p-ISSN 2301-7554, e-ISSN 2541-3643
Volume 13, Issue 3, October 2025

ENGLISH REVIEW Journal of English Education
Published by English Language Study Program, Faculty of Teachers Training & Education, Universitas Kuningan, Indonesia in collaboration with AISEE (The Association of Indonesian Scholars of English Education)
AISEE

FROM CLASSROOM TO CURRICULUM: TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPING A COE-BASED ENGLISH TEXTBOOK FOR VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS

Sisca Wulansari Saputri[1], Issy Yuliasri[2], Suwandi[3], Henrikus Joko Yulianto[4]
[1]*English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education*
Universitas Banten Jaya, Indonesia
[2,3,4]*English Education Department, Faculty of Language and Arts*
Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: siscawulansarisaputri@students.unnes.ac.id

APA Citation: Saputri, S. W., Yuliasri, I., Suwandi., & Yulianto, H. J. (2025). From classroom to curriculum: Teacher perspectives on developing a CoE-based english textbook for vocational high schools. *English Review: Journal of English Education, 13*(3), 1067-1080. https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v13i3.115

Received: 26-06-2025 Accepted: 13-08-2025 Published: 30-10-2025

Abstract: This study investigates teachers' perspectives on developing Character of Excellence (CoE)-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks within Indonesian vocational education. Grounded in the national Profil Pelajar Pancasila (PSP) framework, CoE aims to integrate employability skills with moral and ethical values in language learning. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with vocational English teachers and analyzed thematically. Findings reveal that while teachers understand the pedagogical and moral foundations of CoE, they face several challenges, including a lack of context-specific textbooks, limited ESP training, and minimal collaboration with industry. To overcome these challenges, teachers proposed five interconnected strategies emphasizing collaboration, authenticity, and innovation: (1) collaborative textbook development involving schools, industries, and curriculum experts; (2) project-based and simulation learning; (3) digital and multimedia integration; (4) professional development and peer mentoring; and (5) industry feedback mechanisms. These strategies collectively form a systemic reform model linking pedagogical quality, vocational relevance, and moral education. The study concludes that CoE-based textbook development is not merely a process of content adaptation but a transformative pedagogical movement that integrates linguistic competence, vocational expertise, and ethical values. By positioning English teaching as both a professional and character-building endeavor, the CoE-ESP model offers an innovative and globally relevant framework for value-based vocational English education.
Keywords: *center of excellence; vocational education; english for specific purposes; textbook development; Pancasila student profile; teacher perspectives.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of vocational education in Indonesia has driven an urgent need to align English language instruction with the demands of the workforce and national character formation. The Ministry of Education and Culture launched the Center of Excellence (CoE) program to strengthen the relevance of vocational schools (SMK) by integrating industry partnerships, 21st-century skills, and the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student Profile) framework (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021; Kemdikbudristek, 2023, 2024). However, many English textbooks used in vocational contexts remain generic, failing to address specific professional competencies and values promoted in the Merdeka Curriculum (Candra, 2024; Windayanti et al., 2023). Given the critical role of teachers in material design and adaptation (Richards, 2014; Graves, 2000; Borg, 2006), developing a CoE-based English textbook requires understanding teachers' perspectives on contextual, linguistic, and moral dimensions of learning (Dewantara, 1977; Tilaar, 2015).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has evolved from a linguistic orientation to a learning-centered and needs-driven approach emphasizing authenticity, relevance, and learner goals (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Basturkmen, 2010; Hyland, 2006). In vocational education, ESP serves as a bridge between language proficiency and employability, reflecting global trends toward outcome-based learning (Nation & Macalister, 2010; OECD, 2024). The focus on specific occupational contexts demands materials that mirror workplace communication and integrate technical discourse, which are often absent in traditional textbooks (Elkasović & Jelčić-Čolakovac, 2023; Erkir & Alkhaldi, 2025).

Effective ESP textbook design relies on systematic curriculum development and needs analysis (Graves, 2000; Nation & Macalister, 2010). Tomlinson (2011, 2012) emphasizes that materials should facilitate meaningful learning through authentic input, personalization, and reflection, while Richards (2015) notes that textbooks serve as both linguistic and pedagogical frameworks. Recent studies reveal that teacher involvement in curriculum design ensures alignment with learners' professional contexts (Hakim & Muliyah, 2025; Khojasteh & Mukundan, 2025). However, few ESP textbooks in Indonesia fully integrate industry-relevant discourse or moral values aligned with national education goals (Rahmawati & Rahayu, 2023).

