

TASK-BASED ESP INSTRUCTION FOR AGRICULTURE STUDENTS: IMPACTS ON ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Imam Suhaimi*

¹*Program Studi Agribisnis, Universitas Kahuripan Kediri

Email: suhaimi@kahuripan.ac.id

Abstrak

Studi ini meneliti implementasi pengajaran Bahasa Inggris untuk Tujuan Khusus (ESP) berbasis tugas bagi mahasiswa pertanian dan dampaknya terhadap keterampilan komunikasi akademik mahasiswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji bagaimana aktivitas pembelajaran berbasis tugas meningkatkan kemampuan mahasiswa dalam berbicara, menulis, dan presentasi akademik dalam konteks pertanian. Desain penelitian metode campuran digunakan yang melibatkan mahasiswa dari Fakultas Pertanian Universitas Kahuripan Kediri. Data kuantitatif dikumpulkan melalui penilaian pra-tes dan pasca-tes, sedangkan data kualitatif diperoleh dari observasi kelas dan wawancara mahasiswa. Tugas-tugas pembelajaran dirancang berdasarkan aktivitas komunikasi pertanian otentik, termasuk presentasi laporan, diskusi akademik, tugas pemecahan masalah, dan ringkasan artikel ilmiah. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pengajaran ESP berbasis tugas secara signifikan meningkatkan kinerja komunikasi akademik mahasiswa, khususnya dalam kepercayaan diri berbicara, penggunaan kosakata, dan organisasi presentasi. Mahasiswa juga menunjukkan motivasi yang lebih tinggi dan partisipasi aktif selama kegiatan pembelajaran. Lebih lanjut, tugas-tugas otentik memungkinkan mahasiswa untuk menghubungkan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dengan pengetahuan disiplin ilmu mereka dan kebutuhan profesional masa depan di bidang pertanian. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pengajaran ESP berbasis tugas memberikan pendekatan pedagogis yang efektif untuk meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi akademik di kalangan mahasiswa pertanian dan mendukung integrasi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris kontekstual dan spesifik disiplin ilmu di pendidikan tinggi..

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Inggris untuk Tujuan Khusus (ESP), pembelajaran berbasis tugas, mahasiswa pertanian, keterampilan komunikasi akademik.

Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of Task-Based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction for agriculture students and its impacts on students' academic communication skills. The research aims to examine how task-based learning activities improve students' abilities in academic speaking, writing, and presentation within agricultural contexts. A mixed-method research design was employed involving undergraduate students from the Faculty of Agriculture. Quantitative data were collected through pre-test and post-test assessments, while qualitative data were obtained from classroom observations and student interviews. The instructional tasks were designed based on authentic agricultural communication activities, including report presentations, academic discussions, problem-solving tasks, and scientific article summaries. The findings revealed that task-based ESP instruction significantly enhanced students' academic communication performance, particularly in speaking confidence, vocabulary usage, and presentation organization. Students also demonstrated higher motivation and active participation during learning activities. Furthermore, authentic tasks enabled students to connect English learning with their disciplinary knowledge and future professional needs in agriculture. The study concludes that task-based ESP instruction provides an effective pedagogical approach for improving academic communication skills among agriculture students and supports the integration of contextual and discipline-specific English learning in higher education.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), task-based instruction, agriculture students, academic communication skills.

INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential international language in higher education, professional communication, and scientific publication, including in the field of agriculture. In the era of globalization and digital agriculture, students of agribusiness and agrotechnology are increasingly required to access scientific information, communicate academic ideas, and participate in international academic communities using English. Agricultural students are expected not only to understand general English but also to master discipline-specific communication skills related to agricultural contexts, such as presenting research findings, discussing agricultural issues, writing reports, and understanding scientific articles (Contreras & Moore, 2022).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has therefore gained considerable attention in higher education because it focuses on learners' specific academic and professional needs. ESP instruction emphasizes contextualized language learning that is closely connected to students' fields of study and future careers. According to recent studies, agriculture students require English competencies that support academic communication, technical vocabulary mastery, and professional interaction in agricultural settings. However, many English courses in higher

education still rely on general English materials that do not adequately address students' disciplinary needs (Contreras & Moore, 2022).

