

## PROFILING INDONESIAN VOCATIONAL STUDENTS' ENGLISH COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: AN ANALYSIS OF ELT SYLLABUS IMPLEMENTATION

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Article Info	Abstract
<b>Article History</b> Received: February 2025 Revised: April 2025 Published: July 2025	<i>Vocational schools provide practical training and technical education for various professions, such as automotive, construction, engineering and healthcare. Language skills are essential for competitiveness in the global era, as students use oral or written communication to share information and experiences. The purpose of this study was to determine the level of communicative competence, needs, and ways to develop students' competence. This research is a descriptive qualitative study that collected data from sixty students, three English teachers, and two officers. The study found that the communicative competence profile of private vocational school students is still low. Some of the factors that influence this condition are teachers' commitment and knowledge, students' competence, and school facilities. In order to be employed by the business world, graduates of private SMK must have several important abilities such as speaking, writing, reading, and have a good understanding of computer languages. These skills are essential to ensure that graduates can create official documents needed in the workplace, understand words and procedures, and communicate effectively. As a result, the growth of these skills will make graduates of private vocational schools more capable and readier to enter the workforce.</i>
<b>Keywords</b> Communicative competence; English language teaching; Teaching methodology; English syllabuses; Language skills;	
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### INTRODUCTION

Vocational students as youths have always been regarded as an asset to the social group by family, tribe or state. All students' programs are not well organized, so they need to be properly organized and trained for a specific job. Pramesti and Susanto (2023) also mentioned that Vocational schools itself are educational institutions that provide practical skills and training for specific occupations such as technology, healthcare, business, and industry. They seek to provide students with the knowledge and abilities required to enter the workforce after completing their education, with an emphasis on job-specific skills and career routes. On the flip side, their job performance relies on having the required manipulative skill, adequate technical knowledge, and the intelligence to apply that knowledge to the job's challenges (Lubis, Yudistira, & Saputra, 2025). A vocational school is a secondary education institution that teaches students particular skills and knowledge for various job kinds. These schools emphasize practical training and technical education, preparing students for professions in automotive, construction, engineering, and healthcare (Niswah et al., 2024). English classes in vocational schools face a significant challenge due to the imbalance between curriculum material and instructional time. Teachers only have 2 hours per week for English classes, which

may hinder students' proficiency and language learning objectives. Pandemic has forced educational institutions to close, emphasizing e-learning. Teachers face difficulties in communication using email and computer-related issues, highlighting the need for more user-friendly communication tools to enhance learning experiences (Made Ayu Bintang Aryani, Made Hery Santosa, 2022). However, (Indraswari & Kuswandono, 2018) mentioned that English teachers in vocational schools are motivated by intrinsic motivation, career advancement, and student success. They enhance their teaching practices through classroom action research, seek certifications and qualifications through Teacher Professional Development (TPD) programs, and strive to improve student learning outcomes. The desire for personal fulfillment and a positive impact on students' education drives them to actively pursue professional development opportunities. Therefore, teaching of those vocational intelligences should be supported by the ability of language since they are expected to be able to compete with other workers in a globalization era. They use language to share information and to construe their experiences either by spoken or written. They have contexts while interacting. They might communicate directly or indirectly to achieve their purposes.

Foreign language teaching is crucial in today's interconnected world, providing practical communication skills, cultural understanding, global awareness, and cognitive abilities. It promotes empathy, tolerance, and respect for different cultures, fostering a more inclusive society. By learning a foreign language, students become global citizens with confidence and understanding and for that we have to develop students communicative competence (Behnam Aghayani & Forough Rekabizadeh, 2024). Communicative competence refers to the ability to effectively communicate in a language, encompassing linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies (Fahrutdinova et al., 2016). Furthermore, Communicative competence as an essential component of language acquisition, concentrating on efficient language usage in a variety of social circumstances. This study investigates how the Communicative Approach might improve students' English speaking abilities (Dao & Thu, 2020). To communicate meaningfully in real-world conversations, humans must not only be able to pronounce sounds, words, and sentences correctly according to the relatively static rules of a given language, but also be able to do so in a socially appropriate manner at the time of speaking. This ability is referred to as communicative or interactional competency (Hughes, 2017). In this study, the theory that is more suitable to be used as a reference for vocational school students is from Hughes. That is because his theory explains about communicative or interactional competency refers to the ability to pronounce sounds, words, and sentences correctly according to language rules, while also expressing them in a socially appropriate manner during real-world conversations especially for students who are ready to enter the workforce like in Vocational school.

