

## **A NEEDS ANALYSIS OF ESP FOR FASHION DESIGN STUDENTS AT AN INDONESIAN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL**

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### **Abstract**

This research presents an analysis of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning needs of fashion design students at an Indonesian vocational school, aiming to align English instruction with the practical and professional demands of the fashion field. The study aimed to identify the perceived English language needs, current competencies and difficulties, and students' preferences for English topics, materials, and learning methods relevant to the fashion field. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. The participants were thirty-two students who completed the questionnaires and eight students who were purposively selected for interviews. The researcher analyzed the ESP learning needs of the students by following Hutchinson and Waters' needs analysis, covering necessities (what learners need to know), lacks (what they do not yet know), and wants (what they prefer to learn). The results demonstrated that students considered mastering English important for further study, future career development, and promoting their fashion products internationally. Despite recognizing the importance of English, students reported challenges in grammar, pronunciation, and speaking. They also lacked opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. Vocabulary, writing, and reading were perceived as highly necessary, particularly for the purpose of describing products and staying up-to-date with global fashion trends. Students also showed a strong interest in English materials that support interpersonal communication and practical use, such as introductions, greetings, and procedural texts, alongside interactive and collaborative learning methods like group work and whole-class discussions. The findings of this study suggest the importance of developing more relevant ESP instruction that reflects real-world needs and meets students' expectations regarding ESP learning in the field of fashion design. Teachers are expected to develop lesson plans that support students' language development for both academic and professional purposes.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes, Fashion Design, Needs Analysis, Vocational School

## **INTRODUCTION**

In today's globalized world, English has become the dominant language of international communication, especially in education, business, science, and technology (Rif'attullah & Putra, 2024; Saienko et al., 2024). English is a foreign language that is learned after the mother tongue. In other words, the application and time allocation given will not exceed other learning appropriate to the major. Students will be enthusiastic about learning English as long as the learning does not go out of standard (Kuvandykova, 2024). English is a language that has generally been used as a medium of communication with an international scope, which makes English a universally used language (Baugh & Cable, 1993). To understand how English can be relevant and useful in specific educational settings, it is essential to consider not only the global importance of the language but also its specific application. Language functions vary significantly depending on context, purpose, and audience. While a language like English holds global significance for education, employment, and intercultural communication, its practical use must be adapted to particular fields, cultural contexts, and communicative goals to be truly effective (Gonçalves, 2020; Thu, 2023).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) differs from more general language studies by emphasizing the intentional use of a particular language, or what Cummins (1982) calls "context deduction" language. These tend to be more abstract and rely less on direct

consistency settings than everyday language usage. A commitment to language teaching that pays attention to students' specific goals for learning English has given ESP a unique place for developing innovative theory and practice in language teaching since the term first appeared in the 1960s. ESP is a language teaching methodology whose materials and approaches are focused on students' motives for learning. As a result, ESP is focused on making English classes more relevant to students' needs. With students and professionals around the world now required to master the conventions of their specific field of English communication to guide their learning and promote their careers, ESP has consolidated and expanded its role. It is currently a major player in research and pedagogy in applied linguistics, with substantial and growing contributions from researchers worldwide by analyzing the learning needs of vocational students (Cummins, 1982).

In line with the principles of ESP, vocational education requires language learning that is tailored to the professional needs of students (Yao et al., 2025). Vocational education is one of the national education level systems in our country which was formed with the hope of being able to prepare and develop Indonesian youth who can work professionally in their fields and also be competitive in the world of work on the local, national, regional, and international levels. In an increasingly competitive world of work, someone who has foreign language skills, especially English, in this globalization era is highly prioritized and becomes a plus point in personal self-assessment. Lovin and Savu (2025) emphasize that language and communication skills are crucial for successful integration into the labor market and often influence job satisfaction, income level, and confidence at work. English teaching in secondary vocational schools should create real learning scenarios, especially in vocational modules, to improve students' language practice and application abilities, thereby helping them achieve learning objectives and enhance their employability and comprehensive skills (Yi, 2024). Additionally, Warahmah et al. (2023) highlighted the need for English competencies tailored to specific vocational fields in preparing students for professional communication in their careers.

