

Research Article

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Evaluating ESP Programs for Non-English Majors: A Case Study from a Vietnamese Higher Education Institution

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Abstract

Background/purpose. As English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs expand across Vietnamese higher education, evaluating their effectiveness becomes crucial for improving learner outcomes and aligning instruction with professional demands. This study aims to evaluate the perceived effectiveness, strengths, and limitations of an ESP program at a multidisciplinary university in Vietnam, focusing on curriculum content, teaching practices, materials, assessment, and learner support.

Materials/methods. A mixed-methods approach was employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the ESP program. Quantitative data were collected via a student questionnaire (n = 1463) that measured perceptions of content relevance, skill development, teaching methods, assessment, and support. Qualitative data included classroom observations, document analysis (e.g., syllabi and LMS content), and semi-structured interviews with eight lecturers and four focus group discussions of 41 students. Data were triangulated to identify converging themes and discrepancies across sources.

Results. Quantitative results showed generally positive student perceptions of the program, particularly regarding teaching methods, feedback, and perceived necessity. However, areas such as confidence in applying language in professional settings and the alignment of assessment tasks with workplace demands suggested room for improvement. Qualitative findings revealed challenges, including generic course content, insufficient time for productive skills, inconsistent use of digital tools, and varied assessment practices.

Conclusion. This study highlights the importance of aligning ESP programs with learner needs and professional contexts. Findings call for more discipline-specific materials, expanded speaking/writing practice, enhanced digital integration, and stronger assessment guidance. A learner-centered evaluation approach is essential for continuous improvement of the ESP program.



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1. Introduction

In recent decades, ESP has emerged as a vital branch of English language teaching, especially in tertiary education, where learners must use English in discipline-specific academic and professional contexts. ESP differs from general English in its focus on specific learner needs, genres, and communicative practices within particular fields such as business, law, technology, and healthcare (Anthony, 2018; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). It aims to help learners function effectively in target academic or professional situations (Hyland, 2022; Basturkmen, 2006).

The development of ESP has paralleled broader changes in global economies and workplace demands. As English continues to operate as a lingua franca in international professional settings, ESP programs aim to bridge the gap between language education and the expectations of globalized industries (Johns, 2012; Hyland, 2019). Consequently, the ability to tailor English instruction to the communication demands of specific disciplines has become not only a pedagogical necessity but also a strategic imperative in higher education (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2020; Rahman, 2015). ESP is now widely seen as a vehicle for enhancing graduates' employability, particularly in emerging economies such as Vietnam, where English proficiency is increasingly linked to professional advancement and cross-border collaboration (Chi & Vu, 2024; Nguyen, 2017).

Despite its growing importance, the implementation of ESP programs often faces multiple challenges. Teachers frequently report a lack of training in both subject-specific content and ESP pedagogy, resulting in difficulties designing relevant materials and assessments (Tran & Pham, 2022; Mulyah & Aminatun, 2020). In Vietnam, institutional constraints such as insufficient needs analysis, outdated teaching materials, and poor alignment with industry expectations have been widely reported as obstacles to effective ESP delivery (Hoa & Mai, 2016; Linh, 2022). These issues are further compounded by the absence of systematic program evaluation practices, which are crucial for ensuring responsiveness to learner and workplace needs and for promoting continual improvement (Basturkmen, 2015; Starfield & Hafner, 2025).

While several studies have examined ESP course design or teachers' perceptions in Vietnam and other Asian contexts (e.g., Tran & Pham, 2022; Petraki & Khat, 2020), few have provided a systematic, mixed-methods evaluation of entire ESP programs that integrates student, teacher, and institutional perspectives. Moreover, previous research has tended to focus on isolated aspects such as needs analysis or materials design, leaving a gap in understanding how these elements interact in real instructional contexts.

This study contributes to closing that gap by offering a comprehensive, triangulated evaluation of an ESP program serving non-English majors at a Vietnamese multidisciplinary university. Unlike previous research, it combines large-scale quantitative data with multiple qualitative sources—focus groups, interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis—to provide a holistic account of program effectiveness. The study thus advances empirical understanding of ESP implementation and evaluation in resource-constrained and diverse academic environments, offering insights that can inform both local policy and international ESP practices.

To address this gap, the present study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the ESP program implemented at a public university in Ho Chi Minh City. Specifically, it examines how well the program meets students' learning needs and the professional demands of their respective fields, as well as the alignment of the assessment methods with the program's objectives. The research objectives are threefold:

(1) to assess the extent to which the ESP program addresses students' academic and professional requirements;

(2) to explore the perspectives of both lecturers and students on the content, teaching methods, and materials used in the program; and

(3) to identify challenges encountered in its implementation.

Additionally, the study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of current assessment methods and propose improvements to enhance the overall quality of teaching and learning within the ESP program at this public university. To guide the investigation, the study addresses two research questions. The first question was examined through quantitative data obtained from the student questionnaire. In contrast, the remaining questions were explored using qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, and document analysis.

1. Does the ESP program at the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City effectively meet students' learning needs and the demands of relevant industries?

2. What are the perspectives of students and lecturers regarding the content, teaching methods, and learning materials used in the ESP program?

3. What challenges and difficulties do students and lecturers encounter during their participation in and implementation of the ESP program?

2. Literature Review

2.1. *The Concept of ESP*

ESP refers to the teaching and learning of English tailored to meet the specific needs of learners in particular academic or professional domains. Rooted in applied linguistics and shaped by the practical demands of globalization, ESP has developed into a distinct and dynamic field within English language education (Anthony, 2018; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). The primary goal of ESP is to equip learners with the language skills necessary to function effectively in real-life contexts—whether writing a business report, interpreting a legal document, or presenting scientific research. As such, ESP emphasizes communicative competence in context over broad language proficiency. Historically, ESP evolved in response to the growing need for English in science and technology following World War II, and has since expanded to include diverse professional and academic fields (Johns, 2012; Salmani-Nodoushan, 2020).

A key distinction between ESP and General English lies in the specificity of its objectives, content, and instructional design. While General English focuses on the four macro skills in a broad, non-specialist context, ESP is driven by the learner's purpose and target situation, often involving domain-specific genres and vocabulary (Basturkmen, 2006; Hyland, 2022). ESP is not simply about teaching technical words; instead, it involves introducing learners to the discourse practices and communicative conventions of their disciplines. The content and methodology are therefore derived from a rigorous needs analysis and shaped by an understanding of the target field's language use. This learner-centered and goal-oriented approach to curriculum design is what sets ESP apart and underscores the importance of contextualized instruction for students preparing to enter specific professions or academic settings.

These principles also informed the design of the present study. The evaluation framework adopted here reflects the same learner-centered perspective, focusing on how well the ESP program aligns with students' academic and professional communication needs and how instructional practices address those needs in context.

2.2. *Needs Analysis in ESP Design*

Needs analysis is central to ESP, serving as the foundation for designing relevant and effective courses. It involves the systematic identification of learners' present situation needs (PSNs) and target

situation needs (TSNs), forming a bridge between students' current proficiency and the communicative requirements of their future academic or professional contexts (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Theoretically, needs analysis is grounded in the belief that language learning becomes more meaningful and motivating when it reflects real-world tasks. Practically, it includes gathering data through surveys, interviews, observations, and analysis of authentic texts to inform the selection of course content, teaching methods, and assessment tools (Basturkmen, 2015; Anthony, 2018).

