

# Barriers Prevent EGP Teachers from Becoming ESP Practitioners in the Context of an Indonesian Tertiary Education

Andri Suherman

University of Hamzanwadi. e-mail: andrisuherman@hamzanwadi.ac.id

Received 28 November 2023 | Received in revised form 11 January 2024 | Accepted 01 February 2024

| ARTICLE INFO   | ABSTRACT   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Keywords:</b><br/>EGP Teachers, ESP Practitioners, Teaching Barriers, Tertiary Education</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v9i1.1596">http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v9i1.1596</a></p>  | <p><i>It has been argued by scholars that ESP (English for Specific Purposes) has several absolute features which distinguish it from EGP (English for General Purposes). It is not surprising that many EGP teachers face difficulties when teaching ESP classes. This mixed-method study randomly recruited EGP teachers (N=50) to complete an online survey regarding barriers they have experienced in teaching ESP courses. Some of them (N=20) were then invited to participate in interview sessions to discover their strategies in breaking the barriers. The results from quantitative data in the online survey showed that the teachers have been dealing with five different barriers with Subject Knowledge being the most difficult barrier to handle (M=3.14, SD=0.86). Meanwhile, the qualitative findings from the interview process revealed several strategies employed by the teachers to break the barriers appeared to have been intercorrelated and affected to each other. As this finding revealed, university authorities need to provide EGP teachers with some supports (i.e. training programs, financial aid, and relevant textbooks) to minimize potential barriers when teaching ESP classes. Limitations and suggestions for future research are also presented.</i></p> |
| <p><b>How to cite:</b><br/>Suherman, Andri. (2024). Barriers Prevent EGP Teachers from Becoming ESP Practitioners in the Context of an Indonesian Tertiary Education. <i>Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics</i>, 9 (1), 55-71</p> |  |

## 1. Introduction

Since 1960's, ESP has been becoming one of the major domains in the field of English teaching. Many ESP courses established across the globe has been increasingly developed

over the past few years. This is because recent progress in information and technology has caused the English language as a medium of interaction in many professional fields such as business, tourism, medicine, hospitality, and more. As a result of this, ESP programs have been in high demand among many language learners since the primary goal of ESP programs, as highlighted by scholars (Rafiq et al., 2021; Whyte & Sarre, 2017), is to help learners use the English language in a particular work area. Despite this, not many teachers have a basic understanding of an ESP course, which has apparent distinctions from EGP programs (Basturkmen, 2019). As mentioned by many researchers (Hyland, 2022; Salmani-Nodoushan, 2020; Xia, 2020), ESP is an English language teaching approach to a group of students in universities or workplaces. ESP is fundamentally developed to foster students' English capacity in a specialized study program or in a particular work area (Rafiq et al., 2021). It is for this reason why ESP instructors, as argued by Asgari and Ganji (2020), are required to implement a learner-centered approach in their teaching practices to enable them to help develop their students' language skills. In other words, ESP programs should be designed to help the development of students' English language proficiency in specialized study fields or professional organizations.

As a result of current globalization, the English language has become one of the priorities for many people. This is for the purpose of enabling them to travel around the world, to get a prestigious job, or to attend international conferences. As mentioned by Basturkmen (2019), English language skills are the only license that provides people with an opportunity to achieve this global status. Thus, they need to learn English language skills by attending an appropriate language course called the ESP program. While EGP classes equip students with a basic and general understanding of the English language, ESP programs primarily focus on students' specific needs from a particular study field or work area (Whyte & Sarre, 2017). In other words, as highlighted by Doiz & Lasagabaster (2021), this absolute feature requires ESP programs to intensively meet students' specific needs by using the English language as the medium of instruction. It is therefore, there has been an increasing number of ESP courses established in many educational institutions to accommodate students' different and specific needs. Nevertheless, as revealed by researchers (Iswati & Triastuti, 2021; Siddiq et al., 2019), many teachers have been found to face several barriers when teaching ESP classes. As a consequence of intensive engagement or involvement in EGP programs, many of these EGP teachers appeared to experience barriers that prevented them from becoming ESP instructors. These barriers may include limited training programs, inadequate subject knowledge, insufficient teaching materials, the lack of institutional support, and more (Petraki & Khat, 2022; Siddiq et al., 2019).

In a co-citation analysis of ESP studies carried out by Liu and Hu (2021), ESP teacher development was highlighted to have been an undeveloped area that needed to be extensively examined. In particular, challenges that hinder the development of teaching skills for ESP teachers are required to give more attention. Other than the technical issues mentioned previously, teachers' limited experience in teaching ESP classes is considerably crucial and might affect their teaching practicum (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2021). As highlighted by Tao & Gao (2018), there have been many EGP teachers who found the need to improve their ESP teaching skills despite their high expertise in EGP teachings. In the area of ESP programs, both language and subject content are required to teach, which, as argued by Aniroh (2019), is one of the prominent issues faced by many EGP teachers who teach ESP

classes. Other than the knowledge of the subject matter, little is yet explored about what aspects of ESP teachings might potentially prevent EGP teachers from becoming ESP practitioners. In relation to this, the current study is an attempt to address this issue by investigating barriers that potentially hinder EGP teachers from transforming into ESP instructors in the context of an Indonesian tertiary institution.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Studies on the Barriers of Teaching ESP**