This study focuses on fashion design students as a specific group within vocational education. The fashion design department at one of the public vocational schools in Bone, namely SMKN 1 Bone, serves as the context of this study. In general, fashion design majors study the science of designing clothes. Not only do they learn to design fashion products, but they also explore how to market products, analyze and follow fashion trends, create new trends, and apply technology in completing their works. In this department, English is taught as a subject and is considered relevant for fashion design students. Proficiency in English is expected to broaden their opportunities, particularly in accessing global fashion references and promoting products beyond local markets.

Based on preliminary observations, English learning in vocational schools is often perceived more as a graduation requirement than as a direct preparation for workplace demands. Several students expressed hesitation about applying to jobs requiring English proficiency, which may reflect a need for increased confidence and readiness. Ideally, the English curriculum in vocational schools should be tailored to align with the students' specific vocational competencies. Preliminary insights gathered through informal conversations with several fashion design students at SMKN 1 Bone, on January 10<sup>th</sup> 2023, revealed that the English learning they encountered tended to focus on general English rather than content directly related to their major. This presents a valuable opportunity for teachers to further innovate or adapt English teaching materials to support students' future career paths. Additionally, student-related factors such as learning habits, mindset, and awareness of the role of English in their field are also essential to consider in improving ESP implementation.

Although several studies have explored ESP in vocational contexts, limited research has specifically analyzed the English needs of fashion design students in Indonesian vocational schools. This study aims to fill that gap by identifying students' necessities, lacks, and wants through a structured needs analysis. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the perceptions of fashion design students and how these insights can inform the development of relevant ESP content. Based on this objective, the present study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do Fashion Design students perceive their English language needs for academic and professional purposes?
2. How do students perceive their current English competencies and areas of difficulty related to their field of study?
3. What are the students' perceived preferences regarding English learning topics, materials, and methods relevant to Fashion Design?

The findings of this research are expected to provide practical implications for English teachers and curriculum developers in vocational schools to design ESP instruction that is relevant, targeted, and effective. Understanding what students need, lack, and want in learning English is an essential step to achieving learning outcomes that truly support vocational goals.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore the English language learning needs of fashion design students. This research tried to understand phenomena in their natural setting and context where the researcher does not try to manipulate the observed phenomena (Sarosa, 2012). The research sought to understand social phenomena from the perspective of the participant. So, the notion of qualitative research is research that is used to examine the state of natural objects where the researcher is the key instrument (Arifin, 2001). The research adopted the framework of Needs Analysis as proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), focusing on three main categories: necessities, lacks, and wants.

The researcher conducted this research in one of the vocational High Schools in Bone Regency, namely SMKN 1 Bone. The selection of the school was motivated by the pre-observation that had been done by researcher in the field and found problems that were by the title of the research to be carried out. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 32 students and semi-structured interviews with 8 purposively selected participants. According to Babbie (2020), purposive sampling is a sampling technique based on the researcher's or evaluator's judgment about which samples are most useful and representative. The questions contained in items related to the needs of fashion design students to deepen their learning of English. The interview was used to gain information from sufficient data to know what students majoring in fashion design needs to learn English. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions that yielded frequency and percentage data, while the interviews provided deeper insight into students' perceptions. There are five procedures of data collection in this research.

Firstly, the researcher made pre-observations by asking several students to find out those problems in learning English at vocational schools, such as English teaching materials that were not specific to majors, which actually happened at SMKN 1 Bone. Secondly, the researcher made a questionnaire containing statements that discuss students' English language needs. Furthermore, the questionnaire was distributed to students using Google Forms, accompanied by an explanation of how to answer and the processing time. Thirdly, to support

the questionnaire, the researcher provided several important question points for students related to the need for English subjects for students majoring in fashion. Next, the researcher collects qualitative documents to ensure the validity of the data, such as lesson plans, recordings, and photos. Finally, the researcher re-analyzed the questionnaire and interview data so that they would know what the ESP material needs were for the specific purposes of fashion design students at SMKN 1 Bone.