Teachers are central agents in adapting, supplementing, and evaluating materials to meet learners' evolving needs (Borg, 2006; McGrath, 2013; Richards, 2014). Studies show that teacher cognition, beliefs, and professional learning communities significantly influence textbook development quality (Farrell & Richards, 2024; Putri & Sari, 2024; Nabung, 2024). Collaborative mentoring and reflective practice enhance teachers' confidence in material design, especially in contexts of curriculum reform (Iswati & Triastuti, 2021; Iswati & Hastuti, 2024). Nonetheless, many vocational English teachers still lack institutional support and ESP-specific training, limiting innovation in textbook production (Mandasari et al., 2024).

The CoE initiative encourages schools to design curricula that reflect local industry partnerships and technological adaptability (Windayanti et al., 2023; Rohmad & Fitriyani, 2024; OECD, 2024). In this context, English serves as both a communication tool and a cultural bridge to global employability (Hyland, 2023; Wahyudi et al., 2023). Yet, CoE implementation reports highlight uneven progress in aligning English teaching with vocational specialization, partly due to the absence of standardized CoE-based English textbooks (Kemdikbudristek, 2024; Suryani & Prabowo, 2024).

The Profil Pelajar Pancasila provides a moral and civic framework for Indonesian education, emphasizing critical thinking, collaboration, faith, and global orientation (Kemdikbud, 2021; Dewantara, 1977; Tilaar, 2015). In vocational education, embedding PSP values within English learning promotes ethical professionalism and cultural rootedness (Rahmawati & Rahayu, 2023; Candra, 2024). However, empirical studies show that teachers struggle to translate these values into linguistic content and communicative tasks (Rohmad & Fitriyani, 2024; Windayanti et al., 2023).

Integrating Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approaches enhances vocational students' engagement and contextual learning (Beckett & Slater, 2020; Coyle et al., 2010). Studies demonstrate that PBL fosters active language use in authentic projects, improving both communication and employability skills (Suryani & Prabowo, 2024; Hyland, 2023; Taylor & Francis, 2025). However, teachers require pedagogical guidance and resources to design CLIL-oriented ESP materials effectively (Hakim & Muliyah, 2025).

Recent technological advancements have transformed material design, emphasizing blended learning and authentic digital content (Graham, 2013; Jannah et al., 2025; Taylor & Francis, 2025). Vocational students benefit from multimodal materials that simulate workplace scenarios, yet such resources remain scarce in Indonesian contexts (Erkir & Alkhaldi, 2025; Mandasari et al., 2024). Teacher readiness for digital material production is often constrained by technical skills and infrastructure limitations (Iswati & Hastuti, 2024; Nabung, 2024).

Professional development is key to sustaining high-quality ESP instruction. Collaborative mentoring (Farrell & Richards, 2024), lesson study (Hakim & Muliyah, 2025), and peer mentoring (Putri & Sari, 2024) have shown to improve teacher confidence and innovation. Nevertheless, TPD programs rarely focus on vocational ESP textbook development, leaving teachers uncertain about content selection, assessment design, and alignment with CoE

p-ISSN 2301-7554, e-ISSN 2541-3643
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principles (Nabung, 2024; Iswati & Triastuti, 2021).

Authenticity remains a cornerstone of ESP (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Elkasović & Jelčić-Čolakovac, 2023; Erkir & Alkhaldi, 2025). Studies underline the importance of materials that reflect real-world communication and integrate workplace genres (Hyland, 2006; Hyland, 2023). However, existing vocational English textbooks often overemphasize grammar and neglect occupational discourse practices (Windayanti et al., 2023; Wahyudi et al., 2023).

Curriculum reforms such as the Merdeka Curriculum encourage flexibility, contextualization, and teacher autonomy (Candra, 2024; Kemdikbudristek, 2023). Yet, the success of these reforms hinges on coherent curriculum alignment and instructional resources (Samsuri et al., 2025; Rohmad & Fitriyani, 2024). Without structured frameworks for CoE-based textbook development, teachers face challenges translating policy ideals into practical materials (Windayanti et al., 2023; OECD, 2024).

Recent methodological advances highlight the role of qualitative inquiry in exploring teacher cognition and curriculum reform (Creswell, 2014; Berger, 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2022; Miles et al., 2020). Trustworthiness techniques such as member checking and reflexivity enhance the credibility of findings (Birt et al., 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Bowen, 2009). These approaches are crucial for uncovering teachers' lived experiences and perspectives in developing ESP materials under CoE mandates.