Over the past few decades, ESP has been one of the popular research topics in English Language Teaching (ELT). A variety of issues in the ESP has been investigated by scholars, including the issue of barriers or challenges encountered by EGP teachers when teaching ESP classes. For example, in the context of tertiary education in Afghanistan, Siddiq et al. (2019) examined students' attitudes toward ESP courses and the barriers experienced by EGP teachers in teaching ESP courses. As for the later, their study reported four major barriers perceived by EGP teachers when teaching ESP classes. These barriers included heterogeneous classes, insufficient ESP materials, lack of ESP departments, and inadequate teaching skills. Despite this insightful finding, they did not extensively explore strategies that the EGP teachers have employed to break the barriers as it can provide us with a general overview of barriers in ESP classes from teachers' perspectives. Meanwhile, pedagogical issues encountered by 50 language instructors who teach ESP programs in a Saudi Arabian university are reported by Alsharif and Shukri (2018). Their finding showed that most of the teachers received very limited support from their institution regarding training programs that could support their ESP teaching practices. Similar to the study previously discussed, this study failed to provide us with a brief summary of ESP courses from teachers' perceptions because it did not thoroughly examine techniques that the teachers have made to combat the challenges. In addition to these two studies, researchers have investigated barriers or challenges encountered by a group of ESP stakeholders. For example, in the context of Iranian medical universities, Nezakatgoo and Behzadpoor (2017) investigated teaching issues experienced by ESP instructors among a total number of 25 ESP stakeholders recruited. The teachers have been found to constantly encounter some problematic issues during their ESP teaching practices including the absence of subject knowledge, lack of teaching skills, inadequate language proficiency, and limited ESP material resources. A similar case from Cambodia has been reported by Petraki and Khat (2022). They revealed barriers experienced by ESP stakeholders including teachers (both ESP teachers and specific-subject teachers), students, and alumni. Other than reporting the barriers in ESP classes, they also revealed suggestions from each group of stakeholders, such as providing the teachers with relevant training, administering placement tests for the students, and facilitating discussion forums between the ESP teachers and specific-subject teachers. Although these two studies provide us with meaningful insights regarding barriers and solutions in ESP courses from the perspectives of different stakeholders, as suggested by Marcu (2020), researchers need to focus on one group of respondents with the purpose of helping them generate more comprehensive findings.

In Indonesian educational contexts, some researchers have also been investigating barriers encountered by EGP teachers when dealing with ESP courses for some years. For instance, Iswati & Triastuti (2021) conducted a study on tertiary education in Yogyakarta by

interviewing 5 ESP teachers in relation to barriers they had experienced in teaching ESP programs. Based on their analysis, several barriers encountered by ESP teachers were the absence of need analysis, heterogenous class, inadequate training, and limited subject knowledge. Other than recruiting a relatively small number of participants (N=5), another limitation of their study was it did not extensively explore solutions to break the barriers from the ESP teachers' perspectives. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Poedjiastuti (2017) at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang reported some barriers experienced by different groups of ESP stakeholders, including teachers, students, and policymakers. Although her findings provide us with meaningful insight regarding barriers in ESP classes, she failed to focus her study on exclusively examining barriers encountered by ESP teachers. As mentioned earlier, it would be more comprehensive if researchers focused their study on one group of respondents (Marcu, 2020). On the other hand, a study carried out in Pontianak by Marwan (2017) reported a variety of barriers that an ESP teacher has experienced. The barriers were found to relate to the teacher's heavy workload, insufficient teaching facilities, and students' low learning motivation. As previously mentioned, however, his study was conducted with only one participant. Thus, it can be assumed that the findings of his study might not necessarily represent the condition of the whole population being studied in that particular location.

Other than the above three studies, some of the most current studies also reported challenges encountered by ESP teachers in Indonesian educational settings. For example, Fitria (2023) surveyed 58 ESP teachers from several tertiary education in Indonesia regarding challenges they had experienced. Her finding revealed that the participants mentioned 12 different challenges when teaching ESP classes which they found more problematic than teaching EGP classes. Although her study provides us with an insightful finding, she only employed one type of instrument (survey) to collect the data. Meanwhile, a recent study by Mannong et al. (2024) interviewed 8 ESP teachers from 3 different Indonesian universities in relation to challenges they had faced in designing assessment tools for their ESP classes. Their findings reported 4 main challenges that the ESP teachers had encountered. These challenges were related to students' needs, test difficulty, heterogeneous class, and workplace context alignment. Similar to the previous study, their study only employed one data collection tool (interview) despite a comprehensive finding they provided. Similarly, a study by Dwinalida (2024) employed one instrument (interview) to reveal problems in teaching ESP courses in Purwokerto. The problems were related to heterogeneous classes, students' low motivation, inadequate ESP materials and sources, and limited training for the teachers.

In brief, the aforementioned studies have not yet thoroughly examined teaching barriers received by ESP instructors and the techniques they employed to face such barriers by combining several research instruments. To ensure the validity of research findings, as mentioned by many scholars (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008; Mohammad et al., 2015.; Zohrabi, 2013), it would be necessary if data were triangulated by employing more than one instrument. To address this problematic issue, this study attempts to employ a mixed-method approach to investigate barriers that prevent EGP teachers from becoming ESP instructors and their strategies to break the barriers in the context of Indonesian tertiary education.