In practice, however, the implementation of needs analysis varies widely across institutions. In some cases, it is underutilized or superficially conducted due to time constraints, lack of institutional support, or limited teacher training in ESP methodology. When omitted or inadequately performed, the resulting courses may fail to reflect learners' goals or workplace realities, thereby reducing the effectiveness of instruction. In recent studies, there has been a push for integrating more dynamic and inclusive approaches to needs analysis, including the use of technology and broader stakeholder engagement (Feak & Chan, 2025; Assassi, 2025). Nonetheless, the consistent application of needs analysis as a foundation for ESP course design remains a critical challenge, especially in developing contexts where ESP is mandated but not adequately resourced.

In this study, needs analysis serves not only as a theoretical lens but also as a methodological foundation. The dimensions explored in the student questionnaire such as content relevance, teaching methodology, and assessment alignment were derived from established needs analysis frameworks. This conceptual connection ensured that both the data collection instruments and the analysis process directly reflected the core principles of ESP curriculum evaluation.

2.3. Teaching Approaches in ESP

ESP teaching methodologies have evolved from traditional language-focused instruction to more content-integrated and task-based approaches. Early ESP courses often adopted structural or grammar-translation methods, focusing on discipline-specific vocabulary and sentence patterns (Basturkmen, 2006; Johns, 2012). While useful for some low-proficiency learners, this approach has been criticized for its lack of communicative focus and limited relevance to real-life language use. As ESP matured, pedagogical shifts moved toward communicative and content-based instruction (CBI), which integrates language learning with subject-matter knowledge. In CBI, students learn language through engaging with authentic texts, lectures, and tasks relevant to their fields, thus promoting deeper learning and disciplinary literacy (Hyland, 2022; Hafner & Miller, 2018).

A related and increasingly popular approach is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which fully integrates the teaching of subject content with English language instruction. CLIL is particularly prevalent in European and Asian contexts where English is used as a medium of instruction (EMI) in tertiary education (Coyle, 2012; Huang et al., 2024). Both CBI and CLIL reflect a pedagogical trend toward authenticity and learner autonomy, encouraging students to use English as a tool for acquiring knowledge rather than as an end in itself. However, the successful implementation of these approaches requires teachers who are not only proficient in English but also familiar with the content and communicative practices of the discipline. This presents a major challenge in many ESP settings, including Vietnam, where instructors may lack training in specialized content or the pedagogical frameworks necessary to apply CBI or CLIL effectively.

2.4. Evaluation of ESP Programs

Program evaluation is an essential but often underdeveloped aspect of ESP course implementation. It plays a crucial role in ensuring that the curriculum, teaching practices, and learning outcomes remain aligned with learners' evolving needs and industry expectations (Anthony, 2017; Basturkmen, 2015). A well-designed evaluation system helps identify strengths and areas for

improvement, informing future curriculum development and teacher training initiatives. Davis and McKay (2018) argue that ESP program evaluation should include both formative and summative components and engage multiple stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, and employers. This multidimensional perspective enables a comprehensive understanding of the program's effectiveness and sustainability.

Despite its importance, many ESP programs lack systematic evaluation. In numerous cases, feedback is gathered solely through student satisfaction surveys at the end of the course, without longitudinal tracking of learning outcomes or follow-up with graduates and employers (Petraiki & Khat, 2020; Shanavas et al., 2024). Moreover, few institutions invest in rigorous evaluation frameworks that include classroom observation, document analysis, or stakeholder interviews. As a result, curriculum revision often relies on anecdotal evidence rather than data-driven insights. In contexts such as Vietnam, where ESP programs are expanding rapidly, the absence of institutionalized evaluation mechanisms has led to concerns about program quality and relevance. This underscores the need for in-depth, empirical studies that critically examine ESP program implementation and inform more robust evaluation models.

2.5. Challenges in the Vietnamese Context

ESP in Vietnam has grown significantly over the past two decades, driven by national education reforms and the increasing demand for workforce-ready graduates. However, this expansion has also revealed deep-rooted challenges in program design, delivery, and evaluation. One of the key institutional constraints is the lack of coordination between English language departments and content faculties, which leads to fragmented course planning and poorly contextualized materials (Nguyen et al., 2019). Many universities adopt generic ESP syllabi or textbooks that are not tailored to students' specific disciplines, undermining the relevance and effectiveness of instruction. Additionally, institutional priorities often focus more on coverage and compliance than on pedagogical innovation or learner engagement.

Empirical findings from previous Vietnamese studies further illustrate these institutional and pedagogical challenges. For instance, Hoa and Mai (2016) found that over 65% of Vietnamese ESP teachers lacked formal training in content-based instruction, which often led to reliance on outdated, grammar-oriented materials. Tran and Pham (2022) similarly reported that teachers experienced difficulty designing authentic tasks due to insufficient institutional support and limited collaboration with content departments. Nguyen et al. (2022) observed a persistent gap between university ESP curricula and workplace language practices, concluding that many courses "reflect academic rather than occupational priorities." (p.450)

These findings collectively point to a systemic issue: while ESP has been institutionalized in Vietnamese higher education, mechanisms for needs analysis, professional development, and program evaluation remain underdeveloped. The scarcity of discipline-specific materials and large class sizes (often exceeding 40 students per class) further constrain teachers' ability to apply communicative and task-based approaches effectively. From an international perspective, Vietnam represents a microcosm of the challenges faced by many emerging economies seeking to reconcile global English requirements with localized educational realities. Strengthening ESP research and evaluation in this context, therefore, offers insights not only for national curriculum reform but also for the broader field of ESP implementation in developing higher education systems.

Building on these systemic challenges, teacher expertise represents another critical concern in the Vietnamese context. ESP instructors frequently come from general English teaching backgrounds and may lack sufficient knowledge of the subject matter they are expected to teach. This creates a disconnect between course content and professional language practices, particularly in specialized fields such as economics, technology, or law (Nguyen et al., 2022). Moreover, the availability of

teaching resources remains limited. Teachers often have to adapt materials from international sources without adequate time, support, or training in instructional design. These challenges are compounded by large class sizes, exam-oriented assessment systems, and low student motivation, which together constrain ESP's potential to support real-world language use. Given these ongoing issues, there is a pressing need for context-sensitive evaluations of ESP programs in Vietnam that can inform more responsive curriculum development and teacher preparation strategies. The present study addresses this need by systematically evaluating the ESP programs at a public university in Ho Chi Minh City, providing evidence-based insights to guide future improvements.

In summary, the reviewed literature highlights the growing importance of ESP in higher education, persistent challenges in aligning instruction with professional needs, and the limited presence of systematic program evaluation, particularly in Vietnam. These insights underscore the need for an empirical investigation that draws on both quantitative and qualitative evidence to provide a comprehensive understanding of ESP program effectiveness.

Building on this theoretical and contextual foundation, the following section outlines the research design, participants, and instruments used to answer the study's research questions. This structural alignment between the literature and the methods ensures coherence and clarity in addressing the study's objectives.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the ESP program implemented at a public university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The rationale for adopting this design stems from the study's multidimensional objectives: to assess the program's effectiveness in meeting students' academic and professional needs, to understand students' and lecturers' perspectives on program content, teaching methods, and materials, and to explore the challenges encountered in program implementation. Quantitative data were collected via a structured questionnaire administered to a large cohort of students, providing insights into the ESP program's overall effectiveness and satisfaction levels. Qualitative data were obtained through focus group discussions with students, semi-structured interviews with lecturers, classroom observations, and document analysis. These qualitative methods provided in-depth, contextualized accounts of stakeholder experiences and allowed the researchers to evaluate how assessment practices and instructional delivery align with program objectives.