Communicative competence is crucial for students learning English as a foreign language, enabling them to communicate effectively in spoken and written forms, adapt their language to different contexts, negotiate meaning, and overcome communication barriers, facilitating language learning and intercultural communication (Hery, 2017). Meanwhile based on previous studies there are several some of difficulties and challenges in English communicative competence faced by students. According to Tursunovich that students facing challenges in developing communicative competence in a foreign language face several obstacles. These include lack of practice, limited vocabulary and grammar, cultural differences, fear of making mistakes, listening comprehension, limited exposure to authentic materials, and lack of motivation (Ilkhom Tursunovich Associate Professor, 2023). In addition, Muhammadolimovna said that students face various challenges in communicative competence, including language proficiency, cultural differences, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, limited exposure, lack of motivation, communication anxiety, and difficulty understanding nonverbal cues (Muhammadolimovna, 2023). Furthermore, Chen defined that

students may face challenges in developing communicative competence, including limited exposure to diverse communication situations, technology-related challenges, time constraints, lack of feedback, cross-cultural misinterpretations, active listening difficulties, and balancing accuracy and fluency (Chen, 2021). However, Kasimova stated that students face challenges in developing communicative competence due to factors like cultural background, educational environment, and personal experiences. Common challenges include lack of practical experience, over-theorization, limited time and content, deficiencies in communication skills, and insufficient level of competence (Ўзбекистан, 2020). In short, students facing challenges such as lack of practice, limited vocabulary, cultural differences, fear of mistakes, listening comprehension, limited exposure to authentic materials, and lack of motivation.

Previous research has identified numerous challenges students face in developing English communicative competence. These include lack of practice, limited vocabulary and grammar, cultural differences, fear of mistakes, listening comprehension issues, limited exposure to authentic materials, and lack of motivation. Additional challenges include language proficiency, fear of mistakes, lack of confidence, communication anxiety, and difficulty understanding nonverbal cues. By synthesizing and building upon these findings, the research can propose tailored strategies and interventions to enhance students' communicative competence by addressing specific issues like cultural differences, lack of exposure, and motivation barriers. The research also contributes to existing literature by analyzing how factors like cultural background, educational environment, and personal experiences shape students' communicative competence development. The novelty lies in the detailed exploration of these diverse challenges, which can inform more effective syllabus implementation strategies and support mechanisms in vocational education settings.

This research was conducted at a private vocational school which is one of the technology and information vocational schools. Its graduates are needed to manage industrial technology systems. They have an important role in maintaining those systems. Therefore, they must be prepared as workers who are proficient in their fields. All the programs in vocational schools require English as one of their competencies. The level of students' English ability will determine their positions in industry. If they master English well, they could work properly. If not, they will be jobless or work in any field which is not their skills. For example, the Philippines who have foreign language competency is paid more expensive than Indonesian.

This study examined the students' ability to communicate effectively (a case study of English curriculum implementation at a private vocational school in Tangerang City). In this research, the term 'syllabus' is primarily used in the United Kingdom. This term describes the American concept known as a curriculum (Brown, 2007): 225). The investigation is based on some following reasons: (1) There is a gap between the industry's needs of proficient workers and the quality of vocational graduates, (2) The government—Ministry of Education and Culture does not give sufficient guidelines for vocational teachers to develop their students' language ability that is needed for their works. Therefore, the purposes of this study are to investigate level and need of communicative competence of vocational students; and to find out the appropriate method to teach vocational students.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This research employed a descriptive method with a qualitative approach, focusing on collecting, analyzing, and interpreting non-numerical data to provide a rich and detailed understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. As emphasized in qualitative research, the primary goal is to explore meaning, experiences, and perspectives rather than quantifying variables. According to Nassaji, a descriptive study aims to thoroughly describe a phenomenon and its distinctive characteristics. In this context, the research produces an in-depth narrative that captures the complexities of the subject matter, particularly through textual data analysis.

The study follows a clearly structured chronological research process, which includes the formulation of the research design, data collection procedures, and analysis protocols, often represented through qualitative research algorithms. It is an individual case study, meaning it concentrates on a specific case—such as a program, event, individual, process, institution, or social group—within its real-life context. This method is suitable for gaining a deep understanding of a unique or complex situation. The research is longitudinal in nature, involving a sustained inquiry over a period of time to capture developmental aspects or evolving patterns. The researcher meticulously documents and analyzes the entity under observation using qualitative techniques to ensure a comprehensive and contextually grounded account.

