
Research Article

A Self-Reflective Study on the Importance of Learning English for Educational and Career Development: Experiences of a Business English Lecturer

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Abstract: This study explores the role of English in supporting the academic and professional development of management students, based on the lecturer's reflections as both lecturer and researcher. As English becomes increasingly important in global education and employment, many students are required to read academic materials, complete assignments, and communicate using English. This study focuses on how English for Specific Purposes (ESP), especially Business English, helps students build discipline-related skills and prepare for real workplace communication. Using an autoethnographic approach, the researcher collected data from self-interviews, reflective teaching journals, and informal student feedback over one semester. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns in the lecturer's experiences and observations. The findings show that English supports students' academic growth by helping them understand textbooks, research articles, and business case studies. Students gained confidence in reading and presenting academic information after completing guided tasks. The results also indicate that ESP based on activities such as email writing, meeting simulations, and presentations strengthened students' employability skills. These tasks helped students feel more prepared for internships and early career responsibilities. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of reflective teaching. By analyzing classroom challenges and student needs, the lecturer was able to improve teaching strategies, select more authentic materials, and provide better support for learners. This research shows that integrating ESP with employability goals can create meaningful learning experiences for management students. When English teaching is connected to real professional contexts, students develop both language proficiency and practical communication skills. The study also encourages lecturers to use reflection as a tool to enhance teaching quality and better support students' academic and career preparation.

Keywords: Business English; career development; Employability Skills; ESP; Self Reflective Study

1. Introduction

English has become an important skill for students who want to study and work in a global environment. Many universities and employers expect graduates to use English for communication, reading academic texts, writing reports, and interacting with international partners. Because of this demand, learning English is no longer only a school subject. English has become part of students' preparation for education and careers. Research shows that courses designed for specific jobs, such as Business English or English for Specific Purposes (ESP), help learners to gain skills they need for the workplace (Situmorang et al., 2023).

For management students, English has special value. They study topics such as accounting, marketing, and management that often use English terms and international literature. When graduates apply for jobs or attend internships, they often need to read manuals, write emails, or present in English. Studies that review Business English and English for Specific Purposes found that linking classroom tasks to real business communicative situations improves students' readiness for the workplace (Omer, 2024; Situmorang et al., 2023). In other words, when English teaching is focused on real job tasks, students feel more confident and ready for career demands.

Received: September 18, 2025
Revised: October 15, 2025
Accepted: November 27, 2025
Published: November 30, 2025
Curr. Ver.: November 30, 2025



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At the institutional level, higher education increasingly accepts employability as a central goal. Scholars and policymakers debate how universities should prepare students for work, but many agree that curriculum should include both disciplinary knowledge and practical skills that employers want (Tight, 2023). Employability frameworks and models those that combine knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy are widely discussed in recent literature, and language competence is often named as a key component (Eimer & Bohndick, 2023). This means that English learning can contribute directly to graduates' employability if it is integrated into the curriculum in meaningful ways.

Given these trends, examining English teaching from the lecturer's own perspective can be valuable. Autoethnography and self-reflective approaches permit researchers to connect personal teaching experiences with wider educational issues. By reflecting on classroom practice, a lecturer can reveal how teaching decisions, materials, and student responses relate to professional outcomes for students. Recent studies show that autoethnographic reflections by teachers offer honest, context-rich insights that help readers understand how theory and practice meet in real classrooms (Gomila-Grau et al., 2025; Godber & Atkins, 2021). Such reflective work is useful especially when the researcher is an experienced teacher of courses like Basic English and Business English.

This study is set in the context of Business English teaching for management students. The researcher is a Business English lecturer who teaches Basic English and Business English to management students. This insider position has two benefits: first, it gives the researcher direct access to long-term classroom evidence and informal student feedback; second, it allows a close view of how students use English to prepare for academic tasks and early career steps. At the same time, being both teacher and participant requires careful reflexivity and methods to reduce bias, such as using teaching journals, triangulating with student comments, and relating findings to published research (Godber & Atkins, 2021; Gomila-Grau et al., 2025).

The current paper aims to explore how English teaching in the Business English classroom contributes to students' educational and career development. The focus is not on measuring students' test scores, but on understanding the lecturer's lived experiences, observations, and reflective judgments about learning outcomes and career readiness. Specifically, the study asks: (1) How does the lecturer perceive the role of English in students' academic progress and professional preparation? (2) What teaching practices and classroom activities appear to support students' career-oriented communicative skills? (3) How can reflective insights from teaching inform better integration of English learning and employability goals?