3.2. Research Context

The research was conducted at a large public university in Ho Chi Minh City that offers undergraduate programs in business, law, economics, communication, technology, and design. English is a compulsory subject for all students, taught as a multi-module course that transitions from general English to ESP. The ESP curriculum includes three modules totaling 10 credits. The first module (4 credits) focuses on General Business English, using *Business Partners* by Pearson as the core textbook. The second and third modules (3 credits each) are specialization-specific and categorized into four tracks: English for Business, English for Economics, English for Law, and English for Communication, Technology, and Design (CTD). These latter modules are supported by in-house, compiled materials developed by academic staff in the School of Foreign Languages and delivered through a blended format using the university's Learning Management System (LMS). This structured and discipline-specific ESP sequence forms the basis of the study's investigation into how effectively the program supports students' academic preparation and workplace readiness.

3.3. Participants

Participants in the study included both students enrolled in the ESP program and lecturers responsible for teaching it (Table 1). A convenience sampling strategy was used to recruit student participants for the questionnaire. While this approach was practical given institutional access and scheduling constraints, it carries potential limitations in terms of representativeness. Specifically, students who were less satisfied with the ESP program might have been less likely to participate, potentially introducing a degree of self-selection bias. This limitation was mitigated by inviting students from multiple classes and by ensuring anonymity and voluntary participation to encourage honest responses. A total of 1,463 valid responses were collected across the four ESP tracks: 243 students from CTD, 652 from Business, 448 from Economics, and 121 from Law. These responses provided large-scale quantitative data on students' evaluations of the program's content, methodology, materials, and assessment practices. For the qualitative component, purposeful sampling was employed to ensure diversity in student background (e.g., major, gender) and genuine interest in participation. Eight focus group discussions were conducted with 41 students, representing all ESP tracks. Additionally, eight ESP lecturers participated in semi-structured interviews. These lecturers were selected to ensure coverage of all four ESP areas (two per area), with variation in gender and age (three males, five females, aged 34 to 56). Their insights provided professional perspectives on the program's delivery and alignment with learning outcomes.

Table 1. Summary of Participants

Participant Group	Sampling Strategy	Number of Participants	Business	Technology, Communication, Design	Economics	Law
Students (Questionnaire)	Convenience Sampling	1,463	652	243	448	121
Students (Focus Groups)	Purposeful Sampling	41	12	10	11	8
Lecturers (Interviews)	Purposeful Sampling	8	2	2	2	2

3.4. Instruments

3.4.1. Questionnaire

The student questionnaire was developed in English and adapted from previously validated instruments used in similar ESP program evaluations. Specifically, it drew on the frameworks and item structures of Kalkan and Genç (2023), who evaluated an intensive English program for fifth-grade students in Turkey, and Le et al. (2021), who conducted a contextualized evaluation of an ESP coursebook for medical students in Vietnam. These studies offered practical insights into evaluating ESP course content, teaching methods, and learner satisfaction. After adaptation, the questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness. A back-translation procedure was employed, and bilingual ESP specialists reviewed both versions for accuracy and clarity.

The finalized questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section one introduced the study's objectives and included a consent form to ensure voluntary and informed participation. Section two collected demographic data, including gender, age range, academic cohort, major, ESP track (e.g., Business, Economics, Law, or Communication–Technology–Design), and English proficiency levels

(e.g., IELTS, TOEIC, CEFR). Section three comprised 31 Likert-scale items organized into five thematic dimensions: content relevance (eight items), teaching methodology and materials (eight items), development of language skills (six items), access to learning resources and support (three items), and assessment and general program evaluation (four items). Additionally, two items were included to assess overall satisfaction. Section 4 featured two open-ended questions designed to capture students' personal learning experiences and their suggestions for program enhancement. The questionnaire was aligned with the first and second research questions of the study, aiming to capture students' evaluations of the ESP program's effectiveness and their perspectives on curriculum delivery.

3.4.2. Focus Group Discussions

To gain deeper insight into Research Questions 2 and 3, specifically students' perspectives on instructional content, teaching methods, materials, assessment, and program implementation, eight focus group discussions were conducted across the four ESP specializations (two groups per area). Each group consisted of four to six student participants, selected to ensure diversity in major, gender, and level of engagement. Discussions were conducted in Vietnamese to enable participants to express their thoughts freely and naturally. Prior to each session, ground rules were established to ensure a respectful and open environment for dialogue. All sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and thematically analysed. These discussions yielded rich qualitative data that complemented the questionnaire findings and uncovered nuanced student experiences and challenges across ESP contexts. The protocol for the discussions was informed by recent frameworks in ESP program evaluation (Anthony, 2018) and qualitative inquiry in higher education (Saldaña, 2021), providing structure while enabling emergent themes to surface from student narratives.

3.4.3. Semi-Structured Interviews

To address all three research questions from the instructor's perspective, particularly issues related to course design, instructional methods, material development, assessment practices, and implementation constraints, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight ESP lecturers (two from each specialization). Participants were selected to ensure gender diversity and a range of teaching experience. Interview protocols were developed based on existing literature in program evaluation (Basturkmen, 2018), allowing both guided questioning and flexibility for elaboration. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted in Vietnamese, recorded with consent, and later transcribed and coded thematically. These interviews provided professional insights into the alignment between curriculum design and actual teaching practices, as well as the challenges of delivering ESP content to diverse student populations.

3.4.4. Classroom Observations

To validate and enrich findings related to pedagogical practices and student engagement, eight classroom observations were conducted, one per lecturer across the four ESP areas. Each observed session lasted approximately 90 minutes. A structured observation protocol, informed by Basturkmen (2021), was used, focusing on key dimensions such as instructional delivery, integration of ESP materials, teacher–student interactions, and evidence of formative or summative assessment practices. Sample items included prompts such as “To what extent are classroom tasks aligned with students' target professional contexts?” and “How frequently are students encouraged to use discipline-specific terminology during classroom discussions?”

The observation was conducted by a senior lecturer with more than ten years of experience in ESP teaching and program evaluation, ensuring familiarity with both linguistic and pedagogical dimensions of ESP instruction. The observer was a colleague of the participating instructors but had no supervisory or evaluative role, thereby reducing the likelihood of power dynamics influencing

behavior. To minimize potential observer bias or the “shadow effect,” the observer maintained a non-participant stance, sat unobtrusively in the classroom, and refrained from interacting with the participants during the lesson. The structured format of the protocol and the use of post-observation reflective notes helped ensure reliability and objectivity in the recorded data.

Observations provided valuable contextual evidence of how ESP instruction unfolded in practice, and whether it aligned with stated program goals and student expectations. These insights also served to triangulate and deepen the interpretation of both survey and interview data.

3.4.5. Document Analysis

A detailed document analysis was undertaken to evaluate how the intended curriculum aligned with stated learning outcomes and assessment practices. The documents reviewed included syllabi of all three modules, teacher-created PowerPoint slides, and course content uploaded to the LMS. The analysis focused on consistency across modules, the integration of academic and professional skills relevant to each specialization, and the transparency of assessment criteria. This form of analysis was guided by principles in ESP materials evaluation (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018) and educational program documentation review (Hinkel, 2017). The document analysis offered critical insights into how curriculum design supports or constrains effective implementation and helped identify areas for instructional and material improvement.

