

## Gaps of Workplace English Needs Perceived by Pre-service Medical Record Technicians

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### ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini mengkaji kebutuhan penggunaan Bahasa Inggris di tempat kerja bagi calon lulusan Rekam Medis dan Informasi Kesehatan melalui analisis kebutuhan kualitatif yang berlandaskan teori. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi bagaimana Bahasa Inggris digunakan secara fungsional dalam konteks profesional rekam medis serta sejauh mana persepsi mahasiswa selaras dengan tuntutan institusional, dengan mengacu pada kerangka teoretis mutakhir dalam English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Medical Purposes (EMP), pembelajaran bahasa berbasis tugas, pedagogi berbasis genre, dan teori kompetensi komunikatif. Data dikumpulkan dari 90 mahasiswa semester akhir melalui kuesioner terbuka, yang menghasilkan 128 respons dan dianalisis secara tematik ke dalam lima kategori keterampilan, yaitu berbicara, membaca, menulis, menyimak, serta penggunaan umum/abstrak. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keterampilan berbicara dipersepsikan oleh mahasiswa sebagai keterampilan Bahasa Inggris yang paling menonjol karena visibilitasnya dalam interaksi dengan pasien warga negara asing, khususnya pada layanan pendaftaran dan pelayanan di lini depan. Namun demikian, triangulasi dengan Standar Kompetensi Kerja Nasional Indonesia (SKKNI) menunjukkan bahwa tugas-tugas yang bersifat membaca intensif — seperti pengodean diagnosis, navigasi sistem, dan validasi data—sebenarnya membentuk inti kognitif dari pekerjaan rekam medis. Keterampilan menulis terutama berfungsi sebagai perpanjangan terstruktur dari keterampilan membaca melalui dokumentasi dan pelaporan yang terstandar, sementara keterampilan menyimak cenderung kurang disadari meskipun perannya terintegrasi dalam komunikasi di lingkungan kerja. Kesenjangan ini menegaskan adanya perbedaan yang berkelanjutan antara persepsi dominansi komunikatif dan frekuensi tugas operasional yang sesungguhnya. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya integrasi kerangka regulasi dan analisis tugas okupasional dalam perancangan kurikulum EMP guna memastikan keselarasan pedagogis dengan realitas dunia kerja.

This study investigates the workplace English needs of pre-service Medical Record and Health Information technicians through a theoretically grounded qualitative needs analysis. The research aims to identify how English is functionally used in professional medical record contexts and how learner perceptions align with institutional demands by drawing on contemporary frameworks in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Medical Purposes (EMP), task-based language teaching, genre-based pedagogy, and communicative competence theory. Data were collected from 90 final-semester students through an open-ended questionnaire, yielding 128 responses that were thematically coded into five skill categories: speaking, reading, writing, listening, and general/abstract use. The findings showed that speaking is perceived by students as the most prominent English skills due to its visibility in interactions with foreign patients, especially in registration and frontline services. However, triangulation with the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI) indicates that reading-intensive tasks, such as diagnostic coding, system navigation, and data validation, establish the cognitive core of medical record work. Writing functions primarily as a structured extensions of reading through standardized documentation and reporting,

while listening remains underreported despite its embedded role in workplace communication. This discrepancy highlights a persistent gap between perceived communicative prominence and actual operational task frequency. The study emphasizes the necessity of integrating regulatory frameworks and occupational task analysis into EMP curriculum design to ensure pedagogical alignment with workplace realities.



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## INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has solidified its position as a theory-driven, needs-oriented discipline within applied linguistics, primarily in professional and occupational contexts where communicative failure has significant practical consequences. Recent research indicates that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is now concentrated on understanding how language operates as situated social action within institutional, professional, and epistemic ecosystems, rather than merely adapting vocabulary or skills to specific disciplines (Hyland & Wong, 2019; Pecorari & Coxhead, 2025; Tardy et al., 2020).