## 2.2 Research Questions

A review of the literature above has clearly shown that there have not been many scholars from Indonesia who examined barriers that prevent EGP teachers from becoming ESP instructors and their strategies to break the barriers by using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Thus, the two research questions were raised to answer in this study:

1. What Barriers do EGP Teachers Experience in ESP Teachings?
2. How do EGP Teachers Rank the Barriers and Overcome Them?

The finding of this study hopes to provide meaningful insights related to barriers encountered by ESP teachers in Indonesia and the strategies they have made to break the barriers.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

This mixed-method study was carried out at the University of Mataram, a state tertiary education in West Nusa Tenggara province, Indonesia. This particular institution offers approximately 57 undergraduate study programs. ESP courses are embedded as mandatory subjects in non-English Language study programs that students need to take in their first-year study. As for the teachers, all of them have obtained a relevant academic background to qualify for teaching EGP courses in the English Language study program. Although they have no specific academic qualification in ESP, they are also assigned to teach ESP courses in non-English Language study programs with the purpose of fulfilling their teaching credits or workloads.

### 3.2 Participants

A random sampling technique was used to recruit 50 EGP teachers to participate in an online survey. Twenty of them were then invited to voluntarily participate in interview sessions. The demographic information of all participants is displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Data of Participated EGP Teachers

| Information               | Category                   | Participants |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Gender                    | Male                       | 19           |
|                           | Female                     | 31           |
| Age Range<br>(In years)   | 25-35                      | 18           |
|                           | 36-45                      | 24           |
|                           | 45-55                      | 8            |
| Educational<br>Background | English Language Education | 27           |
|                           | TESOL                      | 16           |
|                           | Applied Linguistics        | 7            |
| Years of ESP Teaching     | 1-5                        | 4            |
|                           | 6-10                       | 0            |
|                           | 11-15                      | 0            |
| Study Programs            | Primary Teacher Education  | 5            |
|                           | Statistics                 | 4            |
|                           | Tourism                    | 5            |
|                           | Computer Engineering       | 3            |
|                           | Mathematics Education      | 5            |
|                           | Pharmacy                   | 4            |
|                           | Physics Education          | 5            |

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Civil Engineering         | 6 |
| International Relation    | 4 |
| Environmental Science     | 3 |
| Early Childhood Education | 3 |
| Management                | 3 |

### 3.3 Instruments

The first instrument used in this study was an online survey. This particular survey firstly required the participants to select a Likert scale of one to five, where 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=somewhat agree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. All the statements are related to a variety of barriers they have encountered during their teaching process in ESP programs. At the second part of the survey, the participants were asked to rank the barriers in teaching ESP classes by selecting one of three levels of the barriers: low, medium, or high. It is worth noting that the survey had been previously developed by the researcher himself following the procedures proposed by Jiang, et al. (2020). Several items in their survey were selected and modified based on the context of this study. Furthermore, the content validity was examined by involving three people who possessed expertise in ESP teaching and research. The survey was then piloted with five volunteer EGP teachers to examine the clarity and readability of the survey items. When the pilot survey analysis had been completed, several changes were made accordingly such as omitting irrelevant statements and modifying unstructured questions.

After participating in the survey, the teachers were invited to semi-structured interview sessions. This is conducted to find out their perceptions regarding barriers they have been dealing with in ESP classes. Twenty representative teachers were randomly selected to be interviewed and asked several questions listed in an interview protocol (see appendix). If necessary, additional questions were raised to obtain more detailed answers from the participants. It should be noted that each interview session was conducted for about 45-60 minutes and audio-recorded for further analysis. To avoid English language barriers during the interview process, all the questions were asked using the participants' first language (Bahasa Indonesia).

### 3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

An SPSS Software was used to analyze the data obtained from the survey. On the contrary, a coding system was employed to analyze the data gained from the interview sessions.

**Table 2.** The Coding System for Interview Data

| Barriers             | Types of Barriers        | Teachers' Strategies to Break the Barriers | Codes |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--|-------|
| A. Internal Barriers | 1. Subject Knowledge     | a. Attending Training Programs             | A-1-a |
|                      |                          | b. Reading Relevant Books                  | A-1-b |
|                      | 2. Teaching Skills       | a. Consulting with Colleagues              | A-2-a |
|                      |                          | b. Attending Training Programs             | A-2-b |
| B. External Barriers | 1. ESP Materials         | a. Downloading Ready-Used Materials        | B-1-a |
|                      |                          | b. Consulting with Colleagues              | B-1-b |
|                      | 2. Heterogeneous Class   | a. Proposing Placement Tests               | B-2-a |
|                      |                          | b. Attending Training Programs             | B-2-b |
|                      | 3. Institutional Support | a. Using Personal Funding                  | B-3-a |
|                      |                          | b. Creating Discussion Forums              | B-3-b |

The coding technique presented in Table 2 above was designed by adapting the inductive coding approach (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). The process of generating the codes involved several steps. For instance, the barrier that appeared to come from the participants themselves was classified as "Internal Barrier" (A) in the first column. Then, if the barrier was related to the knowledge of a certain field of study, it was then classified as "Subject Knowledge" (1) in the second column. Last, if the participants used a reading technique as their strategy to break the barrier, it was then classified as "Reading Relevant Books" (b) in the third column. These three generated a final code of A-1-b in the fourth column.