To answer these questions, this autoethnographic study draws on the lecturer's self-interview responses, reflective teaching journals, and supporting student feedback (informal). The method is appropriate because teacher-researchers can capture nuanced classroom interactions and professional dilemmas that are difficult to find in large surveys. Moreover, connecting personal reflections to employability literature and ESP research helps to show how local teaching practices relate to broader educational objectives. Previous literature has recommended aligning ESP teaching with workplace needs and using work-integrated tasks (such as role-plays, case studies, and workplace simulations) to improve readiness (Situmorang et al., 2023; Omer et al., 2024). This study considers these recommendations alongside the lecturer's practical experiences.

Finally, this research contributes to two areas. First, it adds a reflective, practice-based voice to discussions about English and employability in management education. Second, it offers practical suggestions for Business English teaching that may be useful for lecturers who teach non-English majors. By situating the lecturer's experiences within recent employability and ESP studies, the article aims to provide both a personal account and evidence based on recommendations for improving English instruction that supports students' education and careers (Eimer & Bohndick, 2023; Tight, 2023).

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This research adopts a self-reflective qualitative design, using an autoethnographic approach to explore the lecturer's own experiences in teaching Basic English and Business English to management students. Autoethnography allows educators to connect personal experience with broader cultural and institutional contexts (Tarisayi, 2023). Through systematic reflection, the researcher aims to understand how English teaching contributes to students' academic learning and career readiness.

This approach is suitable because the researcher herself is the instructor of the courses under study. Her reflections and observations can provide deep insight into classroom interactions, students' responses, and professional teaching decisions that are not easily captured by external observation or quantitative methods.

2.2 Participant

This study took place at a higher education institution where the researcher teaches management students enrolled in *Basic English* and *Business English* courses. Each class contains 40 students. These courses focus on improving general language skills as well as introducing business-related English communication tasks such as email writing, report presentation, and meeting simulations.

In this study, the researcher takes the dual role of participant and data collector through an autoethnographic approach. As an experienced professional within her own research context, she uses her insider position to collect rich, context-based data that reflect real experiences. However, this role also requires strong self-awareness and reflexivity to reduce personal bias and ensure the credibility of the findings (Koopman, Watling, & LaDonna, 2020).

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected over one semester (approximately 16 weeks) using three complementary sources:

Self-Interview

- a. The researcher conducted a semi-structured self-interview to document her personal experiences, beliefs, and challenges in teaching English to management students.
- b. The questions focused on teaching objectives, classroom strategies, perceived student progress, and reflections on English as a tool for education and career preparation.
- a. Reflective Teaching Journal
- c. After each class, the researcher wrote reflective notes on teaching practices, classroom engagement, and student reactions.
- d. The journal also included spontaneous reflections on how English activities related to employability skills such as presentation, teamwork, and cross-cultural communication.
- a. Supporting Student Feedback
- e. Anonymous student feedback was collected at the end of the course to provide supplementary perspectives.
- f. This feedback was used to triangulate the researcher's reflections and support the validity of interpretations.
- a. All reflections and feedback were documented in written form and later organised for analysis.

2.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and insights from the collected data. The researcher followed the stages proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarising with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report.

The emerging themes were grouped into categories such as *English for Academic Growth*, *English for Employability*, *Teaching Adaptation*, and *Reflexive Development*. These were then interpreted in relation to the literature on English for Specific Purposes (ESP), employability, and reflective teaching (Eimer & Bohndick, 2023).

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the lecturer's self-interview, reflective journals, and student feedback generated several interconnected findings regarding the role of English in academic development, employability preparation, and teaching practices. These findings also highlight how reflective approaches help the lecturer evaluate and improve English instruction in the Management Study Program.

3.1 English as a Foundation for Academic Development

The first major finding shows that English functions as an essential academic support system for Management students. Many students depend on English to understand textbooks, case studies, research articles, and digital learning resources that use English as the medium of instruction. The lecturer's reflections indicate that students often enter the course with limited confidence in reading and presenting academic information in English. However, through regular exposure to structured vocabulary tasks, guided reading activities, and short presentations, students begin to develop stronger academic literacy.

This is consistent with findings from Hyland and Shaw (2016), who argue that language proficiency is closely linked to students' ability to engage with disciplinary content, especially in fields that rely heavily on international sources. Likewise, Basturkmen (2010) emphasizes that ESP courses help bridge the gap between general English competence and academic English needs, allowing learners to interpret and communicate discipline-specific knowledge more effectively.

In this study, the lecturer observed that students became more comfortable reading business cases and summarizing management theories in English after repeated practice. Student feedback also confirms that improving English reading skills helped them complete assignments more efficiently. Therefore, English is not only a communication tool but an academic scaffold that strengthens students' understanding of management concepts.

3.2 English as a Driver of Employability and Workplace Readiness

The second finding highlights the strong connection between English learning and employability. Activities such as email writing, simulated meetings, report presentations, and group discussions helped students prepare for workplace communication. Many students expressed that these tasks made them feel more prepared for internship interviews, business presentations, and communication with supervisors.