In agricultural higher education, the gap between English instruction and students' real academic communication needs remains a significant issue. Many students experience difficulties in expressing ideas during presentations, participating in academic discussions, and understanding agriculture-related academic texts. These challenges are often caused by limited exposure to authentic communication tasks and insufficient opportunities to practice meaningful language use in classroom activities. Previous research revealed that agricultural students need more contextualized English materials and communicative activities that reflect real academic and professional situations in agriculture (Sarap, et al, 2022).

One instructional approach that has shown strong potential in ESP learning is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). TBLT emphasizes meaningful communication through authentic tasks that simulate real-world language use. Rather than focusing solely on grammar instruction, task-based learning encourages students to complete communicative tasks such as problem-solving, presentations, discussions, and project work. In ESP contexts, TBLT enables students to use English actively while simultaneously developing discipline-related knowledge and communication skills.

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of TBLT in improving English skills in ESP classrooms. Prasetyaningrum (2018) found that task-based instruction improved agriculture students' reading comprehension and classroom participation. Similarly, Duong and Truong (2022) reported that TBLT positively influenced ESP reading comprehension and strategic learning among vocational students. Moreover, integrating task-based instruction with project-based learning and digital resources has been found to increase students' motivation and engagement in ESP learning environments.

Despite the growing body of research on TBLT and ESP, studies specifically investigating the impacts of task-based ESP instruction on agriculture students' academic communication skills are still limited, particularly in Indonesian higher education contexts. Most previous studies focused mainly on reading comprehension, vocabulary mastery, or general language achievement, while fewer studies explored academic communication skills such as academic speaking, presentations, discussions, and discipline-based interaction. Furthermore, agriculture students have unique communication demands because they must communicate technical agricultural concepts effectively in both academic and professional environments.

Academic communication skills are increasingly important for university students because they support participation in seminars, conferences, collaborative projects, and scientific publication activities. Students who possess strong academic communication abilities tend to demonstrate higher confidence, critical thinking, and professional readiness. In agricultural education, these competencies are essential because future graduates are expected to communicate agricultural innovations, research findings, and sustainability issues to wider audiences. Therefore, English instruction should facilitate authentic communicative experiences that prepare students for real academic and workplace interactions (Smith, et al, 2022).

Task-based ESP instruction is considered relevant to address these challenges because it promotes learner-centered activities and authentic communication practices. Through tasks such as group discussions, academic presentations, report writing, and problem-solving activities related to agriculture, students can actively develop their communication competence while engaging with meaningful disciplinary content. In addition, task-based instruction aligns with contemporary views of language learning that emphasize interaction, collaboration, and contextualized communication.

Based on the issues above, this study aims to investigate the impacts of Task-Based ESP Instruction on agriculture students' academic communication skills. Specifically, the study explores how task-based activities contribute to students' speaking performance, presentation skills, vocabulary usage, and classroom participation in ESP learning contexts. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to ESP pedagogy and practically to the development of more contextual, communicative, and discipline-oriented English instruction for agriculture students in higher education.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-method research design to investigate the impacts of Task-Based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction on agriculture students' academic communication skills. The mixed-method approach was selected because it allows the researcher to combine quantitative and qualitative data in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of students' learning experiences and performance improvements. Quantitative data were used to measure students' academic communication achievement before and after the implementation of task-based instruction, while qualitative data were utilized to explore students' perceptions and classroom interactions during the learning process.

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Agriculture of Universitas Kahuripan Kediri

involving undergraduate students from the Agribusiness and Agrotechnology study programs. The participants consisted of 40 second-year students who were enrolled in the English for Agriculture course. The participants were selected using purposive sampling because they had relatively similar academic backgrounds and were actively participating in ESP learning activities related to agriculture.

The instructional treatment was implemented for eight meetings during one academic semester. The learning activities were designed based on the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), emphasizing authentic and meaningful communication tasks related to agricultural contexts. The tasks included academic presentations, group discussions, report writing, problem-solving activities, vocabulary exploration, and scientific article summaries. The instructional materials were adapted from agriculture-related topics such as sustainable farming, agribusiness communication, food security, and agricultural technology.