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1. The Barriers to EGP Teachers' Experience in ESP Teaching

Table 3. Barriers to Teaching ESP among EGP Teachers

| Types of Barriers  | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|------|----------------|
| <b>Barrier 1: Subject Knowledge</b>  |      |                |
| I know nothing about the specific subject I am teaching.   | 3.14 | 0.86           |
| I have no relevant academic qualification in ESP teaching.   | 2.75 | 0.69           |
| I have limited experience in teaching ESP classes.   | 2.64 | 0.77           |
| <b>Barrier 2: Institutional Support</b>  |      |                |
| I receive very limited relevant training from my institution.  | 2.94 | 0.84           |
| The number of teaching media in my institution is inadequate.  | 2.64 | 0.77           |
| My institution allocates very little funds for teachers' professional development programs.                | 2.52 | 0.72           |
| <b>Barrier 3: ESP Materials</b>  |      |                |
| I have inadequate ESP teaching materials in my book collections.   | 2.76 | 0.82           |
| I have limited access to online ESP textbooks.   | 2.41 | 0.66           |
| Limited financial aid is allocated by my institution for ESP textbook purchases.                           | 2.58 | 0.74           |
| <b>Barrier 4: Heterogeneous Class</b>  |      |                |
| My students' different level of English skills is very significant.  | 2.75 | 0.69           |
| No placement tests are administered for new ESP students.  | 2.56 | 0.73           |
| Limited trainings are provided to familiarize ESP teachers with heterogeneous students.                    | 2.64 | 0.77           |
| <b>Barrier 5: Teaching Skills</b>  |      |                |
| I have very little experience in teaching ESP classes.   | 2.67 | 0.78           |
| Limited trainings are provided by my institution for ESP novice teachers to develop their teaching skills. | 2.34 | 0.62           |

From Table 3 above, it can be clearly seen that the highest mean value in barrier 1 (Subject Knowledge) is that the teachers agreed that they knew nothing about the specific subjects they were teaching (M=3.14, SD=0.86). In other words, the absence of knowledge in the specific subject is the most problematic barrier for EGP teachers in teaching ESP classes. This is followed by two other barriers: no academic qualification and no previous experience. Meanwhile, in the part of Institutional Support, the most challenging barrier for the EGP teachers is that there have been limited training programs provided by their institution (M=2.94, SD=0.84) which is followed by lack of financial support and inadequate teaching media. In the case of ESP Materials, table 3 above shows that the most struggling barrier is that the teachers have very few relevant materials (M=2.76, SD=0.82), followed by two other

challenging barriers, which include the teachers' limited access to online ESP textbooks and lack of financial aid from their institution for textbooks purchasing. Meanwhile, in the part of Heterogeneous Class, the teachers have been dealing with their students' significantly different levels of English proficiency as the most difficult barrier to handle ( $M=2.75$ ,  $SD=0.69$ ). This barrier is followed by the absence of placement tests for new ESP students and the unavailability of relevant training programs. In the case of the last issue, Teaching Skills, the most challenging barrier for the EGP teachers is that they have limited experience in teaching ESP courses ( $M=2.67$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ), which is followed by another issue where their institution provides limited training for EGP teachers who transform into ESP teachers.

The quantitative finding above is in line with what Siddiq et al. (2019) have revealed. A mixed-method study was conducted in Afghanistan, and their findings reported several issues experienced by EGP teachers in teaching ESP courses. Based on their analysis, the EGP teachers were dealing with four major barriers. These barriers included heterogeneous classes, insufficient ESP materials, lack of ESP departments, and inadequate teaching skills. Although their study provides us with a general overview of barriers received by Afghan EGP teachers when teaching ESP courses, they did not examine strategies that the EGP teachers have employed to break the barriers. By contrast, the current study revealed a variety of techniques that the EGP teachers have used to face the issues when teaching ESP courses. One of the techniques that most of the EGP teachers have employed is they equipped themselves by taking part in ESP related professional development courses. As suggested by Basturkmen (2019), professional development programs may facilitate teachers with knowledge of current trends in certain fields and relevant networks for their career progress. It is therefore, the teachers in the current study favored relevant training programs to break through the barriers they have experienced when teaching ESP courses. Meanwhile, Nezakatgoo & Behzadpoor (2017) reported ESP teaching challenges encountered by Iranian tertiary-level teachers. In addition to ESP teachers, their study participants also involved other ESP stakeholders (specific-subject teachers, alumni, and students). The findings reported several issues faced by each group of ESP stakeholders and strategies they have made to face the issues. While their study examined issues perceived by different groups of ESP stakeholders, the current study is primarily exploring issues perceived by one group of ESP stakeholders. As mentioned by Marcu (2020), focusing on one particular group of participants may help researchers to comprehensively generate findings. Thus, the results of this study may provide ESP practitioners with useful insight into the barriers encountered by Indonesian EGP teachers when dealing with ESP teaching and the strategies they have employed to break through the barriers.

#### **4.2. Ranking the Barriers and Overcoming Them**

Based on data analysis in the online survey (see Figure 1), the EGP teachers were found to have different perspectives when ranking the five different types of barriers. In regards to the two highest barriers, Subject Knowledge and Institutional Support, over 90% of teachers ranked these two at a high level, and under 50% of teachers ranked them at medium and low levels. As shown in Figure 1 below, the complete opposite happened with the issue of Teaching Skills. This issue was highly ranked by only 43% of teachers, and slightly over 50% of teachers ranked it at medium and low levels. Meanwhile, two other barriers, Heterogeneous Class and ESP Materials, were ranked at a high level by over 75% of teachers and ranked at medium and low levels by more than 60% of teachers.



