

# English Learning Outcomes Based on Indonesian Enacted Current Curriculum in the Perspective of Vocational Students' Need: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

English learning outcomes in vocational education must align with enacted curriculum policies and the specific needs of vocational students. In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum (Freedom to Learn Curriculum) 2022 sets national educational standards, including English language policies. This study examines the alignment between these policies and the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach, which is essential for vocational students preparing for future professions. This qualitative study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze pedagogical discourse at the policy level. Content analysis of government documents on English learning outcomes was conducted, alongside interviews with teachers and students to gather practical insights. Findings indicate that while the Merdeka Curriculum provides general learning outcomes, vocational educators must adapt these to meet students' specific needs. Teachers play a crucial role in integrating relevant themes, practical assignments, and industry-related activities into English instruction. However, challenges remain in effectively implementing ESP due to curriculum constraints and a lack of contextualized materials. The study highlights the need for flexibility in curriculum implementation, emphasizing a balance between national policies and vocational students' professional requirements. Teachers require support in curriculum adaptation to enhance pedagogical strategies and ensure meaningful learning experiences. This research provides critical insights into the impact of policy changes on English learning in vocational schools. It underscores the importance of contextualized instruction and suggests improvements in policy implementation to better serve vocational students' career aspirations.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Curriculum serves as a foundation for shaping educational direction (Usman et al., 2023). As a regulatory framework, it establishes language policies and learning standards that influence educational practices. Indonesia's most recent educational reform, the Merdeka Curriculum (Freedom to Learn Curriculum) 2022, has been introduced as a more flexible and student-centered approach to learning. This curriculum encourages schools and teachers to develop instructional strategies tailored to their specific contexts, student competencies, and local needs.

One of the key principles of the Merdeka Curriculum is student-centered learning, which prioritizes individual competence and interests. While this approach is not new, its implementation has historically been challenging due to limited teacher training, rigid curriculum structures, and a strong focus on content coverage. The revised curriculum aims to address these barriers by offering greater autonomy to educators in designing effective and relevant learning experiences.

Vocational education plays a crucial role in preparing students for employment and aligning their skills with industry demands (Suharno et al., 2020). As Malley & Keating (2000) suggest, a country's industrial progress is significantly influenced by the quality of its vocational education system. In Indonesia, vocational schools operate within a structured classification system, comprising ten expertise spectrum areas, fifty expertise programs, and 126 specific expertise competencies (Kemdikbud, 2022). Given the increasing demands of globalization and international labor markets, English proficiency has become an essential skill for vocational students. This study explores how the Merdeka Curriculum accommodates the needs of vocational students by integrating English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to enhance their future career prospects.

In addition, to accommodate the needs of vocational students, English for Specific Purpose (ESP) should be conducted in English class. So that the skills gained can be used for the job or study purposes in a certain field. It is relevant to the needs of English for students in vocational schools (Vogt & Kantelinen, 2013). In addition, Akbar & Sulistyono (2018), state that designing and applying an effective language teaching model in vocational schools is necessary given the increasing demand for English and the fact that many jobs now require it to face the demands of the global economy and industry.

Schools and their academic staff must ensure that vocational programs are relevant, efficient, effective, accountable, and sustainable. In this context, vocational English teachers play a crucial role in enhancing students' English proficiency by effectively communicating their professional knowledge, skills, and experiences in English. Understanding and implementing these educational policies is essential, as they align with current educational regulations and the evolving demands of global industries, which require vocational graduates to possess qualified English skills. One of the key regulatory aspects of the Merdeka Curriculum is its emphasis on learning outcomes, which, although restructured, maintain the core objectives of the previous curriculum. The latest reform replaces competency-based standards (Kompetensi Dasar/KD) with learning outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran/CP), providing a new framework for language learning. According to Kemdikbud (2022), English learning outcomes now encompass six essential language skills: listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing, and presenting. As this new policy reshapes English instruction in vocational education, teachers must fully comprehend and effectively implement these guidelines to enhance students' language competence and career readiness.

Even with the most recent educational policy alterations in Indonesia, there is no set framework or standard guidance for the English subject at the vocational school level. As the result, teachers are lack of motivation and guideline to apply the appropriate vocational English for their students. The aftermath is the students do not get the appropriate exposure of English that is highly required for their future. Moreover, the course books that the teachers use as the students' inputs contain very general materials that are not contextualized for the students' particular fields of study. Whereas, ESP be a significant approach to cope the needs of students' vocational English. It enables to promote their specific expertise and proficiency in line with the industrial market demands.