The findings were organized thematically according to the Needs Analysis framework. Descriptive analysis was used to interpret the data, supported by figures and direct student quotations. The researcher performed data analysis by enriching information, looking for needs, relationships, comparing, and finding patterns based on original data (Gunawan, 2022). Results were also compared with relevant previous studies to enhance the validity of the interpretation.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

To gain a comprehensive understanding of students' English learning needs in the context of Fashion Design, the findings are presented based on the Needs Analysis framework, covering students' necessities, lacks, and wants. Each section highlights relevant data from questionnaires and is supported by direct student responses gathered through interviews.

### Necessities

The perceived necessities of Fashion Design students regarding English language learning cover why, when, and for what purposes they need to use English.

### *Reasons for the need to learn English*

There are varied reasons that motivate Fashion Design students to learn English, ranging from academic to career-oriented purposes.

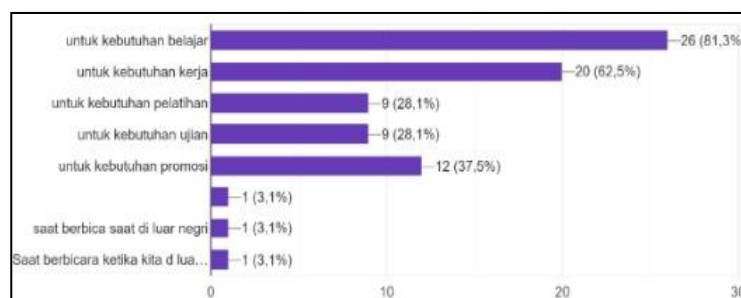


Figure 1. Reasons for the need to learn English

Figure 1 shows the results related to the target situation of Fashion Design students, specifically the reasons why they need English: for study (81.3% or 28 out of 32 students), for work (62.5%), and for promotion (37.5%). These results are also supported by student interviews regarding the need for English in the Fashion Design field.

*“Karena kalau kulanjutkan sekolah busana ku dan sekarang orang yang punya kemampuan berbahasa inggris yang dicari.”*

(Because if I continue my fashion education, people with English skills are now in demand.)  
(Student 4)

“Bahasa Inggris dibutuhkan di jurusan busana karena produk bisa kita promosikan dan keluarkan sampai keluar negara.”

(English is needed in the fashion department because it allows us to promote our products and export them abroad.) (Student 5)

### ***Situations where English is needed***

The students identify several real-life and academic situations in which English is necessary to support their vocational learning and communication.

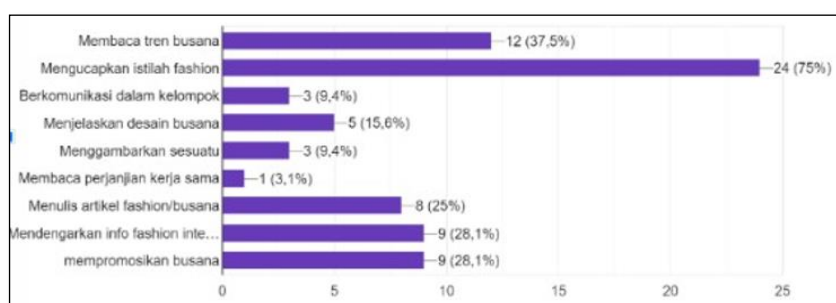


Figure 2. Situations where English is needed

Figure 2 above illustrates the situations where fashion students most frequently use English in learning. The highest percentage was when pronouncing fashion terms (75%), followed by reading fashion trends (37.5%). Listening to international fashion information and promoting fashion each received 28.1%. Reading cooperation agreements ranked the lowest. These findings are further supported by interview responses in which students shared real examples of when and how they use English in their learning and daily activities.