Despite increasing attention to vocational ESP and curriculum reform, limited studies have explored teachers' perspectives in developing CoE-based English textbooks that integrate PSP values and industry relevance. Prior research focuses separately on ESP materials, professional development, or CoE policy, but lacks a unified understanding of how teachers interpret and operationalize these frameworks in practice (Iswati & Triastuti, 2021; Hakim & Muliyah, 2025; Windayanti et al., 2023). Therefore, this study seeks to answer: "How do vocational English teachers perceive the requirements, challenges, and strategies in developing CoE-based English textbooks for vocational high schools?"

This study is among the first to connect teacher cognition, ESP principles, and the Pancasila Student Profile within the CoE framework for vocational English textbook design in Indonesia. It introduces a contextual-pedagogical model that bridges character education, language learning, and industry competence. By highlighting teachers' interpretive and creative processes, it advances both theoretical understanding and practical strategies for CoE-oriented ESP material development.

The findings of this study are significant for multiple stakeholders. For policymakers, they provide empirical evidence to refine national guidelines for CoE-based curriculum design. For teacher educators, they offer insights into professional development models that empower teachers as material developers. For researchers, the study enriches discourse on localized ESP innovation and moral-based curriculum integration, fostering a balanced vision of linguistic and character excellence in vocational English education (Hyland, 2023; Dewantara, 1977; Rahmawati & Rahayu, 2023; OECD, 2024; Kemdikbudristek, 2024).

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design to examine vocational high school English teachers' perspectives on developing textbooks that align with Indonesia's Center of Excellence (CoE) curriculum. This approach was considered most suitable for gaining rich, contextualized understandings of teachers' experiences, reflections, and pedagogical decision-making throughout the textbook development process. Through qualitative description, the study sought to capture authentic and nuanced insights into how teachers interpret and implement curriculum goals in material development (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Participants in this study consisted of six English teachers from two CoE-based vocational high schools (SMK *Pusat Keunggulan*). They were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance and depth of experience. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) currently teaching English within the CoE curriculum framework, (2) having at least three years of experience in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or in vocational education, and (3) being directly involved in adapting or developing English learning materials. All six teachers voluntarily took part in the study and provided written informed consent. Their identities were anonymized using codes (T1–T6), and the names of their schools were withheld to maintain confidentiality.

Table 1. *The demographic characteristics of the participants*

Code	Gender	Years Teaching	Vocational Program	Highest Degree	ESP/Materials PD (Y/N)
T1	M	5	DKV	S1	Y
T2	F	7	Accounting	S1	N
T3	F	6	Hospitality	S1	Y
T4	F	10	Accounting	S2	Y
T5	F	9	DKV	S2	Y
T6	M	8	Hospitality	S1	N

All teachers participated voluntarily and signed informed consent forms. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms (T1–T6) were used and school identities were not disclosed.

Data were collected from two primary sources: semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure natural expression and deeper insights from participants. The interviews focused on teachers' perspectives regarding textbook needs, challenges, and strategies for aligning materials with CoE standards. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' permission before being transcribed verbatim for analysis. To complement the interview data, document analysis was also conducted, examining lesson plans, teacher-created materials, and CoE curriculum documents at the school level. This triangulation strengthened the validity of findings by comparing teachers' verbal accounts with their actual practices and materials (Bowen, 2009; O'Leary, 2022).

The document analysis followed an analytic grid that assessed four key aspects: authenticity, alignment with ESP principles, integration of Professional Skills Practice (PSP), and relevance to industry needs. The analysis process was iterative and collaborative, involving multiple researchers who cross-checked codes and interpretations to enhance reliability. This collective approach minimized subjective bias and strengthened the dependability of findings (Nowell et al., 2017; Miles et al., 2020).

Data analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) six-phase model of thematic analysis. These phases included familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The initial phase of coding was primarily inductive, allowing patterns and meanings to naturally emerge from the data. Subsequently, a deductive approach was applied to connect these emergent patterns to theoretical frameworks, particularly those related to ESP, CoE, and PSP. This integration allowed the researchers to interpret teachers' practices in the context of broader national curriculum goals and expectations (Erkir & Alkhaldi, 2025; Hyland, 2023).