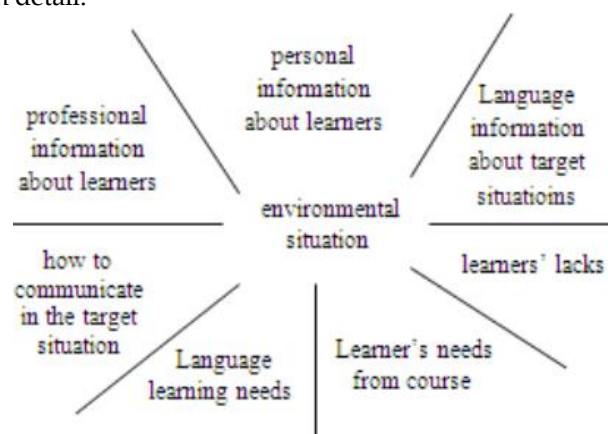
The critical evaluation/review of the learning outcomes has revealed that some important aspects need due attention. These points include the ESP pedagogical strategy and material used in the English language teaching and learning process.

Due to those theories and contextual issues, this study aims to fill up the gaps by examining and analysing English learning outcomes based on enacted current curriculum and regulation in the perspective of vocational students' need as a part of the language policies enacted in the Indonesian national education system. It uses critical discourse analysis of pedagogical discourse at the policy level. This study will focus on the content of English learning outcomes on the E phase analysis, English for Specific Purposes, and Vocational English.

## 2. METHODS

This study belongs to pedagogical discourse at the policy level. It follows the CDA belongs to content analysis – using Qualitative methods. Researcher be able to define, understand, and articulate how language and significant educational challenges relate utilizing CDA. The interaction that exists now between the economy, governmental policy, and approaches to education is one such issue. As regulatory documents are the subject of this study, content/text analysis is also used. Text analysis plays a crucial role in language policy because it provides information on official justifications and discursive techniques used in established language-related policies (Canale, 2015). The analysed document is the decree of BSKAP 033/H/KR/2022 (kemdikbud, 2022) about learning outcomes focused on English subjects to the vocational school level based on vocational students' need point of view. The document was developed by a team from the Indonesian Ministry of Education. It is disseminated by the government through school representatives during workshops and other educational programs. Nationally adopted, the document is easily accessible and can be freely downloaded from the official Ministry of Education website.

In this study, the researchers used ESP needs analysis models by Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) in (Rahman, 2015) to analyse the content of English learning outcomes. The following figure shows the model which is described in detail.



**Figure 1.** ESP needs Analysis models by Dudley-Evans and St John 1998 and Rahman (2015)

In the context of language planning, development, teaching, and learning, several topics and challenges are explored through different components of language needs analysis. Many ESP researchers recommend using TSA (Target Situation Analysis), LSA (Learning Situation Analysis), PSA (Present Situation Analysis), and Language Audits as key strategies for evaluating learners' language needs (Rahman, 2015). The contents of the learning outcomes document were analysed by comprehending the contents, identifying themes, noting themes, and assessing the data using the aspects of Dudley-Evans and St John models.

The researchers also conducted a semi-structured interview with an English teacher and 5 students from a vocational high school that has implemented the 2022 Curriculum. The teacher has been

teaching English at a state vocational high school for more than 20 years. The purpose of the interview was to explore how the teacher dealt with the enacted curriculum, her perceptions of it, and the challenges she faced in implementing English instruction aligned with the specified learning outcomes. The students were tenth graders from the engineering program. The interview aimed to explore students' perceptions of curriculum implementation and their expectations for their English class. Data from interviews with both the teacher and students were transcribed and analyzed using conversational and thematic analysis methods.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Merdeka (Freedom to Learn) Curriculum or 2022 Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum with numerous intra-curricular learning opportunities where the material will be better, allowing students to have enough time to study concepts and build competency. Teachers have the freedom to select different teaching strategies so that instruction can be customized to the interests and learning needs of each student (Kemdikbud, 2023). It places more of an emphasis on strengthening students' competence and interests.

The alteration of the K–13 curriculum to a Merdeka Curriculum prompted a number of paradigms and opposing systems in its application. The 2013 curriculum puts an emphasis on enhancing and balancing knowledge and attitude competences with categories in the selection of class majors. The Merdeka Curriculum, on the other hand, places educational emphasis on fostering students' character and competency as well as their interests and abilities (Usman et al., 2023). The new curriculum presents several challenges, particularly for teachers and students. The Merdeka Curriculum, which the Minister of Education and Culture, Mr. Nadiem, introduced, is an alteration from the traditional methods of teaching and learning. Usman, 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2022). The curriculum enables the educational environment to select the best teaching strategy to maximize learning. Without relying on others, students should take the initiative to learn on their own, based on their passions and abilities (Pertiwi et al., 2022; Usman et al., 2023).

