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English Syllabus Development: A Need Analysis-Based Approaches

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Abstract

This study investigates the English language skills required by students at Aviation Vocational High Schools, focusing on syllabus development and the challenges teachers face in preparing effective teaching materials. The research aims to identify the necessary English skills for aviation students, explore the difficulties in syllabus creation, and determine the skills teachers need to design a relevant curriculum. A needs analysis approach was used, with data collected through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis of the existing syllabus. The study found that speaking skills were the most crucial, followed by reading, listening, and writing. However, the current syllabus does not adequately meet the needs of students, as teachers face challenges such as the lack of diagnostic assessments and materials that are not aligned with aviation industry standards. The study also identifies key teacher skills necessary for effective syllabus development, including the ability to assess student needs and ensure the syllabus is implemented in a way that aligns with the intended learning objectives. The findings highlight the need for a more tailored and effective approach to syllabus design in aviation vocational education.
Keywords: Need Analysis, ESP, Syllabus Development

Introduction

English has grown into an essential tool in both modern science and technology, becoming increasingly significant in Indonesia, where its presence is felt in all levels of education. With the expanding role of English, there is a noticeable shift towards its use beyond traditional academic settings. Aviation high schools face challenges in further developing English language skills. Often, the English taught in aviation vocational schools is general English and not specific. Aviation students need ESP in terms of English for Aviation Purposes. According to Hutchinson & Waters (1987), ESP demands a direct connection between language and job context. This disconnect results in learning that is not relevant to actual job needs in the aviation field. Furthermore, in a global context, the World Economic Forum (2020) emphasizes the importance of 21st-century skills, including English language proficiency and digital competencies. Therefore, vocational school graduates, especially those in aviation-related fields, often struggle to meet global competency standards such as ICAO Level 4 English Proficiency (International Civil Aviation Organization), as well as the technical aviation tools that globally use the international language, which is English.

Moreover, in this research object, an interesting discussion arises regarding the causes of the lack of English proficiency. The researcher is generally captivated by the syllabus used and how it is applied to the students. This study aims to address a gap in understanding the specific English language needs of students in Aviation Vocational High Schools, particularly focusing on the key skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. At the same time, the study seeks to explore the issues that teachers face when creating syllabi that align with these

needs. It will also look into how these syllabi can be designed to ensure that students are well-prepared for their careers in aviation.

While there has been much discussion about the importance of needs analysis in creating effective syllabi, especially in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), few studies have explicitly focused on the needs of Aviation Vocational High School students. Research by Chero (2021) and Menggo (2022) has emphasized the importance of analyzing student needs to tailor learning materials accordingly. In fields like aviation, where practical language skills are paramount, understanding these needs becomes even more crucial. Despite this, most existing studies have not provided sufficient insight into teachers' challenges or how the curriculum can be better designed to meet students' future job demands. The primary aim of this research is to identify the specific English skills required by Aviation Vocational High School students and examine the difficulties teachers face when developing appropriate syllabi. This study hopes to contribute to the ongoing discussion on how English programs can be tailored to support students in vocational education better, especially those preparing for careers in aviation.

Through this research, it is expected that teachers will gain valuable insights into how they can improve their syllabi to match the language needs of their students better. Ultimately, this will help students gain the language skills necessary to excel in their chosen field and enhance their competitiveness in the workplace in the future.

Method

This study utilized a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate the development of an English syllabus for Aviation Vocational High Schools. The research aimed to analyze the English language skills required by students and the challenges teachers face in syllabus creation. The study was conducted at an Aviation Vocational High School in Semarang, Central Java. Data collection involved a combination of primary and secondary sources, including questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. Primary data was obtained through interviews with students, English teachers, and the curriculum division to understand the challenges faced in developing and implementing the syllabus in the classroom. Questionnaires were also distributed to 10^{th} and 12^{th}-grade students in 2 different majors at the Aviation Vocational School. The questionnaires consisted of closed and open-ended questions. This questionnaires focused on the students' needs in English, their perceptions of the relevance of English materials, their difficulties in understanding technical aviation vocabulary, and the learning activities desired by the students. Examples of the questions such as what skills the students need to face the work life, especially in the aviation field, what kind of learning that helps them in learning English, and open-ended item asks students to explain the challenges they face.