The study conducted by Wulandari, Bhattacharyya, and Warni highlights the significance of English communication skills in shaping the employability of graduates working in startup companies (Wulandari et al., 2022). Additionally, Jackson (2016) notes that employers increasingly value communication skills especially English as part of global workplace expectations. The lecturer's reflections support this trend, as she observed that students performed better in professional tasks when classroom activities mirrored real business communication scenarios.

ESP scholars also highlight the importance of authenticity. According to Anthony (2018), ESP teaching becomes more effective when instructors use authentic workplace texts and tasks, such as emails, financial reports, and meeting agendas. In this study, using real company documents and business scenarios improved student motivation and engagement. This finding is consistent with Torregrosa Benavent & Sánchez-Reyes Peñamaría who state that reproduce an immersion environment and provide a realistic context for tasks that relate to learner's needs (Torregrosa Benavent & Sánchez-Reyes Peñamaría, 2011).

The findings further support employability frameworks proposed by Yorke (2016) who argues that employability is built through a combination of skills, knowledge, and self-efficacy. In this study, students noted that presenting in English improved their confidence which is an important psychological component of employability. Through systematic reflection, the lecturer found that integrating ESP tasks with soft-skill development such as teamwork, problem solving and leadership helped students develop a more holistic sense of readiness for the workplace.

3.4 Teaching Adaptation, Challenges, and Reflective Development

The third theme concerns the lecturer's growth and challenges in teaching. As both instructor and researcher, the lecturer identified several areas where teaching practices could be improved. For example, some students required more structured guidance in business vocabulary, while others needed more time to prepare for oral presentations. The lecturer also realized that group dynamics affected the success of classroom simulations. These insights emerged through continuous reflection documented in teaching journals.

This process reflects the ideas of Farrell (2019) who argues that reflective practice helps teachers identify gaps in instruction and develop more effective strategies. Another important finding concerns the role of reflexivity in autoethnographic research. The lecturer acknowledged the challenge of balancing her dual role as teacher and participant. This required conscious effort to avoid overestimating student success or underestimating teaching challenges.

Through reflection, the lecturer also became more aware of student diversity. Some students were highly motivated, while others struggled with anxiety. The lecturer learned that supportive feedback, scaffolded tasks, and collaborative activities helped reduce student hesitation. This supports findings by Mercer & Dörnyei (2020) who highlight the value of teacher emotional support in language learning.

3.5 Integration of ESP and Employability: A Holistic Perspective

The findings show that the integration of ESP principles with employability goals provides significant benefits for students. ESP research highlights the importance of tailoring English instruction to specific disciplines (Anthony, 2018; Basturkmen, 2021). Meanwhile, employability literature emphasizes workplace communication, adaptability, and confidence as critical elements of graduate success (Jackson, 2016; Yorke, 2016). In this study, combining both perspectives allowed the lecturer to design activities that support both academic achievement and workplace readiness.

This holistic integration is supported by studies by Zeng & Della (2024) who found that discipline-specific English tasks improve both academic and professional competence. ESP programs have been particularly effective when designed for specific professional fields, such as aviation, medicine, law, and the other fields. Therefore, ESP courses function best when linked to real workplace expectations. The lecturer's experiences confirm this as students became more confident in business communication when they practiced tasks directly related to the management field.

In summary, the findings show that English learning supports academic development, enhances employability, and benefits from reflective teaching practices. Students gain confidence, improve reading comprehension, and develop real-world communication skills when English instruction aligns with their academic and professional needs. The lecturer's reflections reveal that ongoing adaptation, authenticity of materials, and student-centered strategies contribute to effective ESP teaching.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that English plays an important role in supporting both the academic and professional development of management students. Through reflective analysis, the lecturer found that students rely on English to understand course materials, complete assignments, and communicate their ideas in academic tasks. The findings also suggest that English activities such as email writing, presentations, and meeting simulations help students build the practical communication skills needed in the workplace. When classroom tasks match real business situations, students become more confident and feel better prepared for future careers. The study also highlights the value of reflective teaching. By reviewing teaching journals, student feedback, and personal experiences, the lecturer was able to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the learning process. This reflective approach helped the lecturer adjust teaching strategies, select more relevant materials, and create a more supportive learning environment. These adjustments made the lessons more meaningful for students and strengthened the connection between English learning and employability skills. Overall, this research shows that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can contribute directly to students' readiness for both academic demands and early career experiences. When English teaching is designed to match the needs of a specific discipline such as management, students gain clearer benefits. This study encourages other lecturers to use reflective practice and to integrate authentic workplace tasks into their English courses. By doing so, English instruction can become a

powerful tool that supports students not only in the classroom but also in their future professional paths.

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