It has some regulation products related to the language policy. One of them is learning outcomes which are different in some formulations but still have the same main contents and objective with the previous ones. Since it is a new guidance for English teacher in teaching learning practice, they should comprehend well how implementing this kind of regulation.

In the Merdeka Curriculum era, the PBL (Project-Based Learning) and PrBL (Problem-Based Learning) models are highly relevant and crucial to implement. These models support students in developing essential 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Key features of this curriculum include assessment, learning outcomes that guide multi-perspective learning, scaffolding, and differentiated instruction.

The primary objective of learning English is to enhance students' proficiency in all six language components—listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting—integrated across various text types. The minimum goals for these skills align with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), specifically at the B1 level. CEFR B1 reflects a standard where students can communicate clearly in diverse situations, sustain interactions even when faced with challenges, and convey key ideas necessary for exchanging information (European Union and Council of Europe, 2020). English language skills are grouped into three elements: the Listening-Speaking element, the Reading-Viewing element, and the Writing-Presenting element (Kemdikbud, 2022).

English learning for a vocational student be an effort to prepare them becoming qualified professional with English acquisition which supports their life skill in global workplaces. Learning is centered on text in a variety of media, including spoken, written, visual, audio, and multimodal, according to the genre-based approach used in general English instruction. This is consistent with the assertion made by Halliday and Mathiesen (2014: 3) in (Kemdikbud, 2022) that "*When people speak or write, they produce text, and text is what listeners and readers engage with and interpret.*"

The genre-based approach is one of the learning methods implemented in the Freedom to Learn curriculum, particularly for language teaching. It consists of four stages, all of which are carried out while discussing the same topic. The first stage, Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF), involves the teacher helping students become familiar with the subject matter that will be written or discussed. At this stage, the teacher also introduces the cultural context of the text. The second stage, Modeling of the Text (MOT), provides students with a textual example to guide their writing and speaking responses. The third stage, Joint Construction of the Text (JCOT), involves the teacher collaborating with the students to create texts together. The final stage, Independent Construction of the Text (ICOT), requires students to produce spoken and written texts on their own (Emilia, 2011, as cited in Kemdikbud, 2023).

### **3.2 English Learning Outcomes**

Learning Outcomes is arranged in specific phases as an effort to simplify the learning material and topics so that students can have sufficient time to master the competency. The decree of BSKAP 033/H/KR/2022 is a revision of the learning outcomes of the Merdeka Curriculum that was previously made regarding learning outcomes in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, starting from early childhood to equivalent high school.

In the Merdeka Curriculum, learning outcomes are organized into six phases, aligned with students' competency levels. These phases, from A to F, apply to all subjects across primary and secondary education (SD/MI, SMP/MTs, SMA/MA, SMK/MAK, SDLB, SMPLB, SMALB, and alternative education packages).

For general English learning in Phases E and F (equivalent to SMA/MA/Package C), speaking and writing skills are targeted at the CEFR B1 level (Kemdikbud, 2022). By the end of Phase E, students are expected to effectively communicate in English through oral, written, and visual texts, adapting to the context, audience, and purpose. The primary learning materials in this phase include various text types such as narrative, descriptive, procedural, explanatory, recount, report, and authentic texts. During this phase, students' express opinions, engage in discussions on age-appropriate and real-world topics, and read to gain information or knowledge. They also begin developing skills in making implicit inferences and produce more diverse written and visual texts, considering the target audience and purpose (Kemdikbud, 2023).

The three key elements of English proficiency—listening-speaking, reading-viewing, and writing-presenting—are highlighted in Kemdikbud (2022) for Phase E learning objectives. In the listening-speaking element, students are expected to communicate effectively in English, engage in discussions on youth-related topics, provide feedback, share their ideas, and utilize non-verbal cues for clearer communication. In the reading-viewing element, students should be able to read a variety of texts, respond thoughtfully, analyze details, identify the author's intentions, and develop inferential skills. Lastly, in the writing-presenting element, students are expected to employ self-correction strategies to plan, write, revise, and redraft their texts, using everyday vocabulary and verbs. They should also be proficient in delivering presentations using various forms of media, both printed and digital.