To ensure the study's rigor and trustworthiness, the research adhered to the four established criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through member checking, where participants were asked to review and verify the accuracy of summarized findings (Birt et al., 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability was supported by providing detailed contextual descriptions, enabling readers to determine the applicability of results to similar educational settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Dependability was enhanced through peer debriefing among researchers to ensure consistency and clarity in data interpretation (Nowell et al., 2017). Lastly, confirmability was maintained by keeping a reflexive journal throughout the research process to document analytic decisions and reflections, thereby minimizing researcher bias and reinforcing the objectivity of findings (Nowell et al., 2017; Berger, 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's findings organized according to the three guiding research questions. The first part explores teachers' perspectives on the essential requirements of English textbooks developed under the Center of Excellence (CoE) curriculum framework. It highlights how teachers interpret curriculum goals, industry expectations, and learners' professional needs when designing or adapting instructional materials. The discussion also examines how teachers align textbook content with ESP principles and the vocational context of their respective programs.

The second part discusses the challenges teachers encounter in developing CoE-aligned English materials. These include issues related to limited training in ESP-based material design, insufficient institutional support, and the difficulty

p-ISSN 2301-7554, e-ISSN 2541-3643
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of balancing national standards with local industry demands. Teachers' reflections reveal how these constraints impact both the quality and practicality of the textbooks they produce, particularly in terms of relevance, authenticity, and contextual fit within the CoE framework.

The third part focuses on the strategies and recommendations teachers propose to enhance textbook development. These include strengthening collaboration among teachers, industry professionals, and curriculum developers, as well as providing more professional development opportunities in ESP and materials design. Teachers also emphasize the need for digital integration, learner-centered approaches, and continuous evaluation to ensure textbooks remain adaptive to evolving industry needs.

Overall, the discussion interweaves these empirical findings with relevant theoretical perspectives from English for Specific Purposes (ESP), materials development, and character-based vocational education. This integration provides a deeper understanding of how teachers navigate the intersection of pedagogical, professional, and ethical considerations when creating CoE-oriented English learning resources.

RQ 1: Teachers' perspectives on requirements

Before analyzing the data presented in Table 2, it is important to outline the general pattern of teachers' views regarding the essential components of CoE-based English textbooks. Overall, the teachers demonstrated a shared understanding that such textbooks should serve as comprehensive learning tools integrating linguistic, vocational, and character-building dimensions. They emphasized that effective materials must not only develop students' communicative competence in English but also align with the practical demands of their specific vocational fields. In addition, the teachers believed that a CoE-based textbook must go beyond grammar and vocabulary instruction, it should promote ethical awareness, creativity, and collaboration consistent with Profil Pelajar Pancasila (PSP) values. Another key insight from their perspectives was the need for contextual flexibility: while national curriculum alignment remains crucial, textbooks should allow room for localization to accommodate diverse vocational contexts and regional industries. These overarching ideas set the foundation for the more detailed themes summarized in Table 2, which categorize teachers' perspectives into four main dimensions: language-vocational integration, authenticity, value-based education, and adaptability.

Table 2. *Teachers' perspectives on the requirements of COE-based English textbooks*

Theme	Key Findings	Supporting Evidence / Teacher Quote	Relevant Studies	New Insight
Integration of Language and Vocational Competencies	Textbooks must integrate all six language skills—listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and presenting—while aligning with vocational program competencies.	T4: "Our students learn better when the texts or dialogues are about real situations, like dealing with customers or writing simple reports for their departments."	Basturkmen (2010); Hyland (2023)	Strengthening link between communicative competence and workplace relevance.
Authenticity and Contextualization	Materials must reflect real-world communication, incorporating authentic industry terminology and workplace scenarios.	Teachers stressed that authenticity helps students understand real communication demands in their fields.	Elkasović & Jelčić-Čolakovac (2023); Jannah et al. (2025)	Digital authentic materials improve learner engagement and professional readiness.
Integration of PSP Values	Embedding Pancasila Student Profile (PSP) attributes—such as collaboration, independence, and creativity—is essential to support	Teachers noted that PSP-based lessons help build professional identity and ethical awareness.	Rahmawati & Rahayu (2023); Wahyudi & Jufrizal (2023)	Introduces a uniquely Indonesian ESP model combining linguistic and moral

	both employability and moral education.	development.
Flexibility and Localization	Textbooks should allow local adaptation for different vocational fields while maintaining national curriculum standards.	Teachers preferred adaptable materials that still meet CoE and national learning outcome requirements.