“Dibutuhkan karena banyak istilah dalam busana memakai bahasa Inggris.”

(It is needed because many terms in fashion are in English.) (Student 6)

“Pada saat ini kan saya pakai bahasa Inggris itu pada saat belajar bahasa Inggris ji itupun sedikit-sedikit dan itu juga saat belajar menulis untuk promosi produk.”

(Currently, I only use English during English lessons, and even then just a little—mainly when learning to write for product promotion.) (Student 7)

“Untuk sekarang kak saya menggunakan bahasa Inggris ketika dalam pembelajaran dan kadang-kadang juga pas main social media untuk buat caption dan ketika nonton reels di Instagram banyak yang pakai bahasa Inggris.”

(For now, I use English during lessons and sometimes when using social media—for example, writing captions or watching reels on Instagram, many of which are in English.) (Student 6)

### ***Language skills and aspects needed***

Students express the importance of mastering various English skills and aspects, especially those most applicable to their field of study.

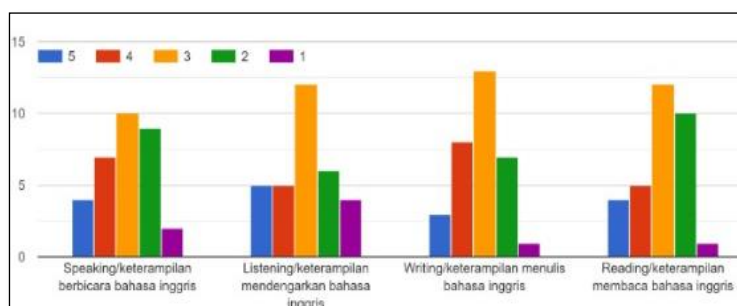


Figure 3. Language Skills Needed

The figure 3 above shows the English language skills needed by Fashion Design students. The researcher concluded that all four skills are considered necessary. Writing received the highest response in moderate need (40.6%), followed by reading and listening (37.5%), and speaking (31.2%).

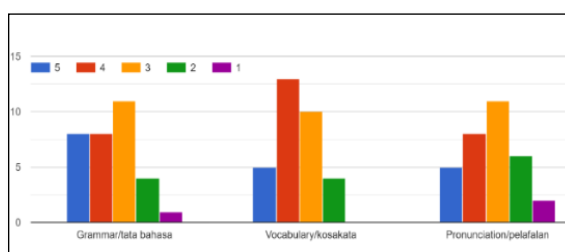


Figure 4. Language Aspects Needed

Figure 4 presents the language aspects needed by Fashion Design students in learning English. The researcher concluded that vocabulary was most frequently rated as a high need (40.6%), while grammar and pronunciation were rated highest in the "moderate need" category (34.4%).

The questionnaire data are also reinforced by students' interview statements describing the specific language skills and aspects they find most useful in their fashion-related tasks.

*“Keterampilan yang saya butuhkan sesuai dengan jurusan saya yaitu speaking dan pronunciation karena itu tadi kak untuk mendeskripsikan desain kadang ada kosakata bahasa Inggrisnya.”*

(The skills I need for my major are speaking and pronunciation, because when describing designs, I sometimes need to use English vocabulary.) (Student 2)

*“Keterampilan yang paling saya butuhkan kan itu listening kan kalo bacaan bahasa inggris kan masih bisa ditranslate tapi kalo dalam bentuk video mi harus didengarkan baik-baik kah bahasa inggris itu lain juga tulisannya lain juga pelafalannya. Pronunciation juga penting.”*

(The skill I need the most is listening. If it's written English, I can still translate it, but if it's in the form of a video, I really have to listen carefully. Because in English, the spelling is different from the pronunciation. Pronunciation is also important.) (Student 2)