### **3.3 Vocational English as Vocational Students' Need**

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Vocational English based on several theories and previous studies will be discussed. Hidayatulloh (2022) states that ESP instruction shares many characteristics with general English instruction, despite some traits that are more common in other specialized fields. According to Hutchinson and Waters in (Astika, 2014), the strategy for ESP should be founded on the ideas of successful language acquisition and instruction. However, in the past the linguistic components of the language were the main focus of ESP instruction. Nowadays, the emphasis is on improving communication abilities, and the learning process is tailored to individual needs to master language.

Another researcher also says that ESP classes are comparable to language teaching generally, which places a greater focus on language usage (Crokors in Budianto, (2003)). The clear distinction is in the specific subject. ESP courses place more of an emphasis on something other than language

proficiency than English for Specific Purposes courses do on language proficiency. According to this claim, language proficiency is a required ability that students have to possess so they will perform successfully in their prospect workplaces. An ESP course is a means, not an end in itself, unlike English courses generally. Additionally, ESP should be viewed simply as a method of instruction.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) in Astika (2014) describe English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as a language learning approach designed to meet the specific needs of learners. The fundamental idea of ESP is that since language varies depending on its context of use, it is possible to identify the unique characteristics of a particular setting and use them as a foundation for designing learners' courses. This concept underscores the context-specific nature of ESP, positioning it within various specialized or disciplinary discourse communities. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) in Rhahima et al. (2021), ESP encompasses several key characteristics, including a focus on improving language proficiency in a target skill, a theoretical approach, materials tailored to students' needs, knowledge of linguistic rules, instructional discourse, and social practices, the use of appropriate language and activities, the implementation of suitable strategies, and the promotion of functional English. These features highlight ESP's practical orientation, ensuring that learners develop language skills directly relevant to their field of study or profession, ultimately enhancing their ability to communicate effectively in specialized contexts.

According to Irshad and Anwar (2018), ESP is a type of English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and also English Language Teaching (ELT). Both teachers and students are already familiar with (ESP), particularly when it comes to teaching and learning English at vocational schools. The teacher may employ ESP to assist students in achieving their objectives in particular domains, taking into account the students' skills requirements (Viana et al., 2018).

Initially, according to Platt (1996) in (Khosiyono, 2018), the origin of ESP was from immigrants who was learning English who employed the ESP method to get ready for work. ESP is necessary for vocational students to enhance their specialized knowledge and abilities. Due to industry expectations, graduates from vocational schools must possess specialized knowledge and abilities based on work desks. Explained by Taillefer, 2007 and Cowling, 2007 in Hidayatulloh (2022) in which the quality of ESP teaching and learning process will be reflected on how proper and much the need analysis. By doing this, the teacher and the students would be able to match what they want and need respectively. The following step is the teacher's analysis, during when they choose the approach, subject matter, and activities for the language class process. Because of this, ESP practice and materials should be related to the students' future careers (Rhahima et al., 2021).

A part of ESP, English for Vocational Purposes, is focused on specific fields, careers, or skills. In vocational school, EVP is required for the design of ESP materials (Widodo, 2016). EVP is required for vocational students in order to advance their knowledge and abilities for the workplace, according to Widodo (2016). Because students actually use the language in real-world settings, the classroom activities are situated within the learning vocational competencies grand practices. As a result, proficiency of English can be seen by practicing it in the dynamist society and particular fields (Platt (1996) in Khosiyono (2018)). Due to this, Vocational English is now officially recognized in the field of education, particularly in secondary vocational education.

English for vocational purposes or vocational English can be defined as a part of ESP that focuses on specific fields, trades, or occupation. Designed for pupils who have a specific vocational interest, vocational English is a socio-institutionally located curriculum in the secondary school sector.

Due to this, Vocational English is now officially recognized in the field of education, particularly in secondary vocational education. English for vocational purpose or vocational English can be defined as a part of ESP that focuses on specific fields, trades, or occupation. Designed for pupils who have a specific vocational interest, vocational English is a socio-institutionally located curriculum in the secondary school sector. It is clear that conducting an analysis of needs is a very important start before creating materials for teaching and learning a language or designing a language assessment.

English teachers, school staffs, and curriculum designers must collaborate to identify solutions that will satisfy the demands of students, including their language, learning, and field-specific needs (Ahmed Alsamadani, 2017).