This new style of thinking helped the idea of English for Medical Purposes develop forward. This is about English for medical purposes in hospitals, since the subjects of this research are pre-service medical records staffs, who will, of course, work in the hospital once they graduated. Research on English for Medical Purposes is looking into how hard it is for people to talk to each other at work (Noprival, 2022; Salager-Meyer, 2014; Shadan et al., 2025). They showed how doctors and nurses utilize English for Medical Purposes to get things done and how they talk to each other in a certain way. This is not about the regular ways we use language, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. English for Medical Purposes is more than that. We need to figure out what people need to learn and do a good job with it. This means we have to use ideas to come up with ways to plan classes for EMP. Needs evaluations for education must be conducted in a theoretically grounded manner that is applicable for class development (Padmadewi et al., 2022; Rinawati et al., 2022).

These kinds of needs evaluations are highly significant for instruction. We need to undertake needs analyses that are methodologically sound, explicitly founded on theory, and directly relevant to curriculum design.

In English for Specific Purposes (ESP), it is becoming more crucial to figure out what individuals require. ESP is not about sending out surveys or talking about what students do. It is about figuring out what students need. Some academics believe that the existing models of ESP are overly simplistic. They do not think about how people really talk to each other at work or the rules that affect this communication. This is a problem because prior models of ESP mostly employed needs analysis to plan what to teach (Basturkmen, 2025; Ibrahim, 2020). To be useful, English for Specific Purposes has to think about these factors. So, scholars believe that individuals should examine language instruction from several perspectives. They prefer to use things like studies of occupational discourse and the theory of communicative competence to aid them with this. They also believe that task-based language teaching and genre analysis are vital.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) and various other strategies can help people learn languages better (Hyland & Wong, 2019; Malicka et al., 2019). We need to consider about how well we can communicate when we talk about being competent at speaking in a scenario. This implies we need to know how to use language and speak in a way that makes sense. We also need to know how language works and be able to change how we talk depending on the situation. The way we talk is also affected by our jobs and the rules at work.

It is very vital that we talk clearly and accurately in healthcare settings. It is important that everyone knows what we are saying. There are a lot of restrictions and hierarchies in healthcare environments that might make it hard to talk to people. We also have to be careful about what we say since we have a duty to our patients and need to keep them safe. ESP and EMP are in line with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). It makes sense since it teaches people a language by having them

practice things they would do at work. So, instead than just learning grammar and everything, students learn a language by performing things that they would do in their employment. For instance, ESP and EMP studies use real-life duties at work to assist people learn a language. This method is focused on what people will do in their jobs. ESP and EMP are employing this method to assist people learn a language in a useful way. To demonstrate that various occupational tasks impose distinct linguistic and cognitive processing demands necessitating reflection in needs analysis and instructional sequencing, recent studies have enhanced this framework by integrating task complexity and cognitive load models (Révész et al., 2016; Robinson, 2021).

Complementing task-based perspectives, genre-based pedagogy has gained substantial traction in ESP scholarship, particularly in relation to professional reading and writing. Genre theory conceptualizes workplace texts as socially situated responses to recurring communicative purposes, governed by disciplinary conventions and institutional expectations (Hyland, 2008; Tardy, 2006). EMP studies consistently demonstrate that communicative breakdowns in healthcare settings often stem from genre misuse—such as inappropriate documentation style or misinterpreted procedural texts—rather than from grammatical error alone (Howick et al., 2024).

In addition, sociocultural and situated learning theories frame professional language development as participation in communities of practice, where learning occurs through interaction, mediation, and legitimate peripheral participation (Duff, 2019; Li, 2025). This perspective is particularly relevant in healthcare workplaces, where novices acquire communicative competence through engagement with senior professionals, institutional routines, and multimodal communication environments.

Recent scholarly discourse concerning English for Medical Purposes (EMP) underscores the criticality of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as an essential theoretical framework, particularly within paradigms that encompass international patients, the global dissemination of medical knowledge, and the synergistic efforts of multilingual healthcare teams (Baker, 2022; Hoff, 2020). This indicates that ICC possesses the potential for pragmatic adaptability to the diverse contexts encountered within healthcare environments. Simultaneously, modern scholarly inquiries into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) rigorously assess the prevalence of standardized language evaluations in vocational education. Advocates of performance-oriented evaluation assert that assessment results inadequately represent workplace readiness and often complicate authentic communicative demands, particularly in professional domains that require integrated, task-oriented language application (Fulcher, 2020, in (Gebriel, 2021; Norris, 2018). This in-depth review bears significant relevance in the healthcare education arena, where command of English is typically seen as just an administrative formality rather than a vital professional ability.