The quantitative data were collected using pre-test and post-test instruments to assess students' academic communication skills. The assessment focused on speaking performance, presentation organization, vocabulary usage, fluency, and communication effectiveness. The obtained scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-test analysis to determine whether there was a significant improvement after the implementation of task-based ESP instruction.

$$t = \frac{x_1 - x_2}{\sqrt{\frac{s^2}{n}}}$$

Meanwhile, qualitative data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and students' reflective responses. Classroom observations were conducted to identify students' participation, interaction patterns, and engagement during task-based learning activities. Interviews were administered to several selected participants to explore their perceptions of the learning process, challenges, and benefits of task-based ESP instruction. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis involving data reduction, categorization, and interpretation of recurring themes.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the study applied methodological triangulation by combining multiple sources of data and research instruments. In addition, peer debriefing and member checking were conducted to increase the trustworthiness of qualitative findings. The results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses were integrated to provide comprehensive conclusions regarding the effectiveness of Task-Based ESP instruction in improving agriculture students' academic communication skills

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The implementation of Task-Based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction was conducted for eight meetings involving 40 undergraduate students from the Agribusiness and Agrotechnology study programs. The instructional process emphasized authentic agricultural communication tasks such as academic presentations, scientific article summaries, group discussions, and problem-solving activities related to agricultural issues. The quantitative findings indicated a significant improvement in students' academic communication skills after the implementation of task-based instruction (Noroozi & Taheri, 2022).

The pre-test and post-test results demonstrated that students experienced considerable progress in speaking fluency, vocabulary usage, presentation organization, and confidence in academic communication. Before the treatment, many students had difficulties expressing agricultural concepts in English and tended to rely heavily on memorization. However, after participating in task-based activities, students became more active and communicative during classroom interactions. The mean score of the students increased from 68.25 in the pre-test to 82.40 in the post-test, indicating a substantial improvement in academic communication performance.

The paired sample t-test analysis also showed that the significance value was lower than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that Task-Based ESP instruction had a statistically significant effect on students' academic communication skills.

The improvement was particularly visible in students' speaking confidence and vocabulary mastery. During the early meetings, most students were hesitant to participate in discussions and often mixed Indonesian with English while presenting agricultural topics. Nevertheless, by the end of the instructional period, students demonstrated greater confidence in delivering presentations and responding to questions from peers. Classroom observations revealed that task-based activities encouraged students to negotiate meaning, collaborate actively, and use discipline-related vocabulary more effectively.

The qualitative findings obtained from interviews and reflective responses further supported the quantitative results. Most participants expressed positive perceptions toward the implementation of task-based ESP instruction. Students stated that authentic communication tasks helped them connect English learning with their academic field and future professional needs. They also reported that agriculture-related tasks increased their motivation because the learning materials were relevant to their disciplinary interests. Several students mentioned that presenting agricultural topics and discussing real agricultural problems enabled them to practice English meaningfully rather than merely studying grammar rules.

Moreover, students perceived collaborative tasks such as group discussions and project presentations as beneficial for improving interaction and communication skills. Through collaborative learning, students became more confident in expressing opinions and responding to academic questions. The classroom atmosphere was also observed to be more interactive and student-centered compared to conventional lecture-based instruction.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Task-Based ESP instruction positively influenced agriculture students' academic communication skills. The improvement in speaking performance, vocabulary usage, and presentation skills indicates that authentic communicative tasks can facilitate meaningful language learning in ESP contexts. These findings are consistent with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which emphasize real-world communication and learner-centered interaction as the core elements of language instruction (Noroozi & Taheri, 2022).

The results support previous studies showing that task-based instruction enhances students' participation and communicative competence in ESP classrooms. Prasetyaningrum (2018) found that TBLT improved agriculture students' reading comprehension and classroom engagement through structured communicative tasks. Similarly, Duong and Truong (2022) reported that task-based learning significantly improved ESP students' reading comprehension and strategic learning processes in vocational education contexts (Prasetyaningrum, 2018).

In this study, task-based activities such as presentations, discussions, and report writing created opportunities for students to use English in authentic agricultural communication contexts. These findings align with Long's concept of TBLT, which emphasizes that language learning should reflect real-life tasks and communicative purposes. Through meaningful tasks, students were encouraged to focus on communication rather than memorization of grammatical structures. As a result, they became more confident and fluent in expressing academic ideas related to agriculture.