### 3.4 Analyzing English Learning Outcomes Based on the Needs Analysis in ESP Setting: Results and Discussion

According to Kemdikbud (2022), English language skills in the Merdeka Curriculum are categorized into three key elements: Listening-Speaking, Reading-Viewing, and Writing-Presenting. These elements structure the learning process and align with the developmental needs of students. For Phase E, which corresponds to Grade X students, the curriculum outlines specific learning outcomes that guide English language instruction. At this stage, students are expected to engage with spoken, written, and visual texts in English, adapting their communication to different contexts, purposes, and audiences. Various text types—including narrative, description, procedure, exposition, recount, report, and authentic texts—serve as the primary learning references. Students use English to express thoughts, emotions, and discuss familiar topics or current issues relevant to their age group. Additionally, they develop the ability to read for information and meaning, including making implicit inferences when interpreting texts. Writing and visual production also become more varied, with students gaining an increased awareness of text purpose and target audience. These learning outcomes emphasize communication skills, comprehension, and creative expression, ensuring that students develop a practical and meaningful engagement with the English language.

**Table 1.** English Learning Outcomes E Phase

Skills Element	The Elaboration of Learning Outcomes
Listening-Speaking element	"By the end of Phase E, students use English to communicate with teachers, peers and others in a range of settings and for a range of purposes. They use and respond to questions and use strategies to initiate and sustain conversations and discussion. They understand and identify the main ideas and relevant details of discussions or presentations on youth-related topics. They use English to express opinions on youth-related issues and to discuss youth-related interests. They give and make comparisons. They use non-verbal elements such as gestures, speed and pitch to be understood in some contexts."
Reading-Viewing element	"By the end of Phase E, students read and respond to a variety of texts, such as narratives, descriptions, procedures, expositions, recount and report. They read to learn or to find information. They locate and evaluate specific details and main ideas of a variety of texts. These texts may be in the form print or digital texts, including visual, multimodal or interactive texts. They are developing understanding of main ideas, issues or plot development in a variety of texts. They identify the author's purposes and are developing simple inferential skills to help them understand implied information from the texts."
Writing-Presenting element	"By the end of phase E, students write a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts, through guided activities, showing an awareness of purpose and audience. They plan, write, review and redraft a range of text types with some evidence of self-correction strategies, including punctuation and capitalization. They express ideas and use common/daily vocabulary and verbs in their writing. They present information using different modes of presentation to suit different audiences and to achieve different purposes, in print and digital forms."

The analysis of English learning outcomes using ESP needs analysis models by Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) in Rahman (2015) is showed in the table. In their model, Dudley-Evans and St. John place particular emphasis on the following topics: (1) learners' professional information; (2) learners' personal information; (3) learners' language information about the target situations; (4) learners' lacks; (5) learners' needs from the course; (6) learners' language learning needs; (7) learners' communication information in the target situation; and (8) environmental information.

**Table 2.** The result of the analysis of ESP needs using Dudley-Evans & St. John's model

Aspect	The existence of English learning outcomes	
learners' professional information	Covered/existing	It is addressed but lacks vocational specificity, as it applies broadly to secondary students without focusing on particular professions.
learners' personal information	Covered/existing	with vocational students included in Phase E and F of the learning outcomes
learners' language information about the target situations	Covered/existing	with no vocational specification (kinds of particular situations revealed but do not provide specific vocational fields)
learners' lacks	Not Covered/existing	
learners' needs from course	Covered/existing	with no vocational specification (kinds of particular grammar, vocabularies, etc revealed but do not provide specific vocational glossary)
language learning needs	Covered/existing	With no vocational specification (kinds of particular situations revealed but do not provide specific vocational fields)
communication information in the target situation	Covered/existing	with no vocational specification (kinds of particular situations revealed but do not provide specific vocational fields)
environmental information	Covered/existing	with no vocational specification (kinds of particular information revealed but do not provide specific vocational fields)

To sum up, the result of the English learning outcomes analysis towards students' need analysis in ESP setting using Dudley-Evans & St. John's model, it is found that most of need aspects are not covered in the learning outcomes sections. Even several aspects have emerged but still in general terms.

A trustworthy educational program should be built on an examination of the needs of students, according to one of the primary principles of the development of curriculum (Sularti et al., 2019). There are several components of ESP language that needs analysis. One of the components is The PSA (Present Situation Analysis) method focuses at the students' strengths and weaknesses to figure out what stage they are at the initial stage of their language study. There are three primary information sources: the students themselves, the language-teaching facility, and the "user-institution," such as the students' place of employment. An ESP practitioner enquires about each of these parties' individual skill levels, resources, and perspectives on language teaching and learning.