Secondary data was obtained through an in-depth analysis of the English subject syllabus used in aviation schools. The syllabus referred to is the English syllabus prepared by English teachers and has been agreed upon by the curriculum and the headmaster. This analysis focuses on identifying the components of English used in the aviation world, such as modules that include technical aviation terms, airport announcements, instructions, and maintenance communication. However, the syllabus mostly contains general English material such as narrative texts, formal letters, and daily conversations, with very little integration of context-specific material to aviation. This analysis helps highlight the gap between the content of the syllabus and the skills needs of students in the aviation field.

Data collection techniques included observation, semi-structured interviews, and a closed questionnaire, categorized into four main English skills: speaking, reading, writing, and

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listening. The data were analyzed using a triangulation approach, combining multiple methods to verify consistency and validity. The data analysis was carried out using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which involved data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions.

Research ethics were maintained throughout, ensuring informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality of the participants. The findings suggest that the speaking skill is most crucial, followed by reading, listening, and writing. Challenges identified in syllabus development included a lack of diagnostic assessments and materials not aligned with industry needs, underscoring the necessity for teachers to possess key skills in syllabus preparation.

Results

The first finding pertains to the specific English language skills required by students in Aviation Vocational Schools. Data obtained through document analysis, school observations, questionnaires, and interviews revealed critical insights into the linguistic demands faced by students in this context. The analysis showed that the most essential competencies for students are related to speaking and reading, particularly in situations that require clear communication and comprehension of aviation-related materials. These needs were predominantly expressed by students in grade 12, who emphasized the importance of being able to communicate effectively and interpret technical information accurately in preparation for their future careers in the aviation sector.

> *"The skills that are crucial for the aviation industry is speaking, as communication is essential, especially if we continue to international careers, and reading, as understanding technical instructions will be invaluable."*

Conversely, 10th-grade students emphasized the importance of reading and listening skills, particularly in preparation for English proficiency tests like TOEFL, which are crucial for advancing in their academic careers. Another student noted:

> *"For me, the most important English skills are reading and listening because at this stage, we are required to pass English proficiency tests such as TOEFL to move forward."*

These findings highlight that students in different grade levels have distinct priorities for their English skills, depending on their goals and immediate needs. For instance, speaking and reading skills were crucial for 12th-grade students preparing for their professional careers, while 10th-grade students focused more on foundational skills like reading and listening to prepare for exams.

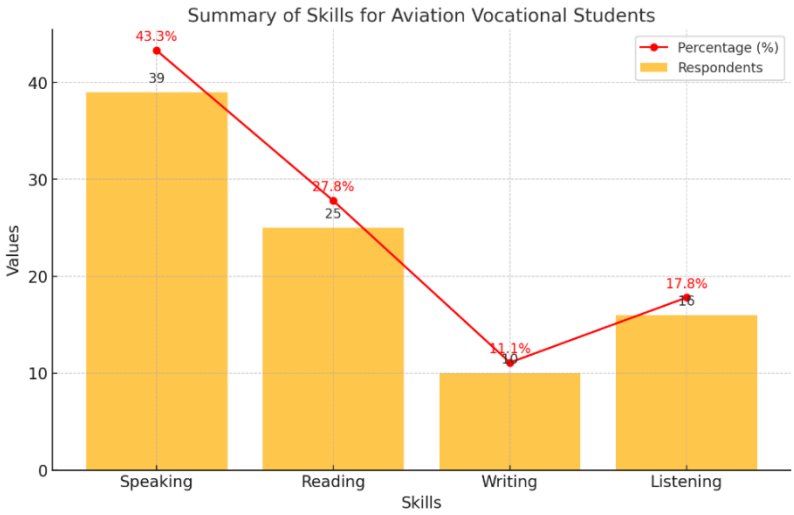


Figure 1. Summary of Skills for Aviation Vocational Students

The questionnaire results further supported these findings. For example, students in fields like electrical maintenance expressed the need for improved reading and listening skills to better understand technical manuals and equipment instructions. On the other hand, students in mechanical vocations prioritized speaking and reading skills, which are necessary for explaining technical issues and understanding foreign language manuals. The following table summarizes the findings:

