



PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS OF INTEGRATING FOUR SKILLS (LISTENING, READING, SPEAKING, WRITING) IN ESP CLASSES

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Annotation: This article examines the key problems and practical solutions related to the integration of four language skills — listening, reading, speaking, and writing — in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classrooms. Unlike General English, ESP requires learners to master discipline-specific communication competencies, making skill integration particularly challenging yet essential. The study identifies major obstacles such as lack of authentic materials, time constraints, teacher training gaps, and low learner motivation. Based on analysis of ESP teaching models and classroom case studies, the article proposes effective solutions including task-based learning, content-based instruction, technology integration, and skill-loop lesson design. The findings suggest that integrated skill instruction in ESP not only improves language proficiency but also enhances professional readiness.

Key words: ESP, integrated skills, listening, reading, speaking, writing, task-based learning, content-based instruction, learner motivation, authentic materials.

INTRODUCTION.

The demand for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has grown significantly across various professional fields such as medicine, engineering, law, business, and technology. Unlike General English, ESP focuses on the language and communication skills needed in specific academic or workplace contexts. However, one of the most persistent challenges faced by ESP practitioners is the effective integration of the four core language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

Traditionally, language teaching treated these skills separately. Recent pedagogical research, however, emphasizes that real-world communication rarely involves isolated skills. A doctor listens to a patient, reads a medical chart, speaks with colleagues, and writes a report — often within minutes. Therefore, integrating skills in ESP classes is not merely a methodological preference but a professional necessity.

Nevertheless, integration presents numerous problems. These include insufficient authentic materials aligned with learners' fields, lack of teacher training in integrated



ESP instruction, difficulty in designing appropriate assessment tools, and learners' resistance due to previous skill-separated learning experiences. This article aims to identify these problems systematically and propose realistic, classroom-tested solutions.¹

Methodology. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach based on analysis of ESP teaching models and classroom observation reports from three ESP programs: English for Medical Purposes, English for Business Communication, and English for Engineering. Data sources included curriculum documents, lesson plans, teacher interviews (N=9), and learner focus groups (N=24) conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year. The analysis focused on identifying recurring problems across these three ESP contexts and extracting effective solutions reported by practitioners. Thematic coding was used to categorize problems into four domains: materials, time, teacher training, and learner motivation. Solutions were then cross-referenced with existing ESP literature to validate their applicability.²

Results. The analysis revealed several consistent problems and corresponding solutions, summarized below. Problems identified:

1. Lack of authentic integrated materials. In all three ESP programs, teachers reported that most commercially available ESP textbooks present skills separately. For instance, medical ESP books often include a reading passage about a disease, followed by unrelated listening exercises. Teachers had to spend excessive time adapting materials.
2. Time constraints in course design. ESP courses are typically short (30–60 hours). Teachers feel pressured to "cover content" rather than design complex integrated tasks. One engineering ESP teacher noted: "If I try to integrate all four skills in one lesson, I can only cover half the syllabus."
3. Insufficient teacher training. Most participating teachers had received training in General English methodology but not in ESP-specific integration strategies. They struggled to design tasks that balance language development with professional content.
4. Low learner motivation in mixed-discipline groups. In classes where students come from different majors (e.g., law and IT together), integrated tasks focusing on one field alienate others. Learners expressed frustration: "Why should I write a legal memo when I need technical reports?"

¹ Basturkmen, H. (2010). *Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes*. Palgrave Macmillan. p. 89.

² Belcher, D. (2009). What ESP is and can be: An introduction. In D. Belcher (Ed.), *English for Specific Purposes in Theory and Practice*. University of Michigan Press. p. 12.



Solutions Implemented and Tested. Solution 1: Task-based integration using authentic workplace sequences. Teachers designed "skill chains" mirroring real professional routines. For medical ESP:

- Listen to a patient's complaint (listening)
- Read the patient's history form (reading)
- Ask diagnostic questions (speaking)
- Write a short case note (writing)

This sequence took 90 minutes but replaced four separate lessons. Learners reported higher engagement because tasks felt realistic.

Solution 2: Content-based instruction with rotating skill focus. To address time constraints, teachers adopted a modular approach: each content topic (e.g., "project proposal") was taught over two sessions. Session 1 focused on reading and listening (receptive input), Session 2 on speaking and writing (productive output). This preserved integration without extending course duration.³

Solution 3: Teacher training through peer observation and micro-teaching. A five-session teacher development workshop introduced ESP-specific integration techniques:

- Needs analysis for skill weighting
- Adapting authentic documents into multi-skill tasks
- Assessing integrated performance holistically

After training, teachers reported increased confidence in designing integrated lessons. Solution 4: Differentiated integration for mixed-discipline groups. Instead of one common task, teachers designed parallel tasks for different specializations within the same lesson framework. For example, in a business/IT mixed class: Both groups read the same case study about a data breach (reading) Both listened to a cybersecurity podcast (listening) Business students wrote a client notification email; IT students wrote a technical incident report (writing) Both presented their output orally (speaking) This preserved integration while respecting disciplinary differences. Motivation improved significantly in focus group interviews.⁴

³ Douglas, D. (2000). *Assessing Languages for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge University Press. p. 54.

⁴ Dudley-Evans, T., & St. John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge University Press. p. 78



Discussion. The findings demonstrate that ESP skill integration problems are interconnected. Lack of authentic materials leads to time waste in adaptation, which increases teacher workload and reduces motivation — both for teachers and learners. However, the solutions tested show that systematic redesign, not additional resources, is often the key. The "skill chain" approach aligns with task-based language teaching (TBLT) principles. Unlike simple skill combination (e.g., read then discuss), skill chains preserve the temporal and logical sequence of real workplace communication. This finding supports Ellis's (2003) argument that task authenticity is more about process than content.⁵

Furthermore, differentiated integration offers a practical answer to the long-standing problem of mixed-discipline ESP classes. Rather than avoiding integration, teachers can use a common input (reading/listening) as a bridge between different professional outputs. This maintains content relevance while developing transferable skills such as summarizing, presenting, and responding to input.⁶

The teacher training component revealed that many ESP teachers already possess the creativity needed for integration; what they lack is a structured framework. The distinction between "receptive integration" (reading+listening) and "productive integration" (speaking+writing) provided a simple yet effective planning tool. Limitations of this study include the small sample size and the focus on three professional domains only. Future research should examine integration problems in ESP for less commonly taught fields such as agriculture or hospitality.

Conclusion. Integrating listening, reading, speaking, and writing in ESP classes is both a pedagogical challenge and a professional necessity. This article has identified four major problems — lack of authentic integrated materials, time constraints, insufficient teacher training, and low motivation in mixed-discipline groups — and proposed corresponding solutions: task-based skill chains, content-based modular instruction, targeted teacher development, and differentiated integration.

The evidence from classroom implementation suggests that integration does not require more time or resources; it requires smarter design. When ESP learners experience skills as part of meaningful professional sequences, their language proficiency and

⁵ Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford University Press. p. 112.

⁶ Hyland, K. (2006). *English for Academic Purposes: An Advanced Resource Book*. Routledge. p. 96.



vocational readiness improve simultaneously. Future ESP curricula should move beyond discrete-skill syllabi toward integrated, task-driven models. Teacher training programs must include ESP-specific integration strategies. Finally, textbook developers should consult workplace professionals to design authentic skill-chain activities rather than artificial combinations.

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