3.5. Data Collection Process

Data collection was conducted in three sequential phases to allow for triangulation and progressive refinement of inquiry. In the first phase, the student questionnaire was distributed both online and in-class, and relevant instructional documents were collected. In the second phase, eight focus group discussions were held concurrently with eight classroom observations. These two sources provided complementary insights into student perceptions and actual classroom practices. In the final phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight ESP lecturers. This sequencing allowed the researchers to contextualize student feedback, observe instructional delivery firsthand, and integrate teachers' perspectives into the overall evaluation.

3.6. Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS to generate descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. This analysis provided an overview of students' evaluations of program components and their levels of satisfaction. This approach was appropriate for the exploratory nature of the study, which aimed to generate a holistic understanding of program effectiveness rather than to test specific hypotheses. Inferential analyses such as *t*-tests or ANOVA were not applied at this stage, as the primary goal was to describe trends across the overall sample. However, future studies may extend this analysis to examine differences among departments, majors, or demographic groups. Qualitative data, including focus group transcripts, interview transcripts, field notes from observations, and instructional documents, were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. Data coding was both inductive and deductive, with themes organized around the study's research questions: program effectiveness, stakeholder perceptions, implementation challenges, and assessment alignment. Findings from different sources were triangulated to ensure analytical rigor and consistency.

3.7. Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire's reliability was verified through a pilot test with a small group of students. Minor adjustments were made based on feedback, and internal consistency was checked using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a high reliability score of .981 across the 31 items, indicating excellent internal consistency (Table 2). The instrument was also developed with reference to

validated ESP evaluation studies, ensuring content validity. For the qualitative components, interview and focus group protocols were designed to capture a broad range of perspectives while remaining focused on the research objectives. The combination of multiple instruments and participant groups strengthened the credibility and dependability of the data.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Result

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.981	.981	31

3.8. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was supported by triangulation across data sources, prolonged engagement during the data collection phase, and peer debriefing throughout analysis. Thick descriptions of the research context and participant demographics were provided to support transferability. An audit trail was maintained to document methodological decisions and coding procedures, enhancing dependability. Confirmability was addressed by keeping researcher bias in check through reflective memo-writing and consultation with experienced colleagues during the interpretation phase.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. All participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to decline or withdraw at any point without penalty. Informed consent was obtained from all student and teacher participants prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure storage of audio recordings and transcripts. Ethical approval was granted by the university's academic ethics committee, ensuring the protection of all participants' rights and well-being throughout the research process.

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative Findings

This section presents the results of the student questionnaire administered to evaluate the ESP program. The questionnaire consisted of 31 items, divided into six thematic categories: (1) Course Content and Learning Outcomes, (2) Teaching Methods and Materials, (3) Skill Development, (4) Resources and Support, (5) Assessment and Feedback, and (6) Overall Satisfaction and Perceived Necessity. The internal consistency of the instrument was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .981$), indicating excellent reliability across the 31 items. Descriptive statistics for each item are reported below.

4.1.1. Course Content and Learning Outcomes

Students showed moderately positive perceptions regarding the alignment of course content with their disciplinary needs (Table 3). The item "The course content is relevant to my field of study" received a mean of $M = 3.671$, while the item on course content reflecting current trends in students' fields scored slightly higher ($M = 3.721$). Students generally found the course objectives clear and aligned with their expectations ($M = 4.135$) and agreed that the program improved their English for professional purposes ($M = 4.150$).

Table 3. Student Perceptions of Course Content and Learning Outcomes in the ESP Program

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	The course content is relevant to my field of study.	3.671	0.796
2	The course content is up-to-date and reflects current trends in my field.	3.721	0.836
3	The course objectives are clear and meet my expectations.	4.135	0.849
4	The program has adequately prepared me for future professional work.	4.094	0.883
5	Topics in the ESP program are useful for my intended profession.	3.534	0.859
6	The ESP program has improved my English for professional purposes.	4.150	0.855
7	I feel confident applying the language skills learned in the ESP program to real work environments.	3.911	0.940
8	The ESP program helped me achieve the expected learning outcomes.	3.992	0.893

However, the item related to students' confidence in applying language skills to real work environments received a somewhat lower mean ($M = 3.911$), and perceptions of whether the program helped achieve the expected learning outcomes also hovered around a moderate level ($M = 3.992$). Notably, the item "Topics in the ESP program are useful for my intended profession" received a relatively low mean ($M = 3.534$), suggesting room for improvement in tailoring content to students' specific career paths.

4.1.2. Teaching Methods and Materials

Students responded positively to the instructional methods and materials used (Table 4). The effectiveness of teaching methods was rated highly ($M = 4.232$), as was the use of diverse teaching strategies ($M = 4.255$). Instructors' use of technology in lessons received one of the highest means ($M = 4.241$), reflecting the growing role of tech-enhanced learning.

Table 4. Student Evaluations of Teaching Methods and Materials in the ESP Program

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	The teaching methods (lectures, discussions, activities) used in the program were effective.	4.232	0.805
2	The teaching materials (textbooks, handouts, online resources) matched my proficiency level.	4.182	0.859
3	The teaching materials were relevant to my field of study.	3.886	0.845
4	The instructors effectively used technology in the lessons.	4.241	0.828
5	Practical materials (e.g., case studies, professional documents) were regularly used in the program.	4.038	0.926
6	I was satisfied with the quality of the learning materials (textbooks, supplemental, and digital resources).	3.935	0.867
7	The teaching methods encouraged my active participation.	4.176	0.863

8	Instructors employed various teaching methods to enhance my learning experience.	4.255	0.830
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Students generally agreed that materials matched their proficiency levels ($M = 4.182$) and supported active learning ($M = 4.176$). However, materials' disciplinary relevance received a slightly lower rating ($M = 3.886$), and overall satisfaction with learning materials was also moderate ($M = 3.935$), indicating a need for more tailored and engaging resources.

4.1.3. Skill Development

The ESP program was viewed as effective in fostering macro-skill development (Table 5). Reading was the highest-rated skill ($M = 4.196$), followed by listening ($M = 4.075$), writing ($M = 4.054$), and speaking ($M = 4.053$). However, professional communication skills in English received a more modest score ($M = 3.907$), and students' confidence in using English in professional contexts also remained moderate ($M = 3.938$), suggesting the need for more real-life communicative practice.

Table 5. Student Perceptions of Language Skill Development Through the ESP Program

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	The program helped me improve my English listening skills.	4.075	0.876
2	The program helped me improve my English speaking skills.	4.053	0.882
3	The program helped me improve my English reading skills.	4.196	0.790
4	The program helped me improve my English writing skills.	4.054	0.876
5	The program helped me develop professional communication skills in English.	3.907	0.956
6	I feel more confident using English in professional settings (e.g., meetings, presentations, negotiations).	3.938	0.937

4.1.4. Resources and Support

Students generally appreciated the availability of instructor support and timely feedback (Table 6). The highest score in this category was for "I received timely feedback from instructors" ($M = 4.319$), followed by instructor support in addressing learning issues ($M = 4.258$). However, the availability of supplementary resources, such as tutorials, digital tools, and library access, had a lower mean ($M = 3.865$), indicating an area for further institutional support.