*“Sebenarnya semua kemampuan bahasa inggris itu dibutuhkan tapi yang paling dibutuhkan dan yang sejalan dengan jurusanku itu untuk sekarang writing karena untuk membuat caption promosi dengan menulis deskripsi busana dengan bahasa inggris.”*

(Actually, all English skills are needed, but the most important one for my major right now is writing—because I need it to create promotional captions and write clothing descriptions in English.) (Student 7)

“Keterampilan yang dibutuhkan kak itu reading sama writing misalnya itu kak postingan atau berita busana yang full inggris ataupun beberapa kata ji pakai bahasa inggris supaya bisa di mengerti dan juga writing kak supaya bisa ki belajar buat promosi busana yang gaul ada kata bahasa inggrisnya juga agar menarik begitu kak.”

(The skills I need are reading and writing. For example, some fashion posts or news are fully in English, or use some English words to make them understandable. Writing is also important so I can learn how to create fashionable and catchy promotional content that includes English words to make it more attractive.) (Student 6)

### Goals for learning English

The students’ goals in learning English reflect their desire to enhance communication skills, support future careers, and understand professional content.



Figure 5. Goals for learning English

Figure 5 shows the goals of Fashion Design students in learning English. The highest percentage (56.3%, or 18 students) aimed to communicate well in English, followed by understanding grammar (50%, or 16 students), and preparing for future job careers (43.8%, or 14 students). These results are also aligned with students’ interview responses, where they conveyed their long-term goals and expectations in learning English for both academic and career advancement.

“Bahasa inggris dibutuhkan di jurusan busana karena misalkan ada orang luar yang mau dibuatkan baju bisaki mengerti apa yang dia mau jadi tidak perlu mi lagi penerjemah.”

(English is needed in the fashion department because if there are foreign clients who want to have clothes made, I can understand what they want. So, there’s no need for a translator.) (Student 3)

“Bahasa inggris dibutuhkan di jurusan busana bahkan semua jurusan karena jika bisa berbahasa inggris akan memudahkan kita untuk meniti karir nantinya.”

(English is needed not only in the fashion department but in all majors, because being able to speak English will make it easier for us to build a career in the future.) (Student 8)

### Lacks

The present situation reveals gaps in students’ English proficiency and learning habits that may hinder their ability to achieve their vocational goals.

### Students’ perceptions of English

Students hold mixed perceptions toward English, viewing it as both important and challenging due to pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary concerns.

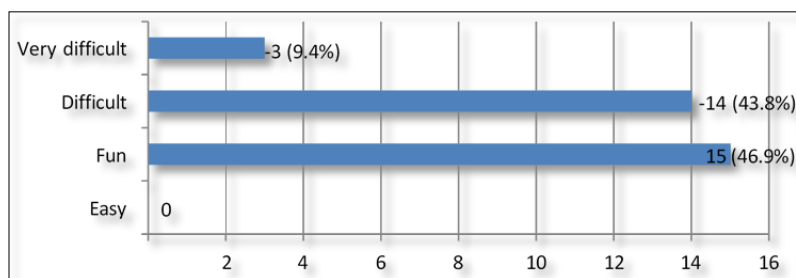


Figure 6. Students' Perceptions of English

As shown in Figure 6, students' perceptions of English vary: 15 students (46.9%) think English is fun, while others find it difficult (43.8%). Additionally, 3 students (9.4%) consider it very difficult. These findings are echoed in interview responses, where students shared their personal feelings, challenges, and initial assumptions about learning English

*“Yang saya pikirkan kak akan menyenangkan dan juga kan saya pilih jurusan busana jadi mungkin pelajaran bahasa inggris menjurus kebusana kayak kosatanya begitu.”*

(I think it will be fun. Since I chose to major in fashion, I expect the English lessons to be related to fashion, especially in terms of vocabulary.) (Student 6)

*“Yang saya pikirkan tentang pelajaran bahasa inggris itu pasti bakalan susah apalagi penyebutan dan tulisannya itu beda. Untuk perkenalan diri menggunakan bahasa inggris saja penyebutannya masih kurang kak.”*

(What I think about English lessons is that they are definitely difficult, especially because the pronunciation and spelling are different. Even when introducing myself in English, I still struggle with pronunciation.) (Student 5)

### ***Frequency of English practice outside the classroom***

The frequency with which students use or practice English outside the classroom is limited.