Table 1. Recapitulation of Student Need

Skill	Percentage of Respondents
Speaking	43.3%
Reading	27.8%
Writing	11.1%
Listening	17.8%
	100%

The data showed that speaking skills were the most needed, followed by reading skills, while writing and listening were less emphasized. This reflects the practical demands of the aviation industry, where verbal communication and understanding technical documents are crucial. Teachers, however, noted that listening and writing skills are also critical but tend to be underemphasized due to challenges with fast-paced communication and complex technical writing.

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Developing and Creating Syllabi

The second result focused on the challenges teachers encounter when developing English syllabi for Aviation Vocational Schools. After conducting interviews with English teachers and the curriculum, it was found that teachers are lacking in diagnostic assessments before determining the necessary materials for students, a low awareness among teachers regarding the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach, and inadequate supervision and guidelines for syllabus development, which leads to confusion and uncertainty, particularly in aviation schools that are only provided with guidelines for general syllabi rather than those tailored to vocational needs. Teachers face difficulties in modifying the general English syllabus to meet students' needs, especially concerning the mastery of aviation technical terminology and communication skills appropriate to the work context. These difficulties arise due to the absence of a framework or example modules specifically designed for the aviation context.

The findings are consistent with Mead and Rubin (2018) emphasize the importance of interactive communication in teaching speaking skills, which is reflected in the results of this research, where speaking skills are considered the most crucial and highly needed by aviation vocational school students. According to Chero (2021) highlights the significance of Needs Analysis (NA) in syllabus development. This study adopts such an approach to design a syllabus specifically tailored to the needs of aviation students. However, differing from Chero, who discusses NA in a more general context, this research narrows its focus to the aviation sector, demonstrating the urgency for a specialized syllabus relevant to the demands of the aviation industry.

Furthermore, this research also builds arguments based on Menggo's (2022) thinking, which states that students' needs encompass deficiencies, wants, and goals. While Menggo focused more on the aspect of students' deficiencies, this study expands the scope by exploring how teachers' awareness and competencies can play a role in addressing these needs. Based on Chen et al. (2023), which prioritizes an inclusive and learner-centered syllabus approach, this research places greater emphasis on the importance of vocational relevance in syllabus design,

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particularly urging teachers to gain an in-depth understanding of the needs of the aviation industry.

This research is also in accordance with the findings of Wagner et al. (2023) and Salimi et al. (2012) which underscore the importance of a well-structured syllabus. However, the distinctive contribution of this study lies in its emphasis on diagnostic assessment as a crucial instrument for aligning the syllabus content, a factor that has not been heavily emphasized in previous studies. Consequently, this research provides an original contribution by highlighting the need for alignment between the English syllabus and vocational learning outcomes, particularly in the field of aviation.

One teacher explained:

> *"Sometimes, due to the workload, we don't have enough time to develop a well-aligned syllabus. We are often asked to prepare one at the start of the semester, but it's not always fully tailored to the needs of the students."*

Another teacher echoed similar concerns, stating that although the syllabus is developed, its application often falls short because it doesn't fully consider the students' background and learning style. The lack of consistent updates and innovation in the syllabus further complicates its effectiveness.

Additionally, teachers highlighted the absence of a diagnostic test, which would help assess students' initial skills and identify gaps. Without this, it's challenging to adapt the syllabus in a way that accommodates all students, especially those with varying skill levels and educational backgrounds.

Skills Required for Developing an Effective Syllabus

The final findings relate to the skills that teachers need in order to effectively create and develop syllabi. Interviews with teachers revealed that three key skills are essential:

1. Identifying learning needs:

Teachers must be able to understand and analyze the specific learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that the syllabus addresses both their immediate academic goals and their future professional needs. Based on the research findings, one of the main challenges faced by teachers is the lack of initial diagnostic assessment that can specifically identify students' learning needs. Teachers need to be able to analyze students' backgrounds and academic as well as professional needs, especially in vocational contexts such as aviation. This finding strengthens previous research which mentioned that learning needs encompass deficiencies, wants, and goals. This study expands on that concept by demonstrating that the identification of learning needs is not only the responsibility of the curriculum but also requires teachers' competency in recognizing specific student needs based on the targeted industry context. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on analyzing the learning needs of aviation vocational school students, which has often been overlooked in the ESP literature.