However, we can't find it in the formula of the English learning outcomes even it concerns on the E phase that used for upper secondary level including vocational school. All the narration of the learning outcomes are still in General English views. Even though, there are the strengths and weaknesses of learning GE in vocational school (Sari & Wirza, 2021) but vocational English should be

applied well for vocational students. Follows are the strengths and weaknesses of learning GE in vocational school based on Sari&Wirza (2021);

**Table 3.** The strengths and weaknesses of learning GE in vocational school based on Sari&Wirza (2021)

Strengths	Weaknesses
Based on the educational standards, teaching and learning activities can help students learn English.	Both the teacher and the students show little comprehension or motivation to develop their ESP abilities.
The students are still learning English in order to understand the language's general listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.	The teacher and pupils are unprepared to use English in the workplace due to their lack of excitement and thoughtfulness when learning ESP.
Students are able to understand the language in a broad context.	The GE in learning English for vocational purposes is unrelated to the needs of the students, who require ESP abilities for employment.

Based on the findings above, the English learning outcomes analysis towards students' need analysis in ESP setting using Dudley-Evans & St. John's model points out that most of the need-related aspects aren't dealt with in the learning outcomes segments. Even though several aspects have been revealed, they are still in general terms. And according to the analysis by using PSA (Present Situation Analysis) component, even though it refers to the E phase used for upper secondary level, including vocational school, we are unable to discover it in the formula utilized on the English learning outcomes. The description of the learning outcomes is still all delivered in general English. Although learning GE in a practical setting has positive and negative aspects, vocational English should be used effectively by students in this field.

Boudjadar (2015) identified effective strategies for integrating ICT into writing classrooms, which can also be applied in vocational English classes. These strategies include establishing clear guidelines and expectations for using technology, such as proper citation practices and avoiding plagiarism. Teachers should also encourage critical thinking and self-reflection by asking students to evaluate the reliability of online sources and reflect on their writing process. Additionally, balancing online and offline activities is essential to help students develop diverse writing and communication skills. Finally, combining technology with other teaching methods, such as peer reviews and teacher feedback, creates a comprehensive and well-rounded writing curriculum.

An effective approach to teaching ICT-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) involves several key steps to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. The process begins with the teacher analyzing the learning outcomes (CP) outlined in the curriculum to determine the focus of instruction. Based on this analysis, the teacher selects suitable digital tools, such as Canva or Kinemaster, to create interactive learning materials. For instance, when teaching procedure texts to Grade 10 automotive engineering students, the teacher can design a video-based lesson that introduces the definition, structure, and language features of procedure texts. The video can incorporate technical visuals and engineering-related clips to make the content more relevant and engaging.

To reinforce learning, the video may include guided exercises, such as puzzles, word jumbles, and cloze texts based on real-world technical procedures. Students can then apply their understanding by writing their own procedure texts based on their vocational experiences, such as "How to Refill Motorcycle Lubricant Oil," "How to Clean a Carburetor," or "How to Operate a Manual Car." To further support comprehension, the video can feature an ESP glossary that expands students' technical vocabulary.

Once students complete their writing tasks, they should be encouraged to present their work in a format of their choice, whether through live presentations, video recordings, or voice recordings.

Teachers play a crucial role in guiding students through the writing process, from prewriting and drafting to revising and proofreading, ensuring well-structured and effective writing. The session should conclude with a reflection activity, where students and teachers review the learning process, provide peer and teacher feedback, and discuss areas for improvement. This structured approach fosters active participation, personalized learning, and practical skill development in ESP instruction.

### 3.5 Teacher's perception and challenges: Interview Results and Discussion

The interview data revealed some information regarding the teacher's perceptions of the current curriculum 2022, English for tenth-grade vocational students' target needs, and the challenges in implementing the regulation in her English class.

The teacher reported having over 20 years of experience in teaching English at a vocational school, having started in 2003. This extensive teaching experience provides valuable insight into the teacher's deep understanding of vocational education, which can inform the effectiveness and adaptability of the curriculum and instructional strategies over time. As stated by the teacher below:

*Q1: How long have you taught English in Vocational school?*

*T : "It's been more than 20 years, I think... I have taught English here since 2003.*

However, the teacher expressed uncertainty about the specific approach she used but identified a blend of Communicative Teaching Learning (CTL) and Project-Based Learning as key components of their instructional practices. But she also noted a shift towards a genre-based approach in alignment with the current curriculum. This indicates the teacher's flexibility and responsiveness to curriculum requirements, adapting their teaching methods to meet both student needs and the evolving educational guidelines. As the teacher answered as follows:

*Q2: What kind of teaching approach do you use in teaching?*

*T : I don't know exactly what approach I use, but it seems to be Communicative teaching learning and project-based learning. But for now, sometimes ... I am used to doing the genre-based approach. It's because we have to teach based on current curriculum.*