Table 6. Student Perceptions of Support and Supplementary Resources in the ESP Program

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	The program provided sufficient additional resources (e.g., library access, online databases, tutorials, digital tools).	3.865	0.869
2	Instructor support was timely and effective in addressing my learning issues.	4.258	0.779
3	I received timely feedback from instructors.	4.319	0.763

4.1.5. Assessment and Feedback

Perceptions of assessment practices were generally favorable, particularly regarding instructor feedback ($M = 4.282$). Students found that assessment methods such as tests, presentations, and

projects fairly evaluated their learning ($M = 4.040$) and helped track their progress ($M = 3.877$). However, the item on real-world alignment of assessments received the lowest score in this section ($M = 3.659$), suggesting a gap between classroom assessments and workplace communication demands (Table 7).

Table 7. Student Perceptions of Assessment and Feedback Practices in the ESP Program

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	Assessment methods (e.g., tests, presentations, projects) were used to fairly evaluate my knowledge and skills.	4.240	0.782
2	Tests and assessments accurately reflected my proficiency and progress during the course.	3.877	0.821
3	Instructor feedback helped me improve my learning performance.	4.282	0.760
4	The assessment methods reflected real-life tasks I may encounter in future jobs.	3.659	0.823

4.1.6. Overall Satisfaction and Perceived Necessity

Students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the ESP program (Table 8). The highest mean across all items was recorded for the statement “This program is necessary for students” ($M = 4.283$), highlighting its perceived value. Overall satisfaction with the program also scored high ($M = 4.190$), suggesting that, despite some areas needing improvement, students viewed the program positively.

Table 8. Student Satisfaction and Perceived Necessity of the ESP Program

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	I am satisfied with my overall experience in the ESP program.	4.190	0.817
2	This program is necessary for students.	4.283	0.846

4.2. Qualitative Findings

This section presents the qualitative findings derived from student focus group discussions, teacher interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Using thematic analysis, five major themes emerged that shed light on the strengths and limitations of the ESP program and expand upon the quantitative results.

4.2.1. Diverse Student Needs vs. Generic Content

A consistent theme across all data sources was the tension between the heterogeneity of students’ academic specializations and the general nature of the ESP course content. The ESP program is designed around broad and interdisciplinary themes such as economics, business, communication, technology, and law. Each course contains six content-based units (e.g., *Economics in the Modern World*, *Operations: Producing the Goods*, *ICT in the Workplace*, *Crimes and Civil Wrongs*) and offers foundational exposure to English for professional purposes. However, students enrolled in the ESP courses major or minor in diverse fields, including accounting, finance, e-commerce, real estate, agricultural business, business administration, and marketing, each with unique professional language needs and communicative practices.

This disciplinary diversity has made it difficult for the program to cater equally to all students. In focus group discussions, students expressed a recurring concern that the curriculum did not

adequately reflect the specific terminology or communicative genres of their fields. One accounting major shared: *“We studied business in general, like marketing and production. But in accounting, I wish we had more specific practice like analyzing financial statements or using accounting terms in presentations.”* Similarly, a finance student commented: *“It’s helpful to know about macroeconomics and labor markets, but I’d rather spend more time reading finance news, investment reports, or simulating real business meetings.”*

Teachers echoed these views, acknowledging the practical limitations of a unified ESP syllabus. One lecturer explained: *“I teach classes with students from six or seven different majors. I have to keep things general; otherwise, the material won’t apply to half the class. It’s a compromise we always have to make.”* Another teacher elaborated on the structural constraints: *“The materials cover topics like globalization or sustainability, which are useful, but they’re not industry-specific. I can’t design tasks for every student’s major in a 90-minute lesson.”*

These concerns were confirmed through document analysis. The syllabi of all ESP courses (e.g., *English for Economics, English for Business, English for Law, and English for Technology, Communication, and Design*) adopt a modular structure with six broad units per course. Unit titles such as *The Business of Business, Macroeconomics but Microfinance, or Law and Order* reflect general themes rather than sector-specific applications. A review of LMS content across all modules revealed a uniform pattern: vocabulary glossaries via Quizlet, interactive grammar tasks, and comprehension questions based on general texts. While these resources support foundational learning, they lack discipline-specific scaffolding.

Classroom observations also highlighted this mismatch. In one observed session of *English for Economics*, the teacher introduced vocabulary related to globalization and technological innovation. However, students specializing in real estate or agricultural business struggled to see the connection to their future professional contexts. One observer noted: *“Students seemed attentive during the vocabulary pre-teaching phase, but when asked to relate the topic to their own fields, they struggled or gave vague answers. Only one or two could connect the content to their major.”*

Moreover, while teachers were provided with ready-made slide decks, answer keys, and audio recordings for listening tasks, these materials were consistent across all groups and lacked contextual adaptation. As such, instructors had to supplement the course with their own materials or activities when possible. However, as one teacher pointed out, *“I do prepare extra slides and articles sometimes, but there’s no guideline or institutional support for adapting materials. It depends on our initiative, which isn’t sustainable.”*

In sum, while the ESP curriculum introduces essential topics across economics, business, law, and technology, its generic design limits its responsiveness to the specific linguistic, discursive, and professional needs of students from diverse academic tracks. This theme directly addresses Research Question 1 (on the program’s effectiveness in meeting students’ learning and professional needs) and Research Question 2 (on student and lecturer perspectives). The dissatisfaction expressed in the qualitative data complements the quantitative survey results, in which items related to content relevance and field-specific usefulness received lower average scores than other dimensions, such as teaching quality or overall satisfaction. This finding underscores the challenge of balancing disciplinary diversity with content relevance in ESP program design. It highlights the need for adaptable curricula that integrate both shared academic skills and field-specific language practices.

4.2.2. Skill-Integrated Approach and Its Constraints

The ESP program is designed to foster integrated language development across the four macro-skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This intention is evident in the course objectives stated in the syllabi for all modules, which consistently reference skill development for both academic and

professional communication. Many students acknowledged the shift from grammar-focused general English courses to more interactive ESP lessons. A student from *English for Business 1* shared: *“In this course, we actually have to speak in class. We give presentations and talk in pairs or groups. It’s not just grammar exercises anymore.”* Another student from the *English for Law* course appreciated the chance to apply English in context: *“The case studies and debates made me feel like I was using English for real situations, not just passing a test.”*

However, this skill-based approach was constrained by several structural and pedagogical factors. The most frequently cited challenge was the overwhelming amount of technical and domain-specific vocabulary introduced in each unit. Students expressed that while learning new terminology was useful, it often dominated class time and limited opportunities for meaningful application in speaking or writing. One finance major explained: *“We learned about terms like inflation, interest rates, and financial risk, but we mainly read about them and answered questions. There wasn’t enough time to actually write or speak using those words.”* Another student elaborated:

“Each unit had a long glossary, and the teacher spent a lot of time helping us understand the meanings. But after that, we moved to the next topic. I wanted more time to use the words in discussion or writing tasks.”

Classroom observations confirmed this imbalance. In an observed lesson from *English for Economics 2*, the first 45 minutes were spent on reading comprehension and vocabulary explanation. While a brief speaking activity followed, only a few students participated, and the teacher quickly transitioned to reviewing answers from a listening task. Speaking and writing tasks, when present, were often assigned as homework or group projects with minimal in-class practice or feedback.