The ongoing technological evolution further exacerbates the complexity of the EMP landscape. Research into digital and multimodal literacies indicates that healthcare practitioners are increasingly engaging with electronic health records, digital platforms, webinars, and online documentation systems, thereby necessitating broader conceptualizations of communicative competence that transcend traditional spoken and written forms (Zhang, 2021). Despite these theoretical advancements, recent systematic reviews expose a persistent methodological shortcoming: numerous ESP needs analyses employ coding schemes devoid of explicit theoretical foundations, thereby limiting their analytical rigor and pedagogical applicability (Basturkmen, 2025; Serafini et al., 2015). Experts are progressively promoting theoretically substantiated coding frameworks that distinctly correlate empirical outcomes with established ESP theories and educational methodologies.

Aside from theoretical discourse, workplace English demands in medical record and health information management are institutionally codified through national occupational standards. Based on the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI), English use is not marginal but structurally embedded across core functional areas of medical record practice (Kementerian Kesehatan, 2022). These areas include diagnostic coding, health information technology, patient registration, filling and assembling systems, and statistical reporting. Each domain enforces distinct linguistic demands that privilege specific English skills rather than generalized communicative competence. One main example of the use of English in medical record context is diagnostic coding explicitly requires intensive reading comprehension of English medical terminology due to the exclusive use of international classification systems such as ICD-10, which is published mainly in English. Then, administrative functions such as patient registration involve standardized English document titles, also basic spoken interaction with

foreign patients, while filing and assembling tasks rely on operational English terminology (Kementerian Kesehatan, 2022). This evidence supports the argument that English for Medical Purposes must be conceptualized as task-specific, skill-differentiated, and functionally embedded, rather than as a generalized language requirement. Accordingly, ESP curriculum design for medical record technicians must be grounded not only in learner perceptions but also in documented occupational practices and regulatory frameworks, ensuring configuration between educational establishment and workplace reality.

In response to this identified gap, the current analysis employs a five-section coding framework—Speaking, Reading, Writing, Listening, and General/Abstract communication—to assess the English language requirements for medical record technicians. These criteria are established within the setting of communication skills theories, task-based language education (TBLE), genre-oriented pedagogical strategies, sociocultural learning paradigms, and professional communication frameworks. By embedding qualitative data within this cohesive theoretical structure, the study aims to augment the methodological rigor of ESP needs analysis while providing directly applicable insights for the formulation of EMP curricula.

## METHOD

This research employs qualitative method by purposive sampling method to collect the data. The setting of this research is in medical records and health information department of a private health polytechnic in Yogyakarta. This study involved a total of 90 pre-service medical record and health information technicians (final semester students soon to be graduated) joining the pre-graduation training.

The study includes 128 responses (from 90 respondents) to an open-ended English needs survey administered to pre-service Medical Record and Health Information students who were about to graduate. The responses were collected through an open-ended questionnaire, as a part of the training evaluation questionnaire, as the primary data. Each response was coded into five main skill categories, following a structured system grounded in occupational task analysis. The categories and sub-categories are: Speaking (foreign-patient service encounters, inter-staff communication, presentation/meetings), Reading (medical terminology, equipment manuals/SOPs, scientific journals), Writing (documentation/data entry, correspondence/email), Listening (oral instructions, seminars/webinars), and General/Abstract (administrative requirements, social motivations). Verbatim responses (in Indonesian) were translated into English to be analyzed thematically. In the Results below, representative respondent quotes for each subcategory are presented and a thematic interpretation for their meanings, noting where learners' perceptions align or conflict with actual workplace needs, are offered. The analysis is informed by ESP and applied linguistics frameworks, including communicative competence models, task typologies, and genre-based pedagogy.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the qualitative needs analysis based on the student responses concerning the use of English in the workplace, answering the question: “*In your opinion, what is English used for at work?*” The data were categorized into five areas: speaking, reading, writing, listening, and general/abstract uses. Selected verbatim excerpts are embedded to illustrate dominant and recurring patterns.

### *Speaking*

This study found that speaking emerged as the most dominant and prominent workplace English needs. Respondents consistently associated English use with direct oral conversation with foreign patients, particularly in frontline contexts such as registration, service delivery, and initial patient encounters.