Teachers consistently articulated that a high-quality CoE-based English textbook must holistically integrate all six language skills; listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and presenting rather than treating them as isolated competencies. They emphasized that these skills should be contextualized within the authentic communicative demands of their students' vocational programs, ensuring that English learning directly supports job-specific proficiency. This alignment between linguistic skills and vocational competencies, according to the teachers, enhances the relevance and practicality of learning outcomes. For instance, students in hospitality programs benefit from materials that simulate real customer interactions, while accounting students require texts that mirror workplace reporting and correspondence. Teachers clearly illustrated this point:

> T1: "Sometimes students ask, 'Why do we learn this?' When we use materials related to their major, they become more interested and see English as useful."
> T2: "It's hard to find English materials that match accounting vocabulary. We often adapt from online sources, but not all are suitable for vocational students."
> T3: "Students respond better when the activities resemble real work, like serving guests or writing job applications."
> T4: "Our students learn better when the texts or dialogues are about real situations, like dealing with customers or writing simple reports for their departments."
> T5: "We need industry people to validate what we teach so that the expressions are the ones actually used in the workplace."
> T6: "Sometimes we insert moral or teamwork values in speaking tasks, so students learn cooperation, not only language."

These teacher responses reinforce that CoE-based English textbook design must align linguistic competence with vocational authenticity and value formation. The recurring themes of *authenticity, contextualization, and moral integration* confirm teachers' awareness of how material design affects learner engagement and professional preparedness.

Authenticity, therefore, emerged as a non-negotiable principle in teachers' views. They believed that materials should not merely expose students to language structures but immerse them in the communicative patterns and discourses of their future professions. This notion resonates with Basturkmen (2010) and Hyland (2023), who argue that ESP textbooks must balance linguistic form with real-world communicative function to be truly effective. Similarly, Elkasović and Jelčić-Čolakovac (2023) as well as Jannah et al. (2025) found that authentic and digital-based materials heighten learner engagement and confidence by mirroring professional communication contexts. Teachers in this study further noted that authenticity helps students "see the purpose" of English, fostering motivation and a sense of identity as future professionals.

Beyond linguistic and contextual authenticity, teachers also emphasized the integration of Pancasila Student Profile (PSP) values as an essential feature of CoE-based textbooks. They viewed the incorporation of national values such as gotong royong (collaboration), mandiri (independence), and kreatif (creativity) as critical in forming graduates who are not only skilled but also ethical and socially responsible. Teachers noted that ESP textbooks should serve as moral and cultural frameworks that shape learners' professional identity in alignment with Indonesia's educational vision. This echoes Rahmawati and Rahayu (2023) and Wahyudi and Jufrizal (2023), who highlighted that character education within ESP materials promotes both employability and ethical awareness.

Moreover, teachers valued flexibility and adaptability as key design requirements. They argued that a CoE-based textbook should allow for local customization without compromising national learning outcomes. This flexibility ensures that materials remain relevant to diverse vocational programs from digital creative design to accounting or hospitality while still adhering to overarching CoE curriculum principles. Such

p-ISSN 2301-7554, e-ISSN 2541-3643
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adaptability supports the dynamic relationship between centralized curriculum standards and local vocational realities, reflecting the argument by Khojasteh and Mukundan (2025) that effective ESP materials should be both standardized and context-responsive.

The findings extend previous ESP literature by showing that Indonesian teachers perceive language teaching as deeply intertwined with values-based education and employability. Earlier ESP models tended to focus primarily on linguistic and professional competencies; however, teachers in this study demonstrated a more integrated perspective one that views language learning as a vehicle for cultivating national identity, moral character, and 21st-century work ethics. The new insight emerging here is the strong emphasis on embedding PSP attributes collaboration, independence, and creativity into communicative and task-based activities, positioning the Indonesian ESP framework as a model that blends technical skill development with character formation.

In essence, this research reveals that teachers conceptualize CoE-based textbook design not merely as a pedagogical exercise, but as a transformative educational process. It is a process that connects language, vocation, and values preparing students to be competent professionals and conscientious citizens. This uniquely Indonesian approach situates English education within the broader goal of producing graduates who are both globally competent and locally grounded in ethical and cultural principles.

RQ 2: Challenges in developing CoE-based textbooks

It is essential to synthesize how the various challenges described by teachers collectively highlight both structural and pedagogical gaps in implementing the CoE-based English textbook framework. Teachers' experiences reveal that the main difficulties are not isolated but interconnected stemming from systemic limitations, institutional workloads, and inadequate professional development opportunities. The lack of field-specific materials and updated industry references constrains the authenticity of learning resources, while the absence of formal ESP training leaves teachers underprepared to design contextually relevant materials. Moreover, heavy teaching loads and administrative duties limit collaboration and innovation, further exacerbated by tensions between national standardization requirements and local vocational needs. Together, these factors underscore the complexity of developing CoE-based materials that must simultaneously address linguistic competence, vocational relevance, and the moral-ethical dimensions embedded in the Pancasila Student Profile (PSP). These interrelated challenges and their implications are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3. *Challenges in developing CoE-based English textbooks*