For the next question;

*Q3: So, your school have conducted Merdeka curriculum or 2022 curriculum... what do you think about this current curriculum, Ma'am?*

*T1: Yes, of course. My school have implemented the curriculum from the early year it's introduced by the government. Since we have experienced several curriculum changes so it does not make me shocked and I think other teachers feel the same. As the new thing in our educational system, I think will be there some challenges and experience limitation faced by teachers, students, parents, and all education practitioners. Absolutely I need to learn and adapt the new things again as the basis of my teaching learning process.*

The teacher confirmed that their school has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum (2022 curriculum) from the outset, following its introduction by the government. Drawing from previous experiences with curriculum changes, the teacher indicated that they and their colleagues were not shocked by this new curriculum. However, they acknowledged that, as with any significant change, various stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and other education practitioners, face challenges and limitations. The teacher emphasized the necessity of continuous learning and adaptation to the new curriculum, recognizing it as essential for the development of their teaching and learning processes.

The teacher expressed concerns that the current curriculum, despite being the latest regulation, does not adequately address the specific needs of vocational high school students. She highlighted a key challenge: the curriculum continues to provide learning outcomes and textbooks designed for senior high school students, which may not be suitable for vocational learners. This indicates a gap in curriculum and material development, as the regulations still focus on general English, rather than tailoring content to the specialized needs of vocational students. As mentioned by the teacher;

Q4: What do you think about this newest regulation as an English teacher in Vocational high school, is there any challenges you face?

T : However, for me as an English teacher in vocational school, I haven't seen curriculum formula from the government which are suitable for students' needs. Even in this newest curriculum we are still given the learning outcomes and text books that be used by Senior high school students. It means that the regulation and material development for our vocational students are still in general English.

The teacher described a proactive approach to adapting the curriculum to meet students' needs. While using the textbooks provided by the school library, the teacher strategically selects materials that align with the students' vocational majors. She emphasized the importance of analyzing the learning outcomes to identify the specific needs of their students. Based on this analysis, the teacher develops customized learning modules for their English classes, ensuring that the content is relevant and tailored to support the vocational students' career-focused learning goals. She explained;

Q5: Then, is there any strategy you use to accommodate your students' need?

T : Sure. Even I use the text book provided in the school library, I am going to sort the material which are suitable for my students' major. I need to analyse and take the suitable parties from the learning outcomes to find the students' target needs, and develop the learning module for my English class.

The teacher shared that, as they teach tenth-grade vocational students, the learning outcomes they use are aligned with those specified in Phase E of the curriculum. In their analysis of students' needs, the teacher emphasized that developing an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum for vocational students requires focusing on skills that directly support their future careers.

Q6: How is your analysis result? Would you mind to tell me, ma'am?

T : Since I teach the tenth-grade students so the learning outcomes should be used is the learning outcomes in Phase E. I'll try to explain it based on my notes. Developing an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum and materials for vocational students requires aligning key aspects of language learning with their future career needs. The essential skill elements — listening-speaking, reading-viewing, and writing-presenting — are all crucial as they directly support the students' professional expertise. These skills enable students to communicate effectively within their vocational fields. In terms of text types, while narrative texts (such as storytelling and personal experiences) are common in general language learning, they may not be prioritized in vocational English education. This is because they are less relevant to the technical and professional demands of vocational students. Instead, texts like descriptions, procedures, expositions, recounts, and reports are more applicable to their future work environments. Additionally, expression skills such as self-introduction, congratulating and complimenting, thanking and expressing gratitude, asking for and giving opinions, and providing orders and instructions are essential. These forms of communication are directly applicable to the daily interactions students will face in their careers, making them crucial for effective vocational English teaching. And of course, students need more glossaries and vocabularies which are relevant with their specific major.

Based on the explanation, it can be displayed the table of vocational tenth grade student's target needs from the learning outcomes analysis as follows;

**Table 4.** Vocational tenth-grade student's target needs from the learning outcomes analysis

Aspect	Description	Vocational Students' Target Needs
Skill Elements	Listening-Speaking, Reading-Viewing, Writing-Presenting	All skill elements are aligned with the students' needs as they directly support their future careers in their respective fields.
Text Types	Narrative, Description, Procedure, Exposition, Recount, Report, and Authentic Text	Narrative texts may not be a priority in vocational English learning because they tend to focus on storytelling and personal experiences, which are less relevant to

		vocational students' technical or professional needs.
<b>Expression Skills</b>	Discussion – Expressing opinions on youth-related issues, making comparisons. Self-introduction, congratulating, complimenting, thanking, asking, giving opinions, giving orders, and instructions.	Self-introduction, congratulating & complimenting, thanking & expressing gratitude, asking and giving opinions, giving orders and instructions. These expressions are more relevant for students to function effectively in their future careers.