Several respondents explicitly highlighted the necessity of English when patients are unable to communicate in Indonesian (so that they will use English as the medium of communication):

“*Speaking to patients who can't speak in Indonesian.*” (R25.21)

“*Communicating with patients who may not be able to speak in Indonesian*” (R24.30)

English was also described as important during registration and administration services involving foreign patients:

*“In performing services to patients in the registration station when they come from foreign countries.” (R25.37)*

*“Communicating to patients in registration station.” (R25.47)*

In relation to patient-facing interaction, some participants acknowledged English use in broader communicative settings, including interaction with people from other countries and professional encounters:

*“In communication, especially communicating with people from foreign countries” (R25.9)*

In sum, in the view pre-service medical record technicians, speaking was supposed to be the most immediate and visible English skill required in the workplace, particularly in service-oriented roles. This is in line with communicative competence models that emphasize interactional and pragmatic competence in institutional settings (Baker, 2022; Hoff, 2020). However, most of the respondents emphasized communication with foreign patients, inter-staff English use was less prominent in their responses. This reflects the “perceptual bias” in needs analysis, where learners focus high interactions while underrecognizing routine workplace communication (Basturkmen, 2025).

#### *Reading*

Reading-related needs were primarily associated with understanding medical terminology and institutional texts. Respondents frequently mentioned difficulty and necessity in comprehending English medical terms used in diagnosis, treatment and procedures. This is shown in the response of one student:

*“There are medical terminologies such as diagnosis, procedures, medications” (R25.7)*

Reading was also linked to understanding written records and documents, such as:

*“Knowledge on medical terminology in English and understanding the content of medical files written in English.” (R24.7)*

In addition, English reading skills were required to comprehend system-based information and instructions, principally within digital health systems, for instance:

*“(To comprehend) (written display) on the computer” (R24.25)*

*“(To process) application system” (R24.24)*

These responses indicate that reading is a critical skill for ensuring accuracy and comprehension in institutional and technology-mediated tasks. The respondents already knew that reading is the core of what they will be doing in their job and it is a part of their job in the future. This is in line with what (Hyland & Wong, 2019) coined that reading is focused on comprehension of key terms and procedural information, reflecting engagement with recurring workplace text types commonly identified in genre-based ESP studies.

The importance of reading skills identified in respondents’ responses aligns strongly with institutional task requirements required in the national competency framework. According to SKKNI documentation, reading comprehension, particularly in English medical terminology through the use of ICD 10, is a core operational requirement in diagnostic coding activities. This finding validated genre-based ESP perspectives, which emphasize that professional reading involves recurring engagement with highly standardized texts ruled by international conventions rather than locally negotiated meanings. Furthermore, reading demands extend beyond clinical terminology into technology-mediated environments. Respondents’ references to understanding system displays and applications reflect the reality that health information systems routinely use English technical vocabulary. This supports the argument that reading competence in this context functions by bridging medical, technological, and administrative genres, validating calls for multi-layered literacy instructions in EMP curricula rather than isolated vocabulary teaching.

#### *Writing*

Writing needs were reported in relation to formal documentation and data entry, especially within medical record systems. Respondents described English use in writing reports, completing medical records, and coding diseases. This is shown in one of the respondents’ answers:

*“(I use English to) fill in EMR or medical record files” (R25.19);*

Meanwhile another respondent emphasized the role of English in coding accuracy:

*“It will be easier to code when I master English well” (R25.46)*

Then, another respondent associated writing with institutional documentation:

*“(English is used for) communication and writing reports” (R24.11)*

These excerpts suggest that writing in English is perceived as a structured and accuracy-driven activity governed by institutional standards rather than creative expressions. Meanwhile, writing is often mentioned together with reading or speaking activities, signifying that written production occurs broader within workplace processes rather than as an individual skill. Such documentation-focused writing aligns with institutional genre categories described in EMP theories, such as EMR entries, SOPs, and coding systems (Hyland & Wong, 2019; Salager-Meyer, 2014). This finding verified previous research showing that breakdowns in professional communication often stem from genre misuse rather than linguistic inaccuracy alone (Hyland & Wong, 2019; Salager-Meyer, 2014).