Theme	Key Challenges	Supporting Evidence / Teacher Quote	Relevant Studies	Critical Insight
Lack of Context-Specific Textbooks	Existing English books are too generic and fail to address field-specific terminology or communicative tasks.	T2: "We only have general English books, so we change the topics ourselves, sometimes without knowing if they fit the actual industry terms."	McGrath (2013); Miles et al. (2020)	Generic textbooks limit vocational authenticity and hinder task relevance.
Limited Access to Updated Industry Materials	Teachers struggle to obtain current, real-world references from local industries.	Teachers noted difficulty accessing company manuals, reports, or authentic communication samples.	—	Lack of authentic resources weakens workplace linkage and applied learning.
Time and Workload Constraints	Excessive teaching hours and administrative duties prevent collaborative textbook development.	Teachers reported insufficient time for research or material design.	McGrath (2013); Miles et al. (2020)	Workload pressures stifle innovation and reflective practice.
Inadequate Training in ESP Material Design	Few teachers have attended ESP-focused workshops	Participants acknowledged relying on online templates or self-	Iswati & Triastuti (2023);	Skill gaps impede teachers' ability to produce

	or courses on material writing and evaluation.	modified general English materials.	Hakim & Muliyah (2025)	linguistically and contextually sound materials.
Balancing Standardization with Localization	Policy pressures to follow national textbook templates conflict with local industry demands.	Teachers struggle to align standardized content with regional vocational realities.	Hyland (2023)	Over-standardization suppresses contextual creativity and adaptability.
Dual Integration Challenge	Teachers must integrate industrial authenticity with PSP-based character education—a dual demand uncommon in ESP contexts.	Teachers noted difficulty balancing language skills, employability, and moral education.	Erkir & Alkhaldi (2025); Windayanti et al. (2023)	CoE introduces a unique Indonesian model combining ESP and character-based educatio

Teachers' responses revealed that while they understood the conceptual foundation of the Center of Excellence (CoE) approach, the actual process of designing and developing CoE-based English textbooks was fraught with interrelated pedagogical, institutional, and systemic challenges. One of the most pressing issues was the absence of context-specific materials that could bridge language learning with the realities of various vocational fields. Teachers repeatedly emphasized that the available English textbooks were too general and failed to represent the communicative practices and technical terminologies of specific industries.

As teachers explained:

> T1: "Sometimes the examples in the books are about tourism or business, but my students are in design, so I have to change almost everything."
> T2: "We only have general English books, so we change the topics ourselves, sometimes without knowing if they fit the actual industry terms."
> T3: "Most textbooks don't use the vocabulary our students find in their internship; we need something closer to the real workplace."
> T4: "I usually rewrite materials based on industry brochures, but that takes time, and not all teachers have the same access."
> T5: "It's challenging because we don't have collaboration with industry experts who could guide us in creating more relevant content."
> T6: "The CoE wants integration with Pancasila values, but it's difficult when we're also struggling to make the materials vocationally authentic."

This situation forces educators to act as both content developers and curriculum designers tasks that require specialized expertise in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and close collaboration with industry practitioners, which is often not feasible given their current workloads and institutional support structures.

Another significant challenge was limited access to updated and authentic industry materials. Teachers described difficulties in obtaining current references, such as company reports, manuals, and workplace correspondence samples, due to either the unavailability of open resources or limited partnerships between schools and industries. Consequently, the materials used in class often become outdated and fail to reflect the technological and communicative advancements of modern workplaces.

> T3: "We tried to contact local hotels to get sample forms or menus for class use, but most companies didn't respond."
> T5: "Authentic resources are difficult to find, and even when we get them, they often contain confidential data, so we can't use them freely."

This lack of access undermines the authenticity principle central to ESP and CoE-based instruction. Without authentic materials, students struggle to transfer their classroom learning to professional contexts.

The issue of time and workload constraints further compounds these difficulties. Teachers reported being overburdened by administrative duties, teaching hours, and other institutional obligations, leaving minimal time for research, material design, or collaboration.

> T1: "We have so many teaching hours, meetings, and paperwork. Designing new materials becomes something extra we do at night or weekends."

p-ISSN 2301-7554, e-ISSN 2541-3643
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T4: "Sometimes I just adapt existing worksheets because I don't have time to design new ones, even though I know they're not ideal."

Prior studies (McGrath, 2013; Miles et al., 2020) have similarly observed that such structural pressures can stifle creativity and innovation in material development. In the CoE context, this constraint is even more pronounced because textbook development requires interdisciplinary collaboration among language teachers, vocational instructors, and industry experts, an endeavor that demands both time and institutional coordination.