2. Creating relevant teaching materials:

Teachers should be able to design materials that align with the students' vocational fields, such as aviation, ensuring that content is both practical and relevant. Research findings indicate that teachers face difficulties in developing teaching materials that are contextual and aligned with the workforce, particularly in integrating technical aviation terminology into the English syllabus. This highlights a gap between the generic syllabus available and the specific needs of the students. Consequently, teachers in aviation vocational schools require more practical and relevant teaching modules or templates that cater to the demands of the international aviation industry. This suggests that relevant teaching materials not only support language skills but also enhance students' job readiness.

3. Ensuring structured implementation:

Teachers need to ensure that the syllabus is followed systematically and that learning goals are achieved step by step, which helps students stay engaged and understand the progression of the material. This research also found that the implementation of the syllabus tends to be unsystematic due to a lack of guidelines and oversight from the institution. Teachers often carry out teaching without clear stages and continuous evaluation. This condition weakens the achievement of the learning objectives that have been designed. A well-structured syllabus is crucial for the effectiveness of teaching. However, this study adds a new perspective by demonstrating that the success of syllabus implementation in the vocational context heavily relies on the active involvement of teachers in designing learning stages that align with the demands of the workforce, as well as the importance of using diagnostic assessments as a means to control student progress.

As one teacher shared:

> *"We often don't pay enough attention to our own skills in syllabus preparation. There's only one training session each year on syllabus creation, but it's not enough to keep up with the rapid changes in the aviation industry."*

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of speaking skills in the English syllabus for Aviation Vocational High Schools, with speaking identified as the most essential skill, followed by reading, listening, and writing. The results of this research align with the aviation industry's emphasis on the importance of effective communication for both professional and academic success in this field. The findings objectively indicate that students in Aviation Vocational Schools face significant challenges in developing their speaking competencies, particularly in the use of aviation technical terms and direct communication situations. This has been identified through student interviews and teacher observations, revealing a gap between the syllabus content and the real communication demands in aviation-related tasks.

This finding reinforces previous studies as conveyed by Mead and Rubin (2018), which emphasize the central role of interactive communication in language learning, particularly in high-stakes contexts such as aviation. However, this research goes beyond those general claims by presenting specific evidence from vocational contexts in Indonesia, indicating that the lack of structured speaking modules and teacher training in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) directly hampers students' readiness for international aviation communication standards.

The novelty of this research lies in the contextual exploration of communicative needs in the aviation vocational school environment, an area that has been rarely addressed in ESP literature. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on teaching ESP at the university level or in general vocational contexts, this study offers practical implications for syllabus designers and teacher training programs, emphasizing the importance of developing communication modules that align with industry needs and are specifically designed for aviation vocational learners. This research, particularly through the diagnostic assessment of student needs, highlights the necessity for a syllabus that prioritizes speaking and listening skills, as these are directly tied to industry requirements. By identifying the specific linguistic and non-linguistic needs of aviation students, this study supports the hypothesis that a well-designed syllabus, one that is informed by a thorough needs analysis, is crucial to meeting the practical demands of aviation education.

This study's findings resonate with several previous studies. Mead and Rubin (2018) emphasize the importance of interactive communication in their work on speaking, which is

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echoed in the results of this research, where speaking is considered the most critical skill for aviation students. Similarly, Chero (2021) stresses the significance of Needs Analysis (NA) in syllabus development, which this study adopts to tailor the syllabus specifically to the needs of aviation students. However, while Chero's work is more general and applicable to various contexts, this research narrows its focus to the aviation sector, underscoring the need for a more specialized syllabus that aligns with industry-specific demands.