#### *Listening*

Listening needs were less explicitly stated by the respondents but were embedded within descriptions of service interaction and communication. English listening was needed to understand explanations, instructions, and spoken interaction during patient services. Listening was also implied in routine service communication as shown in the following response:

*“(I listened to people in English) when communicating in services.”* (R24.36)

In learning and professional development contexts, listening was linked to exposure in English through training or interaction with international partners:

*“(I listened to people in English) when communicating with international team.”* (R25.8)

Although less noticeable than speaking, listening plays a supporting role in workplace communication. The main use of listening in medical context mainly used in communication both with patients and global healthcare teams (Baker, 2022; Hoff, 2020). This gap is wide since the preservice students did not even notice how they will employ listening by the time they are working. However, this finding aligned with task-based language teaching (TBLT) distinctions between operational listening (e.g. understanding instructions) and academic developmental listening (e.g. seminars and training) (Révész et al., 2016). The underreporting of listening needs suggest that this skill is implied and embedded within routine practices, underpinning the need for triangulating self-reported data with task analysis in ESP research.

#### *General/Abstract Uses*

This category reflects broader perceptions of English as a professional requirement and form of social capital. Respondents associated English with administrative expectations, career development, and confidence building. These are shown in the responses as follow:

*“(English will be used when) ...accessing information through documents/resources, career development”* (R25.48)

Others highlighted its impact on personal and professional growth

*“(English) improves confidence and networking”* (R24.20)

These responses indicate that English is valued not only for immediate workplace tasks but also for its perceived long-term benefits. These give broader institutional and societal expectations regarding English use in professional settings, commonly reported in ESP needs analyses (Basturkmen, 2025). Participants' framing of English as an administrative requirement and social capital reflects critiques of test-driven and credential-oriented language ideologies (Norris, 2018). This category offers limited guidance for task-level syllabus design it provides valuable perception into learner motivation and institutional expectations, which are important for curriculum development.

In summary, these findings validated the analytical strength of the five-category framework in mapping workplace English needs. By aligning the empirical data with communicative competence theory, genre-based pedagogy, and task-based language instruction, this study calls for methodologically transparent and theoretically grounded needs analysis in ESP research (Basturkmen, 2025; Serafini et al., 2015). More importantly, it establishes a direct pathway from needs analysis to curriculum and assessment design in English for Medical Record. Moreover, when triangulated with SKKNI-based task mapping, student perceptions reveal partial alignment with actual workplace demands. This means, they have not fully understood what they are going to do next right after graduation. While speaking was perceived as dominant due to visibility in patient interaction, institutional documentation indicates that reading-driven tasks, such as coding, data validation, system navigation, and reporting, establishing the cognitive core of medical record work. Writing, operates as a controlled extension of reading activities, particularly in structured documentation and statistical reporting that follow international conventions. This discrepancy highlights a classic ESP needs-analysis gap between perceived communicative

prominence and operational task frequency, reinforcing the necessity of integrating regulatory and occupational evidence into EMP curriculum design.

### CONCLUSION

This study investigated the workplace English needs of medical record technician students through a theoretically grounded five-category framework including speaking, reading, writing, listening, and general/abstract use. The findings demonstrate that English competence in this context is highly task-specific and operational, embedded in frontline patient services, and institutionally embedded necessity. Through the finding, clear divergence between learner perceptions and documented workplace demands are revealed. While pre-service students mostly associate English use with speaking in foreign-patient interactions, institutional evidence from SKKNI and workplace task analysis confirms that reading-driven activities, mainly diagnostic coding using international classification systems, engagement with health information technologies, and interpretation of standardized documentation, forming the operational core of medical record practice. Writing appears as a controlled and accuracy-oriented extension of reading within institutional genres, such as electronic medical records and statistical reports, whereas listening remains an implicit activity beyond daily tasks, yet being underrecognized skill and in the professional development contexts.

These findings support long-lasting critiques in ESP regarding reliance on self-reported needs without triangulation against occupational realities. Methodologically, the study validates the use of theoretically grounded coding frameworks that integrate task-based, genre-based, and sociocultural perspectives in needs analysis. Pedagogically, the results call for EMP curricula that recalibrate instructional priorities, emphasizing reading literacy, genre awareness, and task sequencing aligned with actual workplace practices rather than perceived communicative prominence alone. Ultimately, this research establishes a direct and defensible pathway from needs analysis to curriculum and assessment design in English for Medical Record education, ensuring stronger alignment between educational preparation and professional performance.

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