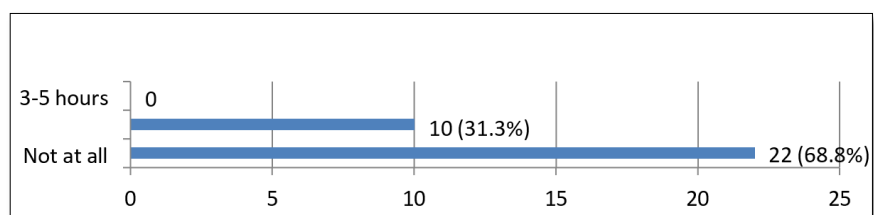


Figure 7. Frequency of English practice outside the classroom

Figure 7 shows that 22 students (68.8%) do not practice English outside of school, while 10 students (31.3%) practice for 1–2 hours.

### ***Students' strengths and weaknesses in English***

Students recognize specific strengths and weaknesses in their English abilities, particularly in grammar, pronunciation, and productive skills such as speaking and writing.

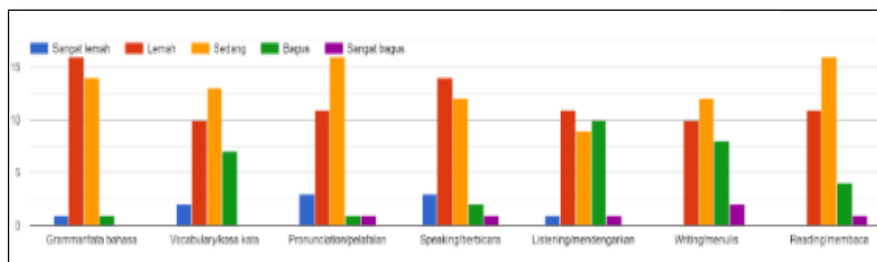


Figure 8. Students' strengths and weaknesses in English

Figure 8 shows the overall English ability levels of Fashion Design students. In grammar, 50% of students were categorized as "weak." In vocabulary and pronunciation, most students fell into the "fair" category (40.6% and 50%, respectively). For speaking and listening, the majority were in the "weak" category, while reading and writing were generally rated as "fair." Overall, most students assessed their English proficiency as fair. The data are consistent with the interview results, where students identified grammar, pronunciation, and speaking as their primary areas of difficulty.

*“Kesulitanaku dalam belajar bahasa inggris itu menguasai grammarnya dan pelafalan katanya juga.”*  
 (My difficulties in learning English are mastering grammar and pronouncing words correctly.)  
 (Student 1)

*“Kesulitan ku kak di penyebutannya karena dalam bahasa inggris kak beda tulisan beda juga penyebutannya.”*  
 (My difficulty is with pronunciation, because in English, the spelling and pronunciation are often different.) (Student 5)

*“Kesulitannya kak saat menghafal kosakata karena penyebutannya juga tidak ditahu.”*  
 (The difficulty is memorizing vocabulary because I don't know how to pronounce it.) (Student 4)

**Wants**

Students express clear preferences in learning content and instructional methods, favoring relevant topics and interactive strategies.

**Preferred topics**

The students prefer topics closely related to fashion, which they find more engaging and applicable to their field of study.