Teachers also pointed out their limited training and capacity in ESP materials design. Many had not received formal instruction in ESP writing, evaluation frameworks, or needs analysis methodologies. Instead, they relied heavily on online templates, translated resources, or self-modified general English materials (Iswati & Triastuti, 2023; Hakim & Muliyah, 2025).

T2: "I learned about ESP from YouTube or webinars, not from real training programs."
T6: "We rarely have workshops about material development; most PDs are still about general English teaching."

This skill gap restricts teachers' ability to create materials that are linguistically accurate, pedagogically sound, and vocationally aligned. The absence of sustained professional development programs in ESP pedagogy means that even well-intentioned teachers are working with limited technical knowledge and support.

A more structural dilemma emerged from the tension between standardization and localization. While the Ministry of Education and Culture's CoE framework mandates standardized competencies and textbook templates across vocational schools, local industry demands often require customized content that reflects regional economic realities. This policy tension places teachers in a difficult position balancing compliance with national standards against the need for locally relevant instruction. Hyland (2023) cautions that over-standardization risks diminishing contextual creativity and innovation, particularly in vocational education, where learning should mirror authentic work environments.

T3: "Sometimes the national module doesn't fit local needs, like our students handle different machinery or software."
T5: "We want to innovate, but inspectors still ask us to follow the national format exactly."

The critical insight from these findings is that teachers in the CoE system are navigating a dual-layered challenge: they must integrate industrial authenticity which demands constant engagement with evolving workplace discourse with character-based education grounded in the Pancasila Student Profile (PSP). This dual responsibility makes CoE-based textbook development more complex than conventional ESP material design. Whereas traditional ESP focuses primarily on communicative competence and professional vocabulary, CoE textbooks in Indonesia must also cultivate moral integrity, collaboration, and creativity. Scholars such as Erkir & Alkhaldi (2025) and Windayanti et al. (2023) note that such integration is rarely addressed in existing ESP frameworks, underscoring Indonesia's unique approach to vocational English pedagogy.

Ultimately, these challenges point to the need for a systemic and collaborative solution involving teachers, curriculum developers, industries, and policymakers. Without sustainable professional training, industry partnerships, and institutional recognition of teachers' workload realities, the CoE vision of producing contextually grounded, character-based English textbooks will remain an aspirational ideal rather than a practical reality.

RQ 3: Suggested strategies and recommendations

To provide a clearer overview of how each proposed strategy specifically addresses the identified challenges and contributes to pedagogical innovation, the following table summarizes the teachers' recommended strategies for developing CoE-based ESP textbooks. It highlights the interconnection between practical implementation, problem resolution, and expected educational outcomes, reflecting the teachers' emphasis on collaboration, authenticity, and value integration. Each strategy operates not in isolation but as part of a coherent reform framework that aligns language education with vocational competence and moral development, forming the foundation for sustainable improvement in CoE-based ESP pedagogy.

Table 4. *Suggested strategies and their pedagogical contributions*

Strategy	Description / Implementation	Addressed Challenges	Expected Outcomes
Collaborative Textbook Development	Joint authorship among teachers, industry practitioners, and curriculum experts to ensure pedagogical and industrial relevance.	Lack of ESP-specific training; outdated and generic materials.	Contextualized, industry-aligned textbooks that mirror authentic communication needs.
Project-Based and Simulation Learning	Embedding PjBL and simulated workplace scenarios (e.g., hotel dialogues, project reports).	Limited connection between theory and practice.	Development of critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving aligned with PSP values.
Digital and Multimedia Integration	Use of online platforms, AR/VR simulations, and video instruction to enhance authenticity.	Insufficient access to updated materials; low engagement.	Interactive, authentic, and technology-enhanced learning experiences.
Professional Development and Peer Mentoring	Continuous training and peer collaboration in ESP design, evaluation, and reflection.	Teachers' limited expertise in ESP and material development.	Increased design competence, reflective teaching, and integration of CoE principles.
Industry Feedback Mechanisms	Establishing regular communication channels with industries through reviews, tracer studies, and advisory boards.	Lack of curriculum–industry alignment.	Continuous material relevance and responsiveness to labor market trends.

To overcome the previously identified challenges, teachers proposed a series of interconnected strategies that emphasise collaboration, authenticity, and innovation in developing Character of Excellence (CoE)-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks. These strategies align with contemporary pedagogical paradigms that value contextual learning, learner autonomy, and cross-sector engagement.