Another important finding of this study is the increase in students' learning motivation and classroom participation. Students showed higher enthusiasm when engaging with agriculture-related communication tasks because the learning activities were directly connected to their academic discipline. This supports Rodríguez-Peñarroja's (2022) study, which revealed that integrating task-based instruction with contextual and digital learning resources could enhance ESP students' motivation and academic performance.

The integration of authentic agricultural topics also contributed to students' vocabulary development and disciplinary communication competence. Students were exposed to technical

agricultural terminology through communicative activities such as scientific article summaries and discussions on sustainable agriculture issues. This finding confirms that ESP instruction becomes more effective when learning materials are contextualized according to students' academic and professional needs. A needs analysis study conducted by Contreras & Moore (2022) emphasized that agricultural students require English competencies that support workplace communication, academic interaction, and access to scientific information.

Furthermore, the collaborative nature of task-based learning enabled students to develop interactional competence and reduce communication anxiety. Group discussions and collaborative presentations provided opportunities for peer interaction and negotiation of meaning. These activities encouraged students to practice speaking more naturally and actively participate in classroom communication. Previous research has highlighted that collaborative and communicative tasks help learners improve confidence and language fluency because they create supportive learning environments (Ait Hattani, 2020).

The findings also indicate that Task-Based ESP instruction supports the development of academic communication skills required in higher education contexts. Students improved not only their speaking ability but also their capacity to organize presentations, explain academic concepts, and respond critically to questions. These competencies are essential for agriculture students because they are expected to participate in seminars, academic conferences, and professional communication activities. According to recent ESP research, oral academic communication tasks such as presentations and discussions are among the most important language needs in higher education (Smith, et al, 2022).

In addition, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on ESP and TBLT in agricultural higher education. Most previous studies focused primarily on reading comprehension or general language skills, whereas this study specifically examined academic communication skills within agriculture-related contexts. Therefore, the study offers empirical evidence that task-based instruction can effectively bridge the gap between English learning and disciplinary communication needs among agriculture students.

Despite the positive findings, several challenges were identified during the implementation process. Some students initially experienced anxiety and lacked confidence when speaking English during presentations and discussions. Limited vocabulary mastery and grammatical accuracy also became obstacles for several participants. However, continuous exposure to communicative tasks gradually helped students become more comfortable using English in classroom interactions. This suggests that ESP lecturers should provide sufficient scaffolding, vocabulary support, and constructive feedback during task implementation.

Another challenge concerned time management in conducting collaborative tasks and presentations. Some activities required longer classroom sessions because students needed additional preparation and discussion time. Therefore, careful instructional planning is necessary to ensure that task-based activities can be implemented effectively within limited classroom schedules.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that Task-Based ESP instruction is an effective pedagogical approach for improving agriculture students' academic communication skills. The approach not only enhances language proficiency but also promotes motivation, interaction, and contextualized learning experiences. Consequently, ESP lecturers in agricultural higher education are encouraged to integrate authentic communicative tasks into English instruction to better prepare students for academic and professional communication demands in the agricultural sector

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Task-Based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction has a positive and significant impact on agriculture students' academic communication skills. The implementation of authentic and discipline-related communication tasks successfully improved students' speaking performance, vocabulary mastery, presentation organization, and classroom participation. The findings revealed that task-based learning created more meaningful and contextualized learning experiences because students were actively engaged in communication activities closely related to agricultural topics and professional needs. Furthermore, the integration of collaborative discussions, academic presentations, and problem-solving tasks encouraged students to become more confident and interactive in using English within academic settings.

In addition, the study highlights that Task-Based ESP instruction not only enhances students' language competence but also increases learning motivation and communicative engagement in higher education contexts. The use of authentic agricultural tasks enabled students to connect English learning with their disciplinary knowledge and future career demands in the agricultural sector. Therefore, this study suggests that ESP lecturers and curriculum developers should integrate task-based and contextual learning approaches into English instruction for agriculture students. Future studies are recommended to involve larger samples, longer instructional periods, and the integration of digital learning technologies to further explore the effectiveness of Task-Based ESP instruction in agricultural higher education

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