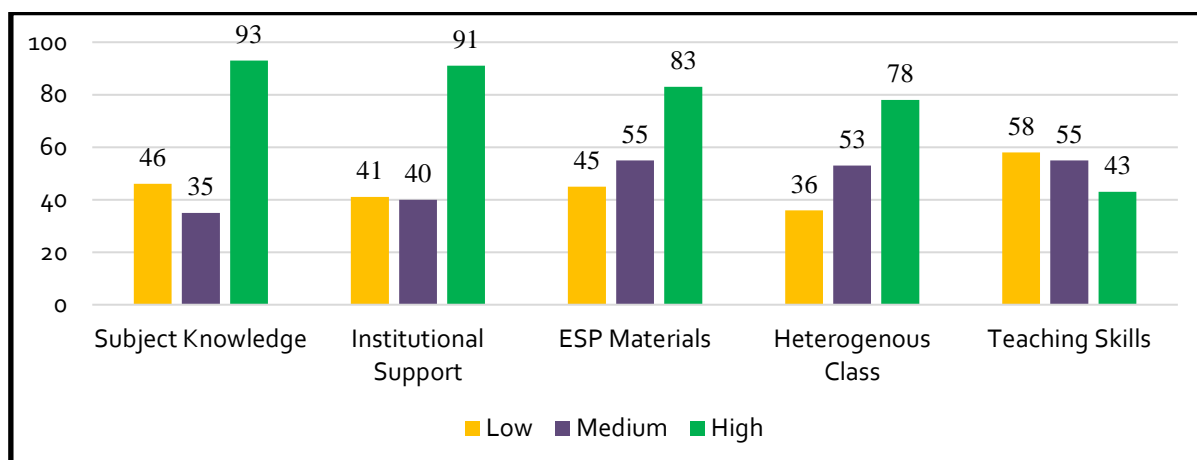


Figure 1. Rank of Barriers by EGP Teachers

Meanwhile, the qualitative data obtained from interview sessions reported techniques that the EGP teachers have employed to break the barriers in teaching ESP courses. With regards to the highest barrier, Subject Knowledge, T<sub>2</sub>, and T<sub>4</sub> mentioned in the interview sessions:

"I often participate in ESP-related trainings, which help me expand my knowledge of specific subjects and keep me updated with new trends in ESP teachings. Since there have been very few trainings organized in my institution, I think I will attend more training programs in the future." (Code: A-1-a)

"Reading relevant articles and books in the internet helps me with specific subject knowledge. But it is not easy to find free-download books. I hope my institution provides ESP teachers with relevant material resources." (Code: A-1-b)

According to the statements above, the teaching barriers regarding subject knowledge were resolved by the teachers simply by attending relevant training. This finding is similar to what Pei and Milner (2016) have found. More than half of EGP teachers (60, 71%) in their study had limited knowledge of the specialist subject when teaching ESP courses. Unlike the current study, however, their study provided no analysis regarding strategies that the teachers employed to resolve the issue. The EGP teachers in the current study resolve the issue by participating in training programs and reading relevant books that can help them with their ESP teachings. These strategies, as Gollin-Kies et al (2015) argued, may help ESP practitioners with their teaching practices and keep them updated with the latest trends in specialized fields.

In relation to the second highest barrier, Institutional Support, the teachers mentioned several strategies they have employed to break through the barrier. For example, T<sub>3</sub> and T<sub>6</sub> mentioned in the interview sessions:

"Related to professional development training, there has been very limited financial support from my institution. Therefore, I mostly use my own money to buy ESP textbooks and register in the ESP teacher community." (Code: B-3-a)

"I usually discuss with other ESP teachers regarding teaching methods or assessment techniques. We initiated to create this regular discussion due to lack of support from our institution." (Code: B-3-b)

These statements show that the teachers overcame the barriers related to Institutional Support by using their personal funding and attending regular discussions to help themselves with their ESP teaching skills. This result appears to have aligned with that of Petraki and Khat (2022). Based on their data analysis, the ESP teachers who participated in their study had relatively limited teaching motivation as the result of limited support from their institution. The teachers in the current study faced this problem by using their own money for textbook purchasing and ESP teacher community registration. Additionally, they created sharing-session programs that may benefit those who lack channels into teacher-training courses (Al-Jarf, 2021).

In regards to the third highest barrier, ESP Materials, T<sub>4</sub> and T<sub>9</sub> explained in the interview sessions how they utilized ready-used modules from the internet.

“ESP materials I found in the internet are very useful because no relevant textbooks have been provided by my university. But I find the need to adapt these materials with my teaching context for optimum results.” (Code: B-1-a)

“Due to my heavy teaching credits, I simply use ESP materials I found in the internet. Before I use them in my ESP classes, I usually ask for some comments from my colleagues for the better materials adaptations” (Code: B-1-b)

The interview excerpts above showed that the EGP teachers were highly dependent on ready-used ESP modules. This finding is similar to what Siddiq et al. (2019) have found. Due to the absence of ESP textbooks, the majority of EGP teachers in their study downloaded ready-used ESP materials from the internet. Nevertheless, these ESP materials were found to have different formats and thus need to adapt based on their teaching contexts. This technique has also been employed by the EGP teachers in the current study. They adapted ESP materials they found on the internet and consulted with their colleagues for some feedback. In relation to this, Diachkova et al (2021) mentioned the benefits of feedback from colleagues, which may benefit ESP teachers in increasing their material development skills.