This pattern was not limited to economics-related courses. In a *Technology, Communication, and Design* class, the teacher focused on defining technical terms like “human-computer interaction” and “sustainable urban design.” While students demonstrated good comprehension in multiple-choice tasks, they had little chance to discuss or present their understanding orally. One teacher candidly admitted: *“I want to do more speaking or writing activities, but in a 90-minute class with 30 students and so much vocabulary to cover, it’s just not feasible.”*

From a curriculum perspective, the document analysis revealed that the coursebook and LMS activities heavily emphasized vocabulary quizzes, reading comprehension, and listening gap fills. For example, in *English for Business 2*, units like *Funding Company Activities* and *Managing Financial Accounts* included technical texts and glossaries but offered limited scaffolded writing models or oral interaction tasks beyond rehearsed presentations.

Teachers interviewed for this study highlighted time as the most pressing constraint. The ESP courses are allocated only 45 hours per semester, and instructors are expected to cover complex content, introduce field-specific terminology, develop four skills, and conduct assessments. As one teacher explained, *“Writing always gets pushed to the end. We might assign a report or email for homework, but we don’t have time to teach the writing process in class.”* Another added, *“Even speaking becomes superficial. We ask students to present, but there’s little time for spontaneous dialogue or feedback.”*

The impact of these limitations was also evident in the survey results. While students rated their overall satisfaction with communicative activities relatively high, items related to writing practice and speaking fluency development received lower scores. This suggests a gap between course objectives and students’ actual learning experiences.

In sum, while the ESP program promotes integrated skill development, the heavy vocabulary load, limited instructional time, and large class sizes constrain the implementation of communicative and productive skill-building. This theme is directly related to Research Question 1 (effectiveness in

meeting students' needs) and Research Question 2 (students' and lecturers' perspectives on pedagogy and materials). The qualitative data reinforce the quantitative findings, illustrating how institutional constraints hinder the realization of the program's communicative goals. This finding reveals a gap between communicative intentions and classroom realities in ESP instruction. It underscores the need for curriculum redesign and time allocation that better support the development of productive skills alongside technical vocabulary learning.

4.2.3. Balancing Academic and Professional Communication

A recurring concern across all qualitative data sources was the tension between academic literacy development and the need for practical, workplace-oriented communication skills. While the ESP courses aimed to prepare students for both academic success and professional contexts, students and teachers alike noted a skew towards academic genres and performance-based assessments.

Students appreciated the structured academic tasks—such as summarizing readings, completing structured reports, and delivering formal presentations—which supported their university learning. However, many expressed anxiety about applying English in real-world professional settings. A student majoring in business administration shared: *“We did reports and slides, and that helped with school. But when I imagine working in a company and sending emails or talking to clients, I don't feel confident. We didn't practice those situations.”* Another student from the economics faculty added: *“I know how to write about economic trends or answer comprehension questions, but writing an email to a manager or making a phone call in English—those are the things I wish we had done.”*

These views were echoed by lecturers, who acknowledged that the current curriculum and assessment practices tend to favor academic outputs. As one teacher from the *English for Business* course explained: *“Our assessments are usually reports, presentations, or summaries. It's easier to grade, and it fits university requirements. But I agree, we lack real business communication—like writing memos, negotiating deals, or handling customer inquiries.”* Another instructor reflected on the lack of opportunity for spontaneous language use: *“Students give presentations, yes, but they are rehearsed. You can tell they memorize the script. There's very little back-and-forth or real-time thinking.”*

This observation was supported by classroom data. In one *English for Economics 2* session, students presented on “Labor Markets” using PowerPoint slides. While their language was largely accurate, delivery was scripted and interaction with peers or the teacher was minimal. There were no follow-up discussions or impromptu Q&A sessions. In another *English for Law 2* class on “Contract Law,” students role-played legal scenarios. However, the role-play was highly structured, with written dialogues prepared in advance. While the activity provided contextual learning, it fell short of simulating the ambiguity and spontaneity of professional interaction.

Document analysis further confirmed the academic leanings of the program. Unit titles such as *“Macroeconomics but Microfinance”*, *“The Business of Business”*, or *“Emerging Media and Communication”* reflect a strong conceptual focus. On the LMS, most tasks were comprehension-based (multiple choice, gap-fill, true/false) or vocabulary-centered. While some modules included presentations or writing tasks, these were often end-of-unit products rather than ongoing communicative practice. Teachers also highlighted the pressure of assessment alignment. One noted: *“The university wants consistency and measurable outcomes. Academic tasks are easier to standardize. But we need to push for more authentic, job-related communication in our assessments.”*

Despite these constraints, both students and lecturers expressed a strong interest in incorporating more workplace-relevant activities. Suggested improvements included practicing job

interviews, writing formal and informal emails, negotiating in role-plays, participating in mock meetings, and analyzing workplace scenarios.

This theme aligns closely with Research Questions 1 and 2, revealing both the strengths and gaps in the ESP program's preparation for students' future careers. The quantitative findings also reflected this tension: while students rated the importance of professional communication highly, they were less satisfied with how much it was practiced in the classroom. The triangulated data suggest a need to recalibrate the balance between academic expectations and practical communicative competence in future curriculum revisions. This finding highlights the need to bridge the gap between academic literacy and professional communication in ESP programs. Strengthening authentic, workplace-oriented tasks can enhance students' confidence and transfer of language skills beyond academic settings.

4.2.4. Availability and Limitations of Materials and Resources

Although core textbooks and structured LMS units support the ESP program at UEH, all data sources identified notable gaps in the breadth and depth of available materials—particularly those that cater to different learners' needs, learning styles, and discipline-specific expectations.

Students in the focus groups consistently highlighted a lack of variety in classroom input and practice materials. While acknowledging the usefulness of the LMS and the printed textbooks, many students reported that the resources were overly reliant on reading passages and written vocabulary tasks. As one student from the *English for Business 2* course put it: *“The lessons were okay, but they felt repetitive. We just read the text, learned the glossary, and answered some questions. I wanted to explore more—like videos of real business cases or how things work in companies.”* Another student majoring in technology design commented, *“For our major, visual examples and short clips would help us understand how to describe things in English. But most of what we had were PDFs and slides. There wasn't much that showed real-life projects or designs.”*

Observations conducted across five classes revealed inconsistencies in how instructors incorporated digital resources. Some teachers integrated tools such as *Kahoot*, *Quizlet*, *Google Forms*, or collaborative activities via *Google Docs* to check understanding and promote student interaction. In one class on *“The Internet”* in *English for Technology, Communication, and Design*, the teacher used an online brainstorming board and played a short YouTube clip on cybersecurity to initiate discussion.

In contrast, other sessions were more traditional. Teachers read aloud from PowerPoint slides, asked students to read and translate textbook passages, or played audio clips with limited student engagement. In these classes, technology use was minimal or absent. A key constraint appeared to be teacher autonomy and lack of institutional support. During interviews, instructors openly shared their dependence on self-sourced materials and digital tools. One teacher noted: *“There's no common training for using digital tools. I create my own activities on Quizizz or find YouTube clips when I have time. But not everyone does that, and students in different classes have very different experiences.”* Another elaborated: *“I've asked for more up-to-date case studies or video materials, especially for law and business classes, but there's no official repository. We don't have a shared platform where teachers can contribute or borrow resources.”*

The document analysis further substantiated this variability. Each unit on the LMS was accompanied by consistent features—namely, a *Quizlet glossary*, *crossword games*, unit-based readings, and comprehension quizzes. However, there were few links to authentic videos, podcasts, or updated articles from the fields of economics, business, law, or design. The syllabi referenced “supplementary materials” but did not specify sources, and there was no central digital library or curated list of external resources to enrich the learning experience.