### **Research Participants or Population and Sample**

This research conducted at one of private vocational school in Tangerang City, Indonesia. Vocational schools have become primary agenda of Ministry of Education and Culture since 2000 to produce proficient graduates (in the regulation of Education and Culture Ministry number 20 in 2006). There are 122 vocational study programs. People might choose one of the programs they interested in. The reason is because vocational school graduates are prepared to enter the industrial world, one of the skills they must have is communicative competence. Specifically, english communicative competence in this advance techology and global era.

The respondents of this study are smaller in order to help the researcher understand the phenomenon under investigation (Gay, L.R., 2006). The respondents in this study were 65 people, that is 60 students, three English teacher, and two officers from Garuda Maintenance Facilities (GMF). The reason for choosing students in this study is because they want to know the level of communicative competence of students. The reason for choosing English teacher respondents for this study is because, researchers want to know how teachers develop communicative competence for students. Then the selection of officer respondents of Garuda Maintenance Facilities (GMF) because researchers want to know what things are needed in the world of work that must improve students' communicative competence. This study must provide detailed information about the respondent and how they are chosen (Gay, L.R., 2006). In my concern, the students of XI grade are students had practiced in the industry (called as *Praktek Kerja Industri*). They know what kind of communicative competence used in their works. These respondents are influential to the data analysis since they are selected based on the research's purposes. The data of this study is called as purposive data. (Creswell, 2008) said that purposive data is selected for purposive goals.

### **Instruments**

The researcher used interviews, observations and documens for instrument in this study. To determine the level of communicative competence of students and teachers, Hughes' (2011) levels and areas of research were used. This study observed the classroom activity and check the documents, namely the syllabus made by the teacher. For the observation in classroom activity process of teaching and learning in the classroom once a week in a month. Observation is used as an initial communication to be a beginning relationship of the research to be more convenient in the research setting (Creswell, 2008). In this study the researcher used interview, observation, document. It was done to collect preliminary data. Sixty students, three teacher, and two industry officers are interviewed based on question guideline to find out what kind of communicative competence are needed for students (Brown, 2007; Davidson, 2007). Creswel (2008) said that data collection process is done through interviews in a group of people, typically four to six. The instrument was given to respondents in electronic form. 8 questions were asked to students to find out the communicative competence needed for students. Then, for interviews with teachers, researchers asked 5 questions, to find out how to develop the communicative competence for students. The last is interview with officers, researchers asked

3 questions to find out the English communicative competence skills of students in the world of work.

### Data Analysis

For data analysis, in this research use (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as it allows for a thorough description and analysis of multiple datasets, facilitating a more comprehensive approach to addressing research questions compared to using just one method. In the data analysis process, first identifying the collected data from observation and interviews. Then, classifying the problems found in English syllabus implementation and categorize the data based on similar characteristics. Next, coding the classified data. The data was coded to find out the students' communicative competence. Then, the coded data was numbered to identify the result of observation. The last, summarizing the coded data in a table sheet. To ensure valid data, researchers use triangulation methods. Then the researcher ensures that the data taken is reliable because of the use of respondents who are in accordance with the research being conducted.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Students' Level Communicative Competence and Students' Need*

The First research objective is to find out the students' level communicative competence and their need in English subject. Researchers conducted observation and structured interviews with sixty vocational school students in Tangerang City.

