, performing a dialogue / having a presentation about material given.
- Reading activity: read some advertisements in magazine and online articles, and picture of some interesting places.

- Listening activity: listen to English culture through video, songs from YouTube.
- Teaching simple presents by using examples of daily activities.

Question 3 : Which type of authentic material do you find more useful and motivating in teaching English?

Responses : The experts integrated the four language skills by using printed materials such as magazines, newspapers, cooking recipes and no printed materials such as movies, talk shows, videos, Song, e-book, video /DVD, and sometimes using smartphones. She said that she could elaborate listening and reading comprehension by assigning the students to listen to songs and then read the lyrics of the song. They were not boring and felt interesting.

Question 4 : When do you use authentic materials?

Responses : They implemented authentic materials for integrating language skills, reading – writing, speaking – listening or vice versa. Their activities were implemented to avoid boredom when they had studied the theories and gave various activities by giving authentic materials.

Question 5 : How do you use authentic material?

Responses:

- The students listen to the video about the materials and then speak in front of the class or retell what they watched, for example, giving directions, they were assigned to analyze the expression of asking and giving directions by telling in front of the classes.
- Then students listen to the songs and sing together.
- By distributing the pictures or photo in articles, magazines, magazines or printed materials as resources, the students were assigned to read and then discuss it together with the groups and do some performances if any,
- They retold the movies after they had watched the movies or videos.

Question 6 : What kind of difficulties do you face in using authentic materials?

Responses : There were some problems to implement the authentic materials, namely: (1) allocation time; it needs extra time to explain and provide the material, (2) choosing the suitable material with the students' proficiency level and topics that were going to discuss and their abilities; (3) The facilities; providing the authentic materials which were not available; (4) the materials itself, such as movies or videos, were hard to understand because what the native speakers said was not easy to understand. Consequently, they need to be adjusted or need extra time to be explained.

Question 7 : What is your opinion about authentic materials after using them?

Responses : all respondents said that authentic materials were a relatively easy and convenient way of improving not only students' general skills but also their confidence in real situations. the authentic materials were challenging, useful and more interesting and meaningful because students can learn English in a real context of how natives use it and they can increase students' English ability with more real examples so they will understand materials easier.

Discussion

Based on the results of the questionnaire for the students, five aspects of authentic materials were discussed, like the use of authentic materials in teaching ESP, authentic materials for teaching listening skills, authentic materials for teaching writing skills, authentic materials for teaching reading skills, and authentic materials for teaching speaking skills. The students were more interested in using authentic materials to teach English for specific purposes by providing multimedia such as audio, video, DVD, and computer-based programs. They were more interested in materials that focused on their career or academics, especially in the mechanical engineering study program, rather than materials related to their daily lives. In terms of authentic materials for listening skills, students preferred using authentic materials such as news, films, and songs that support their future careers. For reading skills, students found authentic materials that included pictures or instructions helpful in learning more quickly. Texts for learning should be related to their daily lives, such as magazines, journals, ads, or global issues. Authentic materials for listening input were preferred, with most items receiving positive responses. One item that most students preferred to remain neutral on was listening to conversations on recordings, indicating that authentic materials in real situations were more applicable for the students.

Regarding authentic materials for reading skills, students had positive attitudes towards using authentic materials that included pictures or real-life scenarios related to their future jobs and specialized fields. The use of authentic materials was found to motivate students and improve reading comprehension. It is in line with Assiddiq (2019) that authentic materials are effective for teaching reading comprehension to Indonesian students as EFL learners. The emphasis was on the content with which readers interact rather than the text's linguistic features. For writing skills, students wanted to improve their ability to arrange words into sentences using pictures or photos that reflected their daily activities. Despite having difficulty with language structures such as tenses, students needed media support to aid their learning. Authentic materials for writing input were preferred as media support and familiar topics to help with writing tasks. Gilmore (2007) also revealed the same idea in his research that authentic material is beneficial for foreign language learning, one of the examples is in writing. The use of authentic materials was found to stimulate students' prior knowledge and writing performance. In terms of speaking skills, students need practice to improve their language skills, especially in the context of their studies or daily lives. While some students were hesitant to use video or TV due to fear of native speakers, the majority preferred using visual-audio media for speaking input. The use of authentic materials was found to have a positive effect on increasing students' speaking skills and motivation. Sevy-Biloon and Chroman (2019) also found that authentic material is one of the ways to motivate and increase students' speaking skills, especially for EFL students.

Regarding authentic materials for vocabulary, students were interested in gaining vocabulary from commercials, posters, directions, and technical terms in English. Despite difficulties in memorization, students wanted to increase their everyday vocabulary. The use of authentic materials such as TV shows, radio, commercials, news broadcasts, and more was suggested to help students grasp new vocabulary. During interviews, stakeholders emphasized

the importance of focusing on specialized fields in English classes to prepare students for future careers. English curriculum alignment with academics and occupation was recommended to enhance students' knowledge and communication skills. Stakeholders suggested that English courses for mechanical engineering programs should cover relevant materials and be updated regularly. Teachers should consider students' language levels and involve stakeholders in designing ESP courses.

The researchers found that most ESP teachers were familiar with authentic materials and used them to teach integrated language skills. Teachers found authentic materials beneficial for integrating the four language skills and motivating students. They faced challenges such as time, materials, and facilities in using authentic materials but found them beneficial in improving students' confidence and language skills in real-life situations. Teachers used printed materials, videos, and audio to assist students' language performance and found that authentic materials helped students become more self-confident in using English.

Conclusion and Recommendations/Implications

Based on the findings, students, stakeholders, and ESP teachers had positive responses toward using authentic materials for teaching and learning integrated skills. Authentic materials were preferred for increasing language input, especially when related to the specialized field to improve communicative performance for real-life situations, such as future professions. Providing authentic materials could help make the teaching and learning process more effective and offer opportunities to explore language skills inside and outside the classroom. The necessary facilities should be provided by ESP teachers, stakeholders, and curriculum designers to support learning when practicing the four language skills. Additionally, the content materials should be relevant to their studies. ESP teachers and curriculum designers can adapt materials based on students' needs, levels, and interests to create more engaging and stimulating language activities during the learning process. Furthermore, ESP teachers viewed authentic materials positively, as they could attend ESP conferences to learn new techniques and strategies for implementing authentic materials in teaching language skills.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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