In courses like *English for Economics 2*, where units covered themes such as “*The Economics of Healthcare*” or “*Labor Markets*”, the absence of multimedia content made the topics feel abstract and disconnected from current events. Similarly, in *English for Law 1*, sessions on “*Computers in Law*” and “*Theft Act*” lacked real legal documents or multimedia scenarios to anchor learning in authentic practice.

This theme directly relates to Research Questions 1 and 2, highlighting that while the ESP program’s foundation is structured and consistent across courses, its capacity to meet diverse learning needs and professional expectations is hindered by insufficient access to updated and engaging materials. Quantitative results also echoed this concern, with students rating “access to supplementary resources” lower than other areas of the program, suggesting that improvements in this domain would enhance both student engagement and perceived program relevance. This finding reveals that limited access to authentic, multimodal materials reduces the program’s ability to meet diverse learner and disciplinary needs. Enhancing institutional support for shared, updated, and technology-enriched resources is vital to sustain engagement and contextual relevance in ESP instruction.

4.2.5. Implementation Challenges: Time, Assessment, and Support

A cross-cutting issue affecting the delivery of the ESP program at UEH is the constraint of time and the lack of institutional support structures, particularly regarding assessment practices and teacher collaboration. Despite a clear commitment to integrating language skills and aligning with professional content areas, both students and lecturers described the 45-hour course structure as insufficient for meaningful instruction, practice, and feedback.

In the teacher interviews, all respondents expressed frustration about balancing multiple instructional demands within a compressed timeframe. One lecturer candidly stated: “*We’re expected to do everything—teach academic vocabulary, practice all four skills, introduce professional genres, and assess speaking and writing. But with just 45 hours, we end up rushing through everything. There’s no room for deep learning.*”

This concern was echoed in classroom observations, where it was noted that lessons often emphasized vocabulary lists and text comprehension, leaving less time for speaking and writing practice. In some classes, the only opportunities for students to practice productive skills occurred during end-of-unit presentations or written assignments, often completed outside of class.

Students consistently confirmed this pattern. Many felt that productive skills, especially writing, were under-supported. One student shared: “*We had to do a presentation for the final assessment, but in class, we only saw one example and didn’t practice. The teacher gave us a score, but we didn’t really know what we did right or wrong.*” Another student in the *English for Economics 2* course commented, “*Writing was just homework. Sometimes the teacher collected it, sometimes not. There wasn’t detailed feedback, just a grade.*”

Classroom observations revealed that while assessment rubrics were mentioned or distributed in some sessions, they were rarely explained or modeled. This inconsistency led to confusion among students about performance expectations, particularly for speaking and writing tasks. Teachers attributed this inconsistency to the lack of collaborative planning and professional development. One instructor remarked, “*There’s no common platform for sharing best practices. Each teacher writes their own rubric or adapts one from the past. It’s hard to ensure fairness across different classes when we’re all doing our own thing.*”

Document analysis of LMS materials confirmed this lack of consistency. While rubrics were available for major tasks such as presentations and reports, they were often uploaded as standalone files without exemplars or model responses. A few units included scaffolding tasks to help students

prepare for assessments, such as draft submissions, peer reviews, or self-assessment checklists. The absence of annotated models or video exemplars on the LMS further limited students' ability to understand and meet performance criteria.

These findings align with the quantitative data, where students rated "assessment and feedback" lower than other aspects of the course. While many agreed that assessment tasks were "clear" and "aligned with learning goals," they expressed only moderate satisfaction with the timeliness, usefulness, and fairness of feedback.

The qualitative and quantitative data together underscore the need for structural changes to improve assessment practices in the ESP program. These include extending instructional time, standardizing rubrics, incorporating formative feedback loops, and providing professional development and opportunities for peer collaboration for teachers. As one teacher concluded, *"If we had more time and clearer institutional guidelines, we could do so much more. Right now, it feels like every teacher is just trying to survive the semester."*

This theme addresses Research Question 3, highlighting the logistical and pedagogical challenges teachers and students face in implementing and participating in the program. Without additional support, the program risks perpetuating uneven learning experiences and assessment outcomes. This finding underscores that limited instructional time and inconsistent assessment support hinder the program's pedagogical effectiveness and fairness. Strengthening institutional coordination, feedback mechanisms, and teacher development is essential to ensure sustainable quality in ESP delivery.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide a multifaceted understanding of how students and teachers perceive the ESP program at the university, reflecting both its strengths and areas requiring further refinement. These findings reinforce and expand upon the earlier literature, particularly regarding the principles of learner-centered ESP design, the role of needs analysis, and the challenges of balancing academic goals with workplace relevance.

Overall, students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the relevance and clarity of the ESP course content. This aligns with Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) argument that ESP courses must be grounded in a clear understanding of learners' professional and academic needs. High ratings for content relevance suggest that the program effectively meets students' general disciplinary needs in areas such as economics and business. However, the qualitative findings also highlight a significant tension between the broad design of the curriculum and the diverse academic backgrounds of the student population. While the content may be suitable for a general business context, it falls short in meeting the more specialized needs of students in fields such as accounting, e-commerce, and agricultural business. This confirms Basturkmen's (2010) critique that ESP programs often struggle to strike a balance between general relevance and discipline-specific specificity. It also echoes Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) call for ongoing needs analysis and flexibility in course design, especially in multi-major classrooms.

In terms of skill development, both quantitative and qualitative data suggest that the program prioritizes the development of the four macro-skills, with particular success in fostering reading and listening. Students reported improved proficiency and appreciated the increased focus on communication tasks compared to previous general English courses. This finding supports the view that ESP programs should provide opportunities for integrated skill use in authentic contexts. However, the limited attention to speaking and writing in classroom practice, especially in formative feedback and interaction, reflects a gap between curriculum goals and actual implementation. As observed in prior studies, productive skills are often deprioritized in time-constrained ESP courses, which undermines the holistic development of communicative competence. This challenge is

especially pronounced in large classes where writing tasks are assigned as homework and speaking is reduced to scripted presentations. Such constraints limit opportunities for authentic language use and spontaneous communication, which are essential for workplace readiness as emphasized in the literature.

Another important issue is the tension between academic and professional communication. The findings show that students were exposed to academic genres and formal tasks such as summaries and oral presentations, but lacked practice in functional, real-world communication such as negotiation, customer interaction, or professional email writing. This aligns with observations from previous studies that ESP programs situated within university contexts often lean more toward academic language training than toward professional discourse. The reliance on monologic, scripted presentation tasks confirms that authentic communicative competence, as required in the workplace, may not be fully addressed. This supports Hyland's (2002) observation that ESP programs must balance academic preparation with practical language use for employment. The course titles and LMS activities also reflect a more academic orientation, suggesting that while the program is effective in promoting content-related language development, it may not fully prepare students for real-world communicative demands.

The findings of this study align with and extend current theoretical perspectives on ESP pedagogy for workplace communication. According to Basturkmen (2010), effective ESP teaching integrates needs analysis, discourse awareness, and task-based learning grounded in authentic professional contexts. Similarly, Hyland (2022) and Johns (2012) emphasize that workplace language competence develops through engagement in situated, genre-based tasks that mirror real communicative practices. The results from this study highlight a gap in these areas, as the program emphasizes academic literacy over functional communication. This suggests that ESP programs should adopt a more situated, task-oriented approach that enables learners to develop the pragmatic and interactional skills necessary for professional performance.