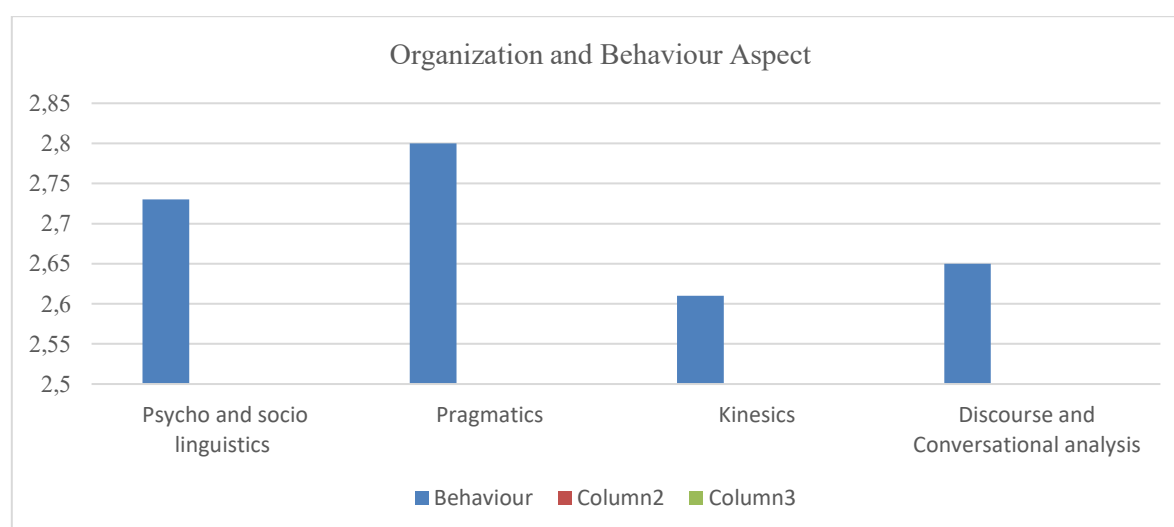


Figure 1. Hughes' Levels and Fields of Research (Classroom observation)

Based on the table of Hughes levels and fields of research that measures teacher competence and students' language ability above, it can be seen that the graph chart illustrates Hughes' levels and fields of research observed during the study on vocational students' English communicative competence. The chart displays a range of levels from 2.6 to 2.85, each corresponding to specific fields of research such as psycho and socio linguistics, pragmatics, kinesics, discourse, and conversational analysis.

At the level of 2.7, the focus of research was on psycho and socio linguistics, indicating an examination of the psychological and social factors influencing language use among the students. Moving to the level of 2.8, the field of pragmatics was explored, delving into the study of language in use and the context-dependent nature of communication. At 2.6, kinesics, which involves the study of body language and nonverbal communication, was a key area of observation. Advancing to the level of 2.65, discourse analysis was highlighted, suggesting an investigation into the structure and organization of spoken or written language in

communicative contexts. Finally, at the highest level of 2.8, the chart suggests a comprehensive analysis of various fields of research, encompassing psycho and socio linguistics, pragmatics, kinesics, discourse and conversational analysis, at the aspect organization of behavior. This indicates a thorough investigation into the students' communicative competence across multiple dimensions and research domains.

In summary, the graph chart provides a detailed breakdown of the levels and fields of research observed during the study, offering a nuanced understanding of the vocational students' English communicative competence. By examining different aspects of language use and communication, the researchers were able to gain valuable insights into the students' proficiency and needs in the English subject within specific research contexts.

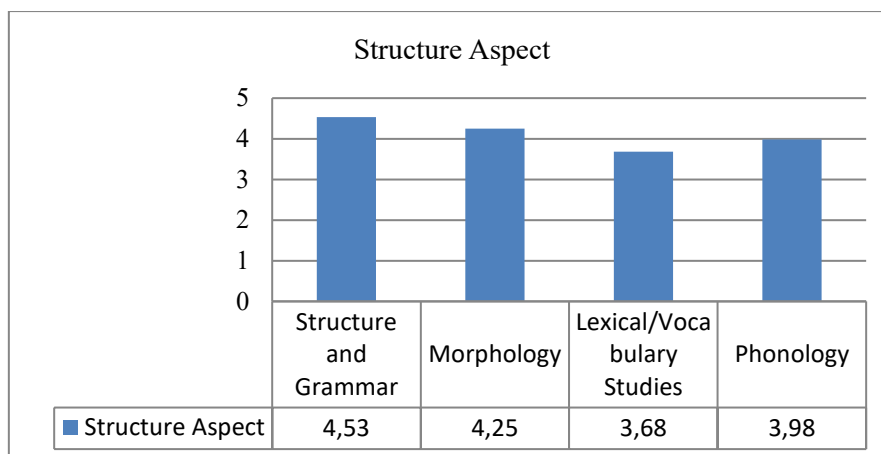


Figure 2. The Ratings of Different Aspects of English Language Proficiency

The chart presents the ratings of different aspects of English language proficiency as perceived by the vocational students. The aspects evaluated include structure, grammar, morphology, lexical/vocabulary studies, and phonology. The ratings range from 0 to 5, with higher scores indicating a higher level of competence in each aspect. According to the chart, the students rated their proficiency highest in the aspect of structure, with a score of 4.53 out of 5. This suggests that the students feel relatively confident in their understanding and use of English language structure. Following closely behind is grammar, with a score of 4.53, indicating a strong grasp of grammatical rules and conventions. In contrast, the students rated themselves lower in lexical/vocabulary studies and phonology, with scores of 3.68 and 3.98 respectively. This may suggest that they perceive their knowledge and skills in word formation and pronunciation to be less developed compared to structure and grammar. Additionally, morphology studies received a rating of 4.25, indicating a moderate level of competence in terms of morphology knowledge and usage. Overall, the students' self-assessment of their English communicative competence highlights areas of strength in structure and grammar, while also pointing towards areas for potential improvement in morphology, phonology, and vocabulary.