Concerning the fourth highest barrier, Heterogeneous Class, the teachers mentioned several opinions during interview sessions. For example, T<sub>9</sub> and T<sub>14</sub> argued:

“In my opinion, placement tests need to be administered at the very beginning with the purpose of grouping students based on the level of their English language skills. This is because it is not easy to deal with classes where the students have no similar level of language abilities.” (Code: B-2-a)

“It might be difficult to administer placement tests with thousands of students. In my opinion, it would be better if the school authorities organized relevant trainings to familiarize ESP teachers with heterogeneous students.” (Code: B-2-b)

The quotes above show that the teachers mentioned the urgency of placement tests. As suggested by some experts (Lenard & Lenard, 2018; Marcu, 2020), administering placement tests at the very beginning may help ESP instructors to design appropriate syllabi and group students into appropriate classes. Additionally, the participants in this study also favored professional development courses, which can inform them of some strategies on how to deal

with heterogeneous classes and how to adapt to new teaching situations (Chmelikova & Hurajova, 2019).

With regard to the fifth barrier, Teaching Skills, the teachers explained how they dealt with this barrier. T6 and T10, for example, explained in the interview sessions:

"I mostly apply the same teaching methods in both my EGP and ESP classes. I just need to clarify some technical words that are quite difficult to understand from specific subject teachers. Working with them benefits me since I have limited experience in teaching ESP courses." (Code: A-2-a)

"Relevant training should have been provided by my institution. It is for the purpose of helping EGP teachers who have never been involved in ESP teachings. I suggest that training be held before the ESP classes begin." (Code: A-2-b)

These statements clearly show that involving specific-subject teachers in their ESP teachings is highly valued by the participants. This is because, as mentioned by Er & Kirkgoz (2018), collaborating with those who teach specific subjects is considerably beneficial for ESP teachers in terms of specialized terminologies and technical vocabularies. Additionally, teachers still expect relevant training to be organized since this training can help develop their ESP teaching skills.

## **5. Discussion**

The data analysis from both the survey and interview appears to have indicated that the five different barriers are intercorrelated. For instance, the issue of Subject Knowledge ( $M=3.16$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ), with the highest rank in the online survey (93%), seems to have a correlation with the issue of Institutional Support ( $M=3.16$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ). Because of limited knowledge of the subjects they were teaching, the teachers mentioned that relevant training should be organized by their institution prior to the commencement of their ESP teachings. This was for the purpose of equipping EGP teachers who had limited experience in teaching ESP courses and would transform into ESP teachers. In addition, the teachers mentioned the need for ESP material resources should also be facilitated by their institution. It is not surprising that the participants also highly ranked the issue of Institutional Support (92%) in the online survey. As highlighted by many scholars (Aniroh, 2019; Jiang et al., 2020; Kakoulli-Constantinou & Papadima-Sophocleous, 2020), support in the form of teaching facilities and material resources should be provided by university officials to help equip ESP teachers with their teaching practices.

With regards to material resources, the teachers mentioned that they mostly favored ready-used modules from the internet as the result of the absence of ESP materials, the issue which was relatively challenging ( $M=3.16$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ) and highly ranked (90%) by the teachers in the online survey. In relation to this, Gu (2019) and Syakur et al. (2022) highlighted that syllabus designers need to first conduct a need analysis prior to developing ESP materials, which is intended to help ESP teachers with their teaching. The teachers in this study, by contrast, used ESP materials from the internet as a consequence of limited support from their institutions. To obtain optimum results, these ESP materials were adapted by the teachers based on their teaching contexts. Interestingly, the teachers correlated this issue with their heterogeneous classes, the issue which was relatively challenging ( $M=3.16$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ) and

ranked by 75% of teachers in the online survey. In this sense, the teachers adapted the ESP materials they downloaded from the internet based on their students' different levels of English proficiency. The teachers also mentioned the importance of placement tests with the purpose of grouping students based on their English language capacities. In relation to this, many researchers (Celik, 2018; Nezakatgoo & Behzadpoor, 2017; Siddiq et al., 2019) argued that the issue of heterogeneous class is found to become one of the problematic challenges in ESP teaching practicum.

In the case of Teaching Skills ( $M=3.16$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ), the teachers seemed to perceive it as a less challenging barrier. This is probably because most of them were relatively experienced EGP teachers which resulted in the improvement of their teaching skills. They simply used their EGP teaching skills in their ESP classes by focusing more on specialized terminologies, the characteristic feature of ESP classes (Belyaeva, 2015). It is not surprising that the issue of Teaching Skills is ranked by less than 50% of teachers in the online survey. However, they found the need to consult with specific subject teachers to help them with specialized terminologies. As revealed in the interview sessions, the teachers also expected support from their institution regarding professional development programs since they had very limited experience in teaching ESP courses. In brief, all the five barriers perceived by the EGP teachers in teaching ESP courses appeared to correlate with each other. Although this is arguably a complex issue, all the five barriers mentioned by the teachers need to be eradicated immediately. Thus, it is essential that university authorities provide EGP teachers with relevant support to help them break through the barriers when transforming into ESP teachers.