Furthermore, this research builds on Menggo's (2022) assertion that students' needs encompass deficiencies, desires, and goals. While Menggo focuses more on the identification of deficiencies, this study extends this by considering how teacher awareness and competencies can address these needs. In comparison to Chen et al. (2023), who prioritize inclusive, learner-centered syllabi, this study emphasizes the vocational relevance of syllabus design, particularly highlighting the need for teachers to develop a deep understanding of the aviation industry's requirements.

Moreover, the research aligns with the work of Wagner et al. (2023) and Salimi et al. (2012), who stress the importance of a well-structured syllabus. However, this study diverges by emphasizing diagnostic assessments as a critical tool in tailoring the syllabus, a feature not as prominent in the studies by Wagner et al. and Salimi et al. These differences highlight the unique contribution of this research in emphasizing the importance of aligning syllabi with specific vocational outcomes.

The findings of this research have important implications for both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the critical role of Needs Analysis in syllabus development, particularly in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in vocational education. The results suggest that aligning the syllabus with the linguistic and professional needs of students can significantly improve learning outcomes, particularly in fields that require specialized knowledge, such as aviation.

In practice, the study emphasizes the need for English teachers to develop the skills necessary to conduct effective needs analyses, adapt teaching materials to meet industry standards, and implement syllabi that are flexible and responsive to students' evolving needs. This has implications for teacher training programs, as it highlights the importance of equipping teachers with the tools to understand and address the specific needs of their students.

Despite the valuable insights provided, this study has some limitations. One limitation is the relatively small sample size, which was confined to a single aviation vocational high school in Semarang, Central Java. While this sample provided in-depth insights into the specific context, the findings may not be generalizable to all aviation schools in Indonesia or beyond. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data from teachers and students, which may be subject to biases or inaccuracies in perception.

Another limitation is the focus on the immediate language needs of students, which may overlook broader cultural or socio-economic factors that could also influence English language acquisition. Furthermore, the study's use of only a single research method for collecting data may limit the comprehensiveness of the findings.

Given the limitations, future research could explore the language needs of aviation students in a broader geographical context, using a larger sample size to ensure more generalizable findings. It would also be valuable to investigate how socio-cultural factors influence language learning in vocational education, particularly in specialized fields like aviation.

Future studies could expand the focus to include a more detailed exploration of the challenges teachers face when implementing syllabus changes, as well as the effectiveness of diagnostic assessments in improving student outcomes. Additionally, researching the impact of continuous professional development for teachers on syllabus design could further contribute

to understanding how to improve the quality of vocational education in aviation and other technical fields.

In conclusion, this study provides a significant contribution to the field of vocational education, particularly in designing English syllabi that are relevant to the professional needs of students. The findings highlight the importance of understanding and addressing students' specific needs, ensuring that English language instruction is not only academically rigorous but also practically relevant for their future careers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the skills required by aviation vocational high school students are speaking is the most dominant skill, followed by reading skill in second place, third is listening skill and the last skill needed by aviation vocational high school students is writing. Problems that are the source of teachers in developing the syllabus include (a) No student needs test (Diagnostic Assessment), (b) Lack of teacher awareness, (c) No supervision and definite syllabus guidelines, and (d) Difficulties in adapting the material to the student's ability and background can be anticipated to be more concerned with developing the syllabus. Also, the teacher's objective skills need to be highlighted in the results of this study. The objective skills of teachers that must be optimized must be used wisely for the preparation and development of the syllabus, in the results of the interview, the objective skills that must be possessed by a teacher in an aviation vocational school (a) Skills to identify the learning needs of diverse students (b) Skills in making teaching materials that are in accordance with the students' vocation (c) Teachers' awareness that the syllabus has been arranged in such a way that it must be carried out in sequence so that the learning objectives can be achieved.

These findings underscore the importance of enhancing teachers' objective skills to ensure a well-structured and relevant syllabus. Teachers need to be equipped with the ability to identify diverse learning needs, create materials that align with the students' vocational requirements, and ensure that the syllabus is implemented sequentially to meet the learning objectives effectively. By addressing these areas, the quality of English education in aviation vocational schools can be significantly improved, preparing students for success in their future careers.

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