Upon closer examination of the chart, it is evident that phonetics is the most emphasized aspect, followed by phonemics and then intonation/prosodic studies. This distribution of scores provides insights into the prioritization of sound elements within the English language syllabus for vocational students. The chart serves as a visual representation of the areas that may require further attention or development to enhance students' communicative competence in English. Educators and curriculum developers can utilize this information to tailor instructional strategies and materials that address the specific linguistic needs of vocational students and foster their proficiency in English communication.

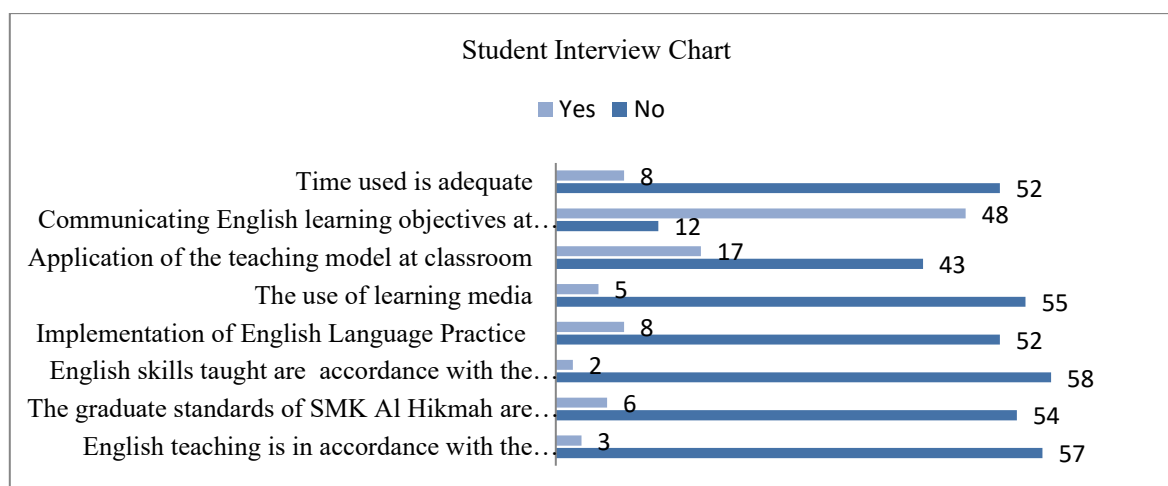


Figure 3. The summarized sheet from students' interviews

The student interview chart reveals a notable discrepancy in the responses of vocational school students at Vocational school in Tangerang City regarding various aspects of English language education. A majority of students expressed dissent ("No") rather than agreement ("Yes") on several key statements. Firstly, 52 students said disagree and 8 students choose agree about time used is adequate. The first, student need is regarding the time used in learning is adequate.

In terms of clarity in communicating English teaching model at classroom, 43 students disagreed that it is effective, while 17 students found it clear and effective. The next need is the use of learning media and the application of teaching models in the classroom. The results of interviews conducted with students, major students chose "No" for this question. This is due to the lack of learning media used by teachers when learning in class and the learning models and media used by teachers are still said to be traditional and monotonous. Students feel bored and bored when learning English because the learning media that teachers use are not creative. With this the teacher must provide learning media that can make students more interested in learning English.