## **6. Conclusion**

The current study aims at examining barriers encountered by EGP teachers when teaching ESP courses. The data analysis from the survey instrument reported that the EGP teachers experienced five different barriers in their ESP teaching practices. Subject Knowledge and Institutional Support were perceived by the teachers as the two most difficult barriers to break. As the data analysis revealed, these two barriers appeared to be intercorrelated with three other barriers called ESP Material, Heterogeneous Class, and Teaching Skills. Meanwhile, the data gained from interview sessions reported a variety of strategies that the teachers have made to break the barriers such as attending relevant training programs, consulting with specific-subject teachers, downloading ready-used materials, and more.

Pedagogical implications in this study may include the urgency of organizing training programs that can help EGP teachers with relevant barriers they have encountered when teaching ESP courses. In addition to this, placement tests should be administered for new students to help minimize the number of heterogeneous classes. Last, ESP textbooks should be provided to help teachers with their teaching materials and resources.

Despite these implications, several limitations are identified in this study. For example, the number of participants recruited was relatively small. To be able to represent the whole population being studied, future studies may recruit more participants. Besides, it is essential that the participants from different locations be invited. It is for the purpose of gaining a more comprehensive finding as they may embody distinctive educational settings. Last, the current study primarily explored the perceptions of one group of people (teachers) as its

research participants. Future studies may examine perceptions from other stakeholders (students, students' parents, syllabus designers, material developers, headmasters, and alumni) which is intended to gain insightful knowledge in the field of ESP teachings.

## References

- Al-Jarf, R. S. (2021). ESL Teachers' Professional Development on Facebook During the Covid-19 Pandemic. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 2(6), 75–81.
- Alsharif, D., & Shukri, N. (2018). Exploring Pedagogical Challenges of ESP Teachers at a Saudi Arabian University. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 8(10), 841–855.
- Aniroh, K. (2019). The Challenges of Teacher-Students in Developing ESP Teaching Materials: *Asian ESP Journal*, 15(2), 42–50.
- Asgari, M., & Ganji, M. (2020). Teaching ESP Students Through Learner-Centre Approach: Zooming in on Students Question Generation. *Iranian Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 9(4), 129–140.
- Basturkmen, H. (2019). ESP Teacher Education Needs. *Language Teaching*, 52(3), 318–330.
- Belyaeva, A. (2015). English for Specific Purposes: Characteristic Features and Curriculum Planning Steps. *Sustainable Multilingualism*, 7(1), 73–91.
- Celik, H. (2018). A Closer Look into an ESP Course Through Students' End-of-Course Evaluation: A Case Study. *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 6(1), 125–139.
- Chmelikova, G., & Hurajova, L. (2019). ESP Teachers in the World of Globalization and Higher Education Internationalisation. *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 7(4), 443–452.
- Diachkova, Y., Sazhko, L., Shevchenko, L., & Syzenko, A. (2021). Global Issues in ESP Classroom: Challenges and Opportunities in Higher Education. *Arab World English Journal*, 12(1), 388–400.
- Doiz, A., & Lasagabaster, D. (2021). An Analysis of the Use of Cognitive Discourse Function in English-Medium History Teaching at University. *English for Specific Purposes*, 62(1), 58–69.
- Drisko, James. W., & Maschi, T. (2015). Qualitative Content Analysis. In *Content Analysis*. Oxford University Press.
- Dwinalida, K. (2024). Exploring ESP Courses: Insights from Teachers and Students. *Journal of English Language and Language Teaching*, 7(2), 13–28.
- Er, M., & Kirkgoz, Y. (2018). Introducing Innovation into an ESP Program: Aviation English for Cadets. In *Key Issues in English for Specific Purposes in Higher Education* (Vol. 11, pp. 179–199). Springer, Cham.
- Fitria, T. N. (2023). English Lecturers' Difficulties in Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Various Higher Education in Indonesia. *Journal of English Teaching and Learning Issues*, 6(1), 65–80.
- Gollin-Kies, S., Hall, D. R., & Moore, S. H. (2015). LSP Classroom Management and Professional Development. In *Language for Specific Purposes* (pp. 135–140). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Gu, H. (2019). Developing ESP Teaching Materials Based on the Analysis of Information Engineering Major Needs. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(10), 121–130.