Additionally, the teacher recognized the need for specialized glossaries and vocabulary related to the students' specific vocational fields, further ensuring that the materials cater to their professional language needs.

In the currency implementation of this curriculum and its regulation products, in the field there are some challenges and experience limitation faced by teachers, students, parents, and all education practitioners to conduct this language policy in a proper way to gain the national education goals especially for vocational English teachers. This is in line with the statement that Vocational English materials should be provided to students, as materials include anything that can aid in language learning (Nikoopour and Amini, 2011). So that, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is crucial for vocational students as it targets their particular language learning needs (Anthony, 2018).

### 3.6 Vocational Students' Perception: Interview Results and Discussion

Six questions were provided to the students concerning their awareness of the curriculum, perception of the English learning experience, its relevance to the vocational field, challenges in learning English, the importance of English, and their expectations of the learning method.

**Table 5.** The Result of Students' Interview

Theme	Findings
Awareness of the New Curriculum	Students are aware of the implementation of the 2022 (Merdeka) Curriculum, but some feel that it is similar to previous curriculums.
Perception of English Learning Experience	Most students enjoy English learning due to interactive elements like games, quizzes, presentations, and videos. However, some find English difficult, especially with long reading materials that make them feel disengaged.
Relevance of English Learning to Vocational Fields	Many students feel that English lessons are not aligned with their vocational fields. The textbooks and materials used often lack relevance to their specific areas of study.
Challenges in Learning English	Students face difficulties with grammar and vocabulary, limiting their ability to fully understand and use English. Some students also struggle with interpreting English in general.
Importance of English for Future Careers	Students recognize the importance of English for their future careers, especially for working in global environments and achieving career goals.
Expectation of Learning Methods	Students expect more materials and lessons relevant to their vocational fields (e.g., automotive, mechanical engineering). They prefer interactive learning methods, such as videos and exercises, and focus on speaking and writing skills.

Based on the findings, students are aware of the 2022 Merdeka Curriculum but find it similar to previous ones, suggesting a lack of noticeable change. While they enjoy interactive lessons with games and videos, some struggle with long reading materials and find English challenging. A major issue is the lack of vocational relevance in the curriculum. Students feel that textbooks do not align with their career fields, highlighting a need for more industry-specific content. Lim (2022) discovered that ESP teachers frequently lack a sufficient understanding and experience uncertainty when teaching multiliteracies. As noted by Haryudin et al. (2020), creating teaching materials that are relevant to the

vocational fields of students is clearly challenging, often leading instructors to develop their own materials tailored to their specific teaching areas, such as English for multimedia, marketing, accountancy, and others.

Students face difficulties with grammar and vocabulary, limiting their English proficiency. They recognize English's importance for their future careers and want learning to focus on practical skills like speaking and technical writing. So, the curriculum needs to better align with students' vocational needs and improve language skills to better prepare them for their careers. Irawan et al. (2022) highlight that to effectively support and provide students with the required instructional resources, ELT teachers in vocational high schools must use English for specific courses or purposes that align with the learning contexts of the study program.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This critical discourse study has examined English learning outcomes in the Merdeka Curriculum from the perspective of vocational students' needs. The findings reveal that while the curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, competency development, and adaptability to individual interests, it lacks vocational specificity, particularly in addressing the communication and professional skills required for different career paths. Although the curriculum sets general English proficiency goals at the CEFR B1 level, it does not adequately prepare vocational students for workplace-specific language use. Teacher interviews indicate that while educators adapt diverse teaching methods such as Communicative Teaching, Project-Based Learning, and Genre-Based Learning, they often compensate for the curriculum's general nature by customizing materials to meet vocational needs. However, they face challenges due to the lack of specialized content, vocational glossaries, and sufficient resources, underscoring the need for better support in curriculum implementation.

The implications of this research suggest that ESP practitioners and policymakers should incorporate needs analysis findings into the development of language teaching regulations, vocational training programs, and specialized ESP courses tailored to specific vocational fields. Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations, including a focus on a single educational policy and limited empirical data on student outcomes. Future research should explore comparative studies of different curriculum implementations, investigate student perspectives on vocational English learning, and assess the effectiveness of customized ESP materials in vocational education settings. These efforts would contribute to more effective policy development and practical improvements in vocational English instruction.

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