### ***Development of Communicative Competencies for Vocational Students***

The second research objective is to find out how to develop communicative competencies for vocational students' in Banten. Researchers conducted structured interviews with a vocational teacher majoring in TKJ and two officers from Garuda Maintenance Facilities (GMF). Firstly, the first question for the teacher interview was "Is there sufficient curriculum documentation available?". In this question the teacher answered:

*"Yes, it is adequate and available, the curriculum in this school uses the 2013 curriculum. the curriculum is also very important for learning in schools because it is a guide for learning and also a reference for assessment."* (P.2)

Based on the interview results, can be seen that the teacher documented the Curriculum well and the existing of curriculum at SMK Al Hikma are available. The use of curriculum at SMK Al Hikma followed by Ministry of Education is *Kurikulum 2013 (K13)*. The teacher believes that curriculum is very important, because it contains objective and subject matter sequencing. Therefore, it can be as guideline for the teachers to design the specific lessons included learning objective, media, method, material and assessment to teach individual students effectively. It is in line with the importance of curriculum that is a crucial tool in education, providing a structured approach to teaching and learning activities. It ensures comprehensive and balanced education for students by outlining essential knowledge and skills. Secondly, the interview asked about whether the Content Standards (SI) and Competency



Standards (SK) in the Kurikulum Merdeka fulfilled the need of students in the work field or not.

*"No, this school still uses the 2013 curriculum in its learning. So, it is not specific about the needs in the world of work. Usually, we only learn English in general. and examples such as making invitation letters or job application letters." (P.1)*

The teacher answers "no", SI and SK in the 2013 curriculum still focus on general English language skills. The material includes .... of the material mentioned, there is only 1 material that is sufficiently related to the study program and industry needs, namely making invitation letters. The lack of material content related to work can be concluded that the fulfillment of the English language needs of students for the industrial world is still very lacking. So the recommendation is to revise the syllabus in terms of material or provide additional material according to the needs of the world of work such as vocabulary knowledge, communicating actively, making presentations, making formal letters and other materials.

Furthermore, the third question explains whether teachers apply the English syllabus in the classroom.

*"No, I usually don't stick to the syllabus when I teach." (P.1, P.2)*

According to the results of the interview it was stated "no" that the teacher did not apply the English syllabus in class. This can have an impact on the students' learning process. Inconsistent application of the syllabus can lead to a lack of clarity in learning objectives, a lack of continuity between learning materials, and a potential gap between the material taught and the competency standards that should be achieved by students. The conclusion that can be drawn from the data in the third question is the need for more attention in terms of consistency in the application of the syllabus in the classroom by teachers. Efforts are needed to increase teachers' awareness and commitment to following the syllabus to ensure that the learning process runs according to the plan and objectives set. This will contribute to improving the effectiveness of English language learning for SMK students in Banten. These results are supported by some previous research theories, which state that a well-structured syllabus is essential for effective communication and student success in English language teaching.

Based on the results of fourth question, it was found that teachers answered "No" to the question related to the use of learning media. This identifies that the respondent teachers do not use learning media in the English learning process in the classroom.

*"In learning in class, I usually do not use learning media. I only use the textbooks available at school and study with students in class. then usually use the lecture method." (P.3)*

When teachers do not use learning media, this can affect students' interactivity and engagement in the learning process. The use of appropriate learning media can help clarify concepts, enrich students' learning experience, and improve students' memory. In the absence of the use of learning media, learning may become monotonous and less interesting for students. Therefore, the conclusion that can be drawn from the data in the fourth question related to the use of learning media is the need for more attention to the utilization of learning media in the English learning process. Teachers need to be encouraged to use a variety of appropriate and innovative learning media to improve the quality of learning, enrich students' learning experience, and improve students' memory and understanding of the subject matter. Thus, the use of appropriate learning media can increase the effectiveness of English learning for vocational students in Banten. This is also supported by some previous research, such as learning media is a crucial tool in teaching and learning activities, offering benefits like increased engagement, understanding, and improved communication. It simplifies complex concepts, facilitates effective communication, encourages independent learning, and supports differentiated teaching. It also encourages creativity and innovation in teaching methods, providing a personalized experience tailored to individual student needs.



Based on the data listed in the fifth question, the focus on questions related to difficulties in teaching and learning activities (KBM) shows that the teachers interviewed answered "Yes" regarding difficulties in KBM. This indicates that teachers experience difficulties in the KBM.

*"In teaching in class, I often experience difficulties. Students who are difficult to organize in learning are one of the difficulties." (P.3)*

*"Yes. sometimes I have difficulties when learning in class. usually in delivering material. because sometimes students' memory and understanding are different and that is one of the problems." (P.2)*

Difficulties in KBM can vary, ranging from obstacles in delivering subject matter effectively, managing the class well, to adjusting learning methods to the needs of students. When teachers experience difficulties in KBM, this can affect the effectiveness of learning and students' understanding of the subject matter. Therefore, the conclusion that can be drawn from the data in the fifth question related to difficulties in KBM is the need for further support and guidance for teachers who experience difficulties in KBM. Teachers need to be given training and guidance to overcome the obstacles faced in the KBM process so that they can improve the quality of learning and achieve the desired learning objectives. Thus, efforts to help teachers overcome difficulties in teaching and learning will contribute to improving the effectiveness of English language learning for vocational students in Banten.