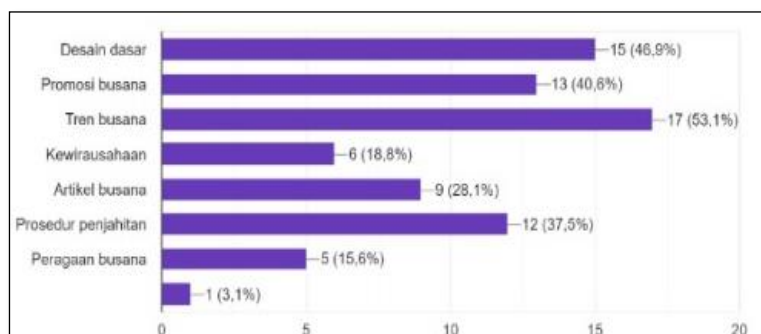


Figure 9. Preferred topics

Figure 9 shows the percentage of students' preferences for English topics related to Fashion Design. The most popular topics were Fashion Trends (53.1%), Basic Design (46.9%), Fashion Promotion (40.6%), and Fashion Making Procedures (37.5%).

**Preferred materials**

Students identify materials such as introductions, greetings, and fashion-related expressions as the most useful for their communication needs.

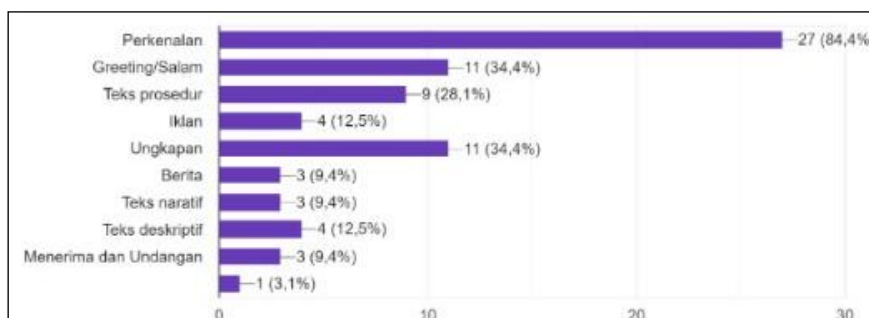


Figure 10. Preferred materials

Figure 10 shows the percentage of students' preferences for English materials related to Fashion Design. The most desired materials were Introductions (84.4%), Greetings and Expressions (34.4%), and Procedure Texts (28.1%).

**Preferred learning methods**

Collaborative and interactive learning methods are favored by students, as they prefer engaging with peers through group work and whole-class activities over lecture-based instruction.

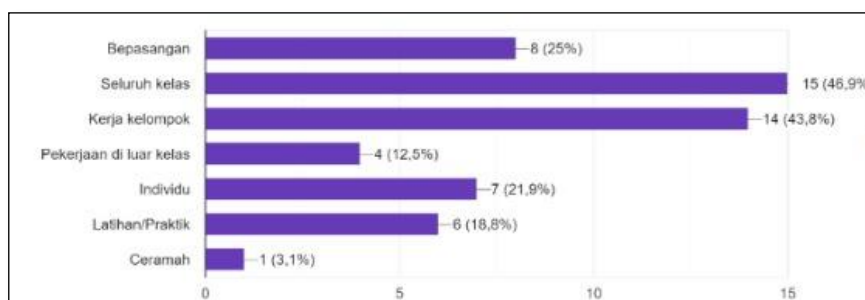


Figure 11. Preferred learning methods

Figure 11 presents the questionnaire results regarding preferred learning methods for ESP in Fashion Design. Students most preferred whole-class activities (46.9%), followed by group work (43.8%) and pair work (25%). Lecture-based activities, where students only listen to the teacher, were the least favored.

**Discussion**

Building upon the findings, the subsequent discussion addresses each of the research questions in turn to explore how students perceive their needs, current challenges, and preferred learning approaches in ESP for Fashion Design.

### **Students' perceived needs for English in academic and professional contexts**

The students' recognition of English as a vital tool for further education, employment, and global product promotion aligns with Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) target situation needs, where learners must perform in specific real-world contexts. English is not seen merely as a school subject but as a gateway to accessing international fashion discourse. These findings are consistent with Rosida and Sujannah (2023), who emphasized that English curricula should be tailored to specific vocational fields. Similarly, Choi (2014) highlighted the importance of developing a resource bank of authentic workplace communicative events to support vocational English teaching and curriculum development, which aligns with the participants' call for the use of English in product descriptions, promotional captions, and fashion trend analysis.