The analysis of teaching materials and resources also reflects a mixed picture. On the one hand, students were generally satisfied with the quality of the materials and the integration of technology into instruction, indicating alignment with principles of contextualized and multimodal ESP teaching. On the other hand, qualitative data revealed inconsistency in the use of digital tools and a lack of engaging, authentic resources such as videos, podcasts, or industry-specific case studies. Some teachers actively used online tools and supplemented the textbooks, but others relied heavily on slides and lecture-based delivery. This variability suggests a lack of institutional coordination and support for material development, a problem that has been noted in previous evaluations of ESP programs in similar contexts. The absence of a centralized material repository or training in digital resource design limits instructors' ability to deliver differentiated and engaging instruction, despite the availability of technological platforms.

Assessment and feedback were generally perceived as fair and supportive, with students highlighting timely feedback as a key strength of the program. This finding confirms the importance of effective feedback mechanisms in language learning and program evaluation, as suggested by Brown and Glover (2006). However, the qualitative findings revealed inconsistencies in assessment practices, limited classroom discussion of rubrics, and insufficient support for speaking and writing assessments. These gaps reflect implementation challenges rather than design flaws and suggest a need for more robust professional development, peer collaboration, and quality assurance measures. Instructors' concerns about time pressure and large class sizes further illustrate the difficulties of consistently applying formative assessment principles. As noted in Alderson's (1992) work on program evaluation, the success of any language program depends not only on curriculum design but also on how assessment is integrated, standardized, and aligned with learning objectives.

Finally, the most pervasive issue cutting across all themes is the limitation of time and structural support. Teachers reported struggling to cover the content, build skills, and provide feedback within the 45-hour timeframe. Students noted that productive tasks often lacked sufficient class time, and assessment tasks were sometimes rushed. These institutional constraints reflect the systemic nature of ESP program challenges in many Asian educational settings, where logistical limitations often undermine ambitious curricular aims. The findings thus reinforce Brown's (2006) argument that language program evaluation must take into account contextual and structural variables that shape the feasibility of teaching practices and learning outcomes.

In sum, the findings confirm many of the principles and challenges discussed in the literature on ESP program development and evaluation. While the program demonstrates clear strengths in relevance, content clarity, and instructional commitment, its effectiveness is shaped by deeper institutional and pedagogical issues. Addressing these challenges will require ongoing needs analysis, differentiated curriculum design, stronger integration of professional genres, and more coordinated institutional support for instructors.

6. Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive evaluation of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program implemented at a multidisciplinary university in Vietnam, drawing on student surveys, classroom observations, document analysis, and interviews with both teachers and students. By triangulating quantitative and qualitative data, the study offers valuable insights into the perceived effectiveness, strengths, and challenges of ESP instruction in a context characterized by diverse learner needs and limited instructional time. The use of a mixed-methods approach allowed for a deeper understanding of how students and instructors experience the program on multiple levels—from curriculum relevance and pedagogical approaches to assessment practices and institutional support. These findings are particularly important for ESP programs operating within similarly resource-constrained or multi-disciplinary environments. They provide a grounded evidence base for future program revisions and reforms.

The findings highlight the generally positive perceptions of students regarding course content, teaching methods, skill development, assessment, and support. Students reported that the program contributed to improving their English proficiency for professional purposes and provided a foundational understanding of content relevant to their disciplines. Teachers also demonstrated a strong commitment to delivering skill-integrated lessons using a variety of instructional materials and activities. Nonetheless, persistent challenges were identified that may hinder the full achievement of learning outcomes. These include a lack of discipline-specific content, limited classroom time to develop speaking and writing skills, uneven use of digital resources, and inconsistencies in feedback and assessment implementation across instructors.

This study contributes to the existing literature by offering a contextualized evaluation of an ESP program situated in a Vietnamese higher education setting that serves a diverse and heterogeneous student population. Unlike many prior studies that emphasize either needs analysis or syllabus design in isolation, this research adopts an integrated lens, examining how curriculum content, teaching strategies, materials, assessments, and institutional factors collectively shape students' learning experiences. It also demonstrates the utility of learner-centered and teacher-informed evaluation frameworks for identifying areas of improvement and strengthening accountability. By providing a model of holistic evaluation, the study adds methodological value for researchers and practitioners engaged in ESP program development. It underscores the significance of aligning educational design with both student expectations and the communicative demands of future professional contexts.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample was limited to a single university, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other institutions

or national contexts. Second, while the study used mixed methods to generate a rich dataset, the analysis remained primarily descriptive and exploratory in nature. More analytical or longitudinal approaches may be needed to uncover the causal relationships between program components and student outcomes. Third, the perspectives of other key stakeholders, such as curriculum designers, policymakers, and employers, were not included, thereby limiting the study's ability to address broader institutional or labor market alignment. Future evaluations would benefit from a more comprehensive inclusion of these voices to capture the full ecosystem surrounding ESP program implementation. Finally, although the present study relied on descriptive statistics to provide an overall evaluation of the ESP program, future research could employ inferential analyses (e.g., *t*-tests or ANOVA) to explore whether students' perceptions differ significantly across disciplines, year levels, or gender. Such analyses would enhance the generalizability and analytical depth of the findings.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of responsive, context-sensitive ESP program evaluation that takes into account both learner needs and institutional constraints. Engaging both students and instructors in the evaluation process can help institutions improve the relevance and quality of ESP instruction. The findings call for greater differentiation of course content, more authentic and task-based instruction, stronger assessment support systems, and enhanced professional development for ESP educators. These improvements are essential for ensuring that ESP programs remain dynamic and adaptable to evolving academic and workplace communication demands. As Vietnam and other countries continue to internationalize their higher education systems, such responsive and evidence-informed approaches to ESP program design and evaluation will be increasingly critical.

7. Suggestion

Based on the findings, several practical and research-oriented recommendations emerge. First, ESP programs should adopt a more differentiated approach to content development, offering modules or materials tailored to students' fields of study such as accounting, finance, e-commerce, or design. Task-based learning activities and genre-specific instruction can enhance the transferability of language skills to real-world contexts. Second, institutions should invest in building centralized repositories of teaching and learning resources, including authentic texts, case studies, podcasts, and digital tools aligned with specific disciplines. Professional development and collaborative planning opportunities should also be provided to instructors to ensure consistency in assessment practices and promote the integration of innovative pedagogy. Third, future research should investigate the long-term impacts of ESP programs on students' performance in the workplace. Longitudinal studies or tracer studies that follow graduates into employment can yield insights into the effectiveness of ESP learning in real-world settings. Comparative studies across institutions or regions can also help identify contextual factors that shape ESP program outcomes. Finally, stakeholder voices—particularly those of alumni, employers, and curriculum planners—should be included in future evaluation studies to ensure that ESP programs are aligned not only with learner expectations but also with broader labor market and policy demands. Such multidimensional evaluation will be vital for strengthening the quality and accountability of ESP education in Vietnam and other similar contexts.

Declarations

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conducted in accordance with institutional guidelines and ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study.

Data Availability Statement. The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. To protect participant confidentiality, only de-identified and anonymized data will be shared.

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