Researchers conducted interviews with two officers from Garuda Maintenance Facilities (GMF). The first question for the interview with the two officers was about whether the graduates of vocational schools in Tangerang city are suitable for their field of work.

*"Yes, all graduates are in accordance with the majors chosen at school and in accordance with the world of work that students will enter." (P.2)*

Thus, according to the first question related to the standard of Vocational School in Tangerang City graduates in accordance with their field of work. From the graphic 2, it can be seen that the industry answered "Yes", which means that according to the industry, Vocational School in Tangerang City graduates have skills that are in accordance with the required field of work. This shows that graduates of Vocational School in Tangerang City are considered to meet the standards expected by the industry in terms of the skills required in their work.

Furthermore, in the second question, on whether graduates of vocational schools in Tangerang city already have adequate English standards in accordance with their field of work.

*"Not adequate. Many students are not able to speak English fluently. Students must learn more English to enter the world of work according to their field of work. Because it can be used as one of the skills for students in finding a job." (P.1)*

Based from the answer from GMF officer, it was found that the industry answered "No" regarding the English language skills of vocational school in Tangerang city graduates according to company standards. This shows that in the view of the industry, the English language skills of vocational school in Tangerang city graduates do not meet the standards expected by the company. The impact of this "No" answer is that graduates of Vocational School in Tangerang City need to improve their English language skills to match the demands and standards required in the work environment. Good English language skills are essential in today's world of work, especially in the era of globalization where cross-cultural communication is key in various fields of work.

In question number 3 about whether the English skills that students have to enter the world of work are appropriate.

*"Yes, it is appropriate. Students who graduate from vocational schools in Tangerang City already have the English language skills to enter the world of work. Although sometimes there are students who are not suitable or the English skills they have are not sufficient to enter the world of work." (P.2)*

Based on the result interview, the researcher found that the question related to specific English skills for vocational students in Tangerang, city was answered "Yes". In addition, based on the results of the interview, several other results were found. This is related to what skills must be possessed by vocational graduates to be able to work in companies. The first skill is reading, where students must master vocabulary related to terms, procedures and competencies of students' vocational school.

## Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, the discussion on the English communicative competence of Indonesian vocational students reveals a nuanced portrait of challenges and gaps that require urgent pedagogical and curricular attention. The data gathered from observations, interviews, and document analysis collectively point to a disconnect between the expected communicative outcomes outlined in national educational goals and the actual skills possessed by vocational school students. While students demonstrate moderate to strong performance in grammatical structure and language mechanics, their competence in essential communicative domains—such as vocabulary usage, phonology, discourse analysis, and especially applied communication in workplace scenarios—remains underdeveloped. The findings are in line with Suwartono et al. (2024) who inform that while technical aspects of language, such as structure and grammar, have been relatively well addressed, the implementation of communicative practices that bridge classroom instruction with real-world industrial needs remains inadequate.

A significant factor influencing this disconnect is the misalignment between the curriculum content and the specific language requirements of the workplace. Teachers at the school under study predominantly adhere to the 2013 curriculum, which emphasizes general English rather than English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Hidayat & Fardi, 2020). As reported by the teachers and students, much of the content—such as writing invitation or application letters—lacks relevance to the dynamic communication skills needed in industrial contexts, such as technical vocabulary, interactive presentations, and situational dialogue (Sunds et al., 2023; Sobirovna & Hakima, 2024). This deficiency highlights the need for a more tailored and functional English language curriculum that is responsive to the students' vocational pathways (Novita et al., 2023). Syamsinar (2016) argue that the absence of materials directly related to students' specializations weakens both motivation and practical language acquisition, resulting in a communicative gap that affects employability. Students themselves expressed dissatisfaction with the applicability of what they are taught, indicating that current instruction does not sufficiently prepare them for professional communication.

Moreover, the classroom practice of English instruction was found to be lacking in innovation and consistency (Sasstos, 2020; Ozudogro & Ozudogro, 2017 ). Teachers reported not following the syllabus rigorously and relying heavily on traditional textbook-based methods and lecture-style teaching. This static pedagogical approach has failed to engage students, many of whom report feeling bored and unmotivated in English classes. With only limited integration of learning media and a lack of interactive teaching strategies, classroom dynamics are not conducive to developing real communicative competence (Silvana et al., 2021; Sukardi & Puyada, 2017). Students voiced concern about the lack of practical application in lessons and noted that the English they learn in school rarely corresponds to their actual vocational needs or workplace experiences (Chayati et al., 2015). This is exacerbated by time constraints, as the instructional time allocated for English is minimal, often insufficient for the development of both receptive and productive language skills.