- Hyland, K. (2022). English for Specific Purposes: What is It and Where is It Taking Us? *ESP Today*, 10(2), 202–220.
- Iswati, L., & Triastuti, A. (2021). Voicing the Challenges of ESP Teaching: Lessons from ESP in Non-English Departments. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 8(1), 276–293.
- Jiang, A. L., Zhang, L. J., May, S., & Qin, L. T. (2020). Understanding Novice Teachers' Perceived Challenges and Needs as a Prerequisite for English Curriculum Innovation. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*, 33(1), 15–31.
- Kakoulli-Constantinou, E., & Papadima-Sophocleous, S. (2020). The Use of Digital Technology in ESP: Current Practices and Suggestions for ESP Teacher Education. *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 3(1), 1–15.
- Kimberlin, C. L., & Winterstein, A. G. (2008). Validity and Reliability of Measurement Instruments Used in Research. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, 65(23), 2276–2284.
- Lenard, D. B., & Lenard, I. (2018). Examining Pedagogical Content Knowledge of ESP Teachers. *The Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 6(3), 353–364.
- Liu, Y., & Hu, G. (2021). Mapping the Field of English for Specific Purposes (1980-2018): A Co-Citation Analysis. *English for Specific Purposes*, 61(1), 97–116.
- Mannong, A. B. M., Setiawan, S., & Munir, A. (2024). Teachers' Voices: Challenges in Designing ESP Assessment. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 11(1), 310–317.
- Marcu, N. A. (2020). Designing Functional ESP (English for Specific Purposes) Courses. *Procedia Manufacturing*, 308–312.
- Marwan, A. (2017). ESP Teaching Challenges in an Indonesian Vocational Higher Institution. *The English Teacher*, 3(1), 1–12.
- Mohammad, M. M., Sern, N. L., & Salleh, K. M. (2015). Measuring Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 204(1), 164–171.
- Nezakatgoo, B., & Behzadpoor, F. (2017). Challenges in Teaching ESP at Medical Universities of Iran from ESP Stakeholders' Perspectives. *Iranian Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 9(2), 59–82.
- Pei, X., & Milner, J. O. (2016). Problems in Transforming EGP Teachers in China's Universities into ESP Teachers. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(11), 2102–2120.
- Petraki, E., & Khat, K. (2022). Challenges and Constraint in the Design of an ESP Course in Cambodia: Implications for Higher Education Institutions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 42(2), 260–275.
- Poedjiastuti, D. (2017). The Pedagogical Challenges of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Teaching at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 12(6), 338–349.
- Rafiq, K. R. M., Hashim, H., & Yunus, M. M. (2021). Sustaining Education with Mobile Learning for English for Specific Purposes (ESP): A Systematic Review (2012-2021). *Sustainability*, 13(17), 9768–9770.
- Salmani-Nodoushan, M. A. (2020). English for Specific Purposes: Traditions, Trends, Directions. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 7(1), 247–268.
- Siddiq, K. A., Miri, M. A., & Sarwarzada, T. (2019). Afghan Students' Attitudes and Motivations Towards ESP and EGP Courses. *Language in India*, 19(6), 363–374.

- Syakur, A., Junining, E., & Mubarak, M. K. (2022). Developing ESP Textbooks for Pharmacy Students Using On-Line Teaching in Higher Education. *Britain International of Linguistics Arts and Education Journal*, 2(1), 467–474.
- Tao, J. T., & Gao, X. A. (2018). Identity Constructions of ESP Teachers in a Chinese University. *English for Specific Purposes*, 49(1), 1–13.
- Whyte, S., & Sarre, C. (2017). New Developments in ESP Teaching and Learning Research. In *Introduction to New Developments in ESP Teaching and Learning Research* (pp. 1–12). Research-Publishing Net.
- Xia, S. A. (2020). English for Specific Purposes in the Digital Era: What has Changed? Interview with Vijay Bhatia. *RELC Journal*, 51(1), 188–197.
- Zohrabi, M. (2013). Mixed-Method Research: Instruments, Validity, Reliability, and Reporting Findings. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(2), 254–260.

## Appendices

### Survey Questions:

**Part A: Select one of the five ranks below for each statement based on your ESP teaching situations! Please note that 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat agree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.**

1. I know nothing about the specific subject I am teaching  
1      2      3      4      5
2. I have no relevant academic background in ESP teaching  
1      2      3      4      5
3. I have limited experience in teaching ESP classes  
1      2      3      4      5
4. I receive very limited professional development courses from my institution  
1      2      3      4      5
5. The number of teaching media in my institution is inadequate  
1      2      3      4      5
6. My institution allocates very little fund for teachers' training courses  
1      2      3      4      5
7. I have inadequate ESP teaching materials in my book collections  
1      2      3      4      5
8. I have limited access into online ESP textbooks  
1      2      3      4      5
9. Limited financial aid is allocated for ESP materials purchases  
1      2      3      4      5
10. My students' different level of English skills is very significant  
1      2      3      4      5
11. No placement tests are administered for new ESP students  
1      2      3      4      5
12. Limited trainings are organized to help ESP instructors with heterogenous students  
1      2      3      4      5

13. I have very little experience in teaching ESP classes  
1      2      3      4      5
14. Limited trainings are provided by my institution for ESP novice teachers to improve their teaching abilities  
1      2      3      4      5

**Part B. Please select a, b, or c for the following questions!**

1. Select one of the three levels below in relation to the issue of subject knowledge.
  - a. Low
  - b. Medium
  - c. High
2. Select one of the three levels below in relation to the issue of support from your institution.
  - a. Low
  - b. Medium
  - c. High
3. Select one of the three levels below in relation to the issue of ESP teaching materials.
  - a. Low
  - b. Medium
  - c. High
4. Select one of the three levels below in relation to the issue of heterogeneous classes.
  - a. Low
  - b. Medium
  - c. High
5. Select one of the three levels below in relation to the issue of your teaching skills.
  - a. Low
  - b. Medium
  - c. High

**Interview Questions:**

1. How long have you been teaching EGP courses?
2. Are there any barriers that prevent you from teaching ESP courses? If yes, what are they?
3. With regard to your knowledge of a specific subject, what barriers have you experienced?
4. How did you break the barriers?
5. Is there any support from your institution to help you with these barriers?
6. In relation to institutional support, how much support have you received from your institution?
7. Have you received some funding support from your university to help you with your ESP teaching?
8. In regard to ESP teaching materials, what barriers have you encountered?
9. How did you break the barriers?
10. Have you downloaded some ESP textbooks from the internet? How was your experience?



11. How about your ESP students? What barriers have you faced regarding students with different levels of English skills?
12. How did you break the barriers?
13. Are there any placement tests administered for new ESP students in your institution?
14. In relation to your teaching skills, what barriers have you experienced?
15. How did you break the barriers?