The use of English in pronouncing terms, reading trends, and composing fashion-related content illustrates a shift toward instrumental motivation, where learners engage with language as a tool to achieve specific goals (Cheng, 2023). This is also in line with Haroen et al. (2024) and Ibrahim et al (2023), who found that nursing students benefited more from vocationally aligned English instruction than from general English classes.

### **Students' current competencies and learning challenges**

While many students view English positively, they also express challenges in mastering aspects such as grammar, pronunciation, and speaking. Their reflections reveal a tension between valuing English and lacking confidence in using it effectively. This discrepancy suggests a need for more targeted support to help bridge the gap between students' aspirations and their current abilities.

The majority of students reported minimal practice outside the classroom, which likely contributes to their limited progress in developing communicative competence. Without meaningful opportunities to engage with English beyond school, learning remains passive and disconnected from real use. These insights are consistent with the findings of Ahmed et al. (2025), who noted that limited exposure to authentic language use and practice opportunities reduces learners' confidence in their speaking and communication skills. Hali and Yuningsih (2024), Krimea et al. (2021), and Sweet et al (2025) also found that issues with grammar were a leading cause of speaking difficulties. Students showed that while they are aware of what they lack, their limited opportunities for practice and their struggles with key language aspects make it difficult to meet the expectations of their field.

### **Students' learning preferences: topics, materials, and methods**

Students expressed strong interest in English topics that are closely aligned with their vocational field. These include fashion trends, basic design, promotional strategies, and fashion-making procedures. Such topics were considered engaging because they reflect the students' daily learning and professional aspirations. In addition, students showed clear preferences for English materials that support basic communication and functional language use, particularly introductions, greetings and expressions, and procedure texts. These materials help students develop confidence in expressing themselves, interacting with others, and explaining fashion-related processes.

In terms of instructional methods, students preferred collaborative learning environments such as group and class activities. These preferences reveal the importance of interaction and engagement, which are often absent in lecture-dominated classrooms. Interactive settings appear to offer a more effective and enjoyable experience, particularly for students whose field depends heavily on communication and creativity.

This supports Le Quang (2025) who highlighted that ESP instruction should be personalized to align with learners' career goals and specific disciplines in order to enhance motivation and relevance. This is also in line with Lei et al. (2023), who found that cooperative learning fosters socialization, interpersonal skills, and active engagement, which collectively boost academic achievement and motivation. Students are eager for an English learning experience that feels relevant, engaging, and empowering, one that reflects their real-world goals and enables them to develop the language skills necessary for success in fashion communication.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the ESP needs analysis, students majoring in fashion design perceive that mastery of English is very important to support their academic pursuits, future careers, and international product promotion. The majority of them consider vocabulary, writing, and reading skills as particularly essential, especially for describing fashion products and staying up-to-date with global fashion trends. Students also showed a keen interest in fashion-related material and favored group projects and whole-class activities, which promoted cooperation and interaction.

Even though there are still certain difficulties with speaking, grammar, and pronunciation, students demonstrate a positive attitude and a desire to get better at English when given interesting and useful resources. Materials that foster fundamental communication skills, such as greetings, introductions, expressions, and procedure texts, were preferred by students. These resources are considered useful and relevant to both classroom instruction and real-world job situations.

These results highlight the importance of designing ESP instruction that meets the communicative requirements of fashion design students as well as the professional content areas. ESP instruction can better assist vocational students in reaching their academic and career-related language objectives by combining relevant materials, real-world language use, and interactive learning techniques. Future research may explore the development and implementation of ESP teaching materials tailored specifically to fashion-related contexts. It is also recommended to involve English teachers and industry professionals in a collaborative curriculum design process to ensure alignment between language instruction and the communicative demands of the fashion industry.

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