The findings also emphasize the need for greater teacher commitment to the syllabus and instructional planning. The data show that English syllabi are often underutilized, with some teachers admitting they do not consistently implement or even refer to the guidelines during classroom instruction. This lack of alignment between the intended curriculum and actual teaching practices undermines students' opportunities to develop targeted language skills

(Rachmawati et al., 2021; Mulyah & Aminatun, 2020). The study suggests the necessity of routine professional development and structured evaluation mechanisms to ensure teachers are equipped and held accountable for implementing syllabus-driven, relevant instruction. Regular monitoring by the head of the study program and the creation of teacher forums for sharing best practices could promote greater cohesion and effectiveness in English language instruction across vocational schools.

From the perspective of industry representatives, while graduates may technically meet general vocational skill requirements, their English proficiency is often substandard and not aligned with workplace expectations. The ability to communicate effectively in English—especially in multinational or technically driven environments—is considered a competitive advantage, yet many graduates lack the vocabulary, fluency, and confidence necessary for effective workplace communication (Zein et al., 2020; Haryudin & Yana, 2020; Siyang, 2018). Industry input underscores the importance of integrating industry-relevant language skills into the curriculum, including the capacity to read technical documents, write formal correspondence, and engage in spoken interactions in English. The study thus advocates for a syllabus revision that bridges academic instruction with the communicative demands of the labor market.

It is also worth noting that communicative competence goes beyond linguistic accuracy; it involves socio-pragmatic skills, discourse management, and non-verbal communication—all of which are underrepresented in current teaching practices (Hongwei et al., 2018; Abidah et al., 2023). Hughes' model, which was used as the evaluative framework in this study, stresses the role of contextual and interactional aspects of communication, suggesting that students should be exposed to real-life language tasks and assessed not just on grammar but also on the appropriateness and effectiveness of their language use (Nurtanto et al., 2021; Bada, 2022; Campbell, 2020). This theoretical framework aligns with the vocational context, where students must operate in socially and professionally appropriate ways in diverse workplace situations. Integrating such competencies into assessment models and instructional design could greatly enhance the communicative readiness of vocational school graduates.

This study confirms that while there is foundational awareness of English language instruction in vocational schools, the implementation of communicative competence is largely theoretical and lacks practical application. To remedy this, schools must recalibrate their English teaching strategies by developing curriculum content that is contextualized, job-specific, and skill-oriented (Yasykur et al., 2023; Manalu et al., 2022). Teachers must adopt more interactive and media-rich pedagogical approaches, consistently apply the curriculum, and undergo targeted training to meet both educational standards and industry demands. In doing so, vocational schools will not only fulfill their mandate of producing technically competent graduates but also linguistically equipped individuals who can thrive in the global workforce. These improvements are essential not only for enhancing educational quality but also for securing better employment opportunities for students in a competitive and interconnected world.

## CONCLUSION

The study on Indonesian vocational students' English communicative competence highlights a significant gap between desired English skills and actual competencies. Factors contributing to this discrepancy include teachers' commitment, students' diverse competencies, and school facilities. To improve students' communicative abilities, the study recommends teachers to be committed to syllabus development, align teaching methods with students' needs, and adopt student-centered approaches. Regular supervision and evaluation by program heads are also crucial. Collaborative efforts can promote consistency and quality in vocational education. Fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in language teaching

can equip graduates with essential skills for the competitive job market. Enhancing English communicative competence is essential for future career prospects and workforce success. By addressing challenges, implementing strategies, and fostering collaboration, vocational schools can prepare students for the globalized economy and ensure the relevance and excellence of vocational education programs.

There are some suggestions as recommendation to solve the problems found in this study. First, the teacher must commit to her syllabus and improve her syllabus based on the needs of her students in work fields. The second, the teacher must consider her students' condition both psychological and cognitive while teaching language. Otherwise, there is no connection between the materials and the students' needs. The third, the head of study program should supervise and evaluate per six months (semester) what the teacher has done in classroom. The last, teacher should create a MGMP forum to make standardize syllabus for vocational students.

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