Collaborative textbook development

Teachers strongly advocated for joint development initiatives involving schools, industry practitioners, and curriculum experts to ensure pedagogical soundness and industry relevance. Such collaboration enables alignment between the communicative functions taught in class and the actual linguistic practices used in professional settings.

> T1: "It would be much better if industries were directly involved in textbook writing, not just consulted after everything is finished."
> T2: "We often guess whether the English expressions we use are correct for the workplace. Collaboration would make our materials more accurate."
> T3: "Sometimes the vocabulary in textbooks doesn't match the terms used in students' internship places. We need input from real practitioners."
> T4: "Joint projects between teachers and industry experts can ensure that what students learn is applicable once they graduate."
> T5: "We need industry people to validate what we teach so the vocabulary and expressions are really used in the workplace."
> T6: "It's also important that universities support us with updated linguistic or methodological knowledge while industry gives practical input."

This collaborative model reflects the triple-helix approach in education linking academia, industry, and government to produce responsive curricula that mirror dynamic workplace needs. It also echoes participatory curriculum design frameworks, where stakeholders contribute expertise throughout the material development cycle (Graves, 2000; Nation & Macalister, 2010).

Project-based and simulation learning

Teachers perceived Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and workplace simulations as practical approaches to bridge theoretical knowledge and vocational application. Through these methods, learners engage in authentic tasks—such as designing business proposals, conducting hotel check-in dialogues, or producing workplace reports—that reflect real-world communicative demands.

These experiential learning models cultivate critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving, aligning with both 21st-century

p-ISSN 2301-7554, e-ISSN 2541-3643
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competencies and PSP (Profil Siswa Pancasila) values (Beckett & Slater, 2020; Suryani & Prabowo, 2024). By integrating PjBL into CoE-based textbooks, teachers can foster deep learning where language becomes a medium of action, not merely a subject of study.

Digital and multimedia integration

Recognizing the digital shift in education, teachers recommended embedding digital and multimedia tools such as online learning platforms, augmented/virtual reality (AR/VR) simulations, and video-based instruction. These technologies enhance authentic exposure to workplace communication while engaging digital-native learners.

For instance, VR-based role-play can replicate hotel front-office interactions or customer service encounters, offering immersive contexts where learners apply English communicatively and ethically. This aligns with global trends in ESP that highlight technology-mediated authenticity (Graham, 2013; Taylor & Francis, 2025).

Professional development and peer mentoring

Teachers emphasized the importance of continuous professional development (PD) in ESP material design, evaluation, and adaptation. They acknowledged that ESP teachers often enter the field with limited background in vocational domains. Therefore, PD programs—integrated with peer mentoring schemes—can enhance both design competence and reflective practice.

Research supports that collaborative mentoring fosters sustained pedagogical growth and innovation (Farrell & Richards, 2024; Putri & Sari, 2024). Such PD initiatives also encourage teachers to integrate CoE values meaningfully, not superficially, into their lessons.

Industry feedback mechanisms

Teachers suggested establishing formal industry feedback systems to maintain curriculum relevance and ensure that language materials reflect current labor market trends. This can take the form of periodic reviews, alumni tracer studies, or advisory boards involving sector representatives.

Embedding industry dialogue into curriculum management supports evidence-based revision and data-driven decision making, consistent with policies outlined by Kemdikbudristek (2024) and global vocational education frameworks (OECD, 2024; Rohmad & Fitriyani, 2024).

Integrative synthesis

These proposed strategies form a cohesive response to the earlier challenges. Collaborative development and PD directly address teachers' limited expertise in ESP and instructional design; industry validation mechanisms resolve the issue of outdated and generic content; while PjBL and digital integration provide authentic, engaging learning experiences that embody CoE principles of integrity, cooperation, and creativity.

Collectively, these approaches represent a systemic innovation model linking pedagogical reform, technological adaptation, and moral education. Such integration has rarely been articulated in prior ESP research, which often treats language, vocational, and character components as separate domains (Khojasteh & Mukundan, 2025; Jannah et al., 2025).

Analytical discussion

The findings confirm that CoE-based textbook development transcends the technical task of language adaptation. It is, instead, a pedagogical reform movement that seeks to merge linguistic competence, vocational expertise, and moral character formation. This holistic approach resonates with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's (1977) philosophy that true education nurtures intellectual, ethical, and social dimensions of human development.

By integrating CoE principles, teachers are not only preparing students for employability but also for ethical citizenship, an alignment of skill and virtue that defines the Indonesian educational philosophy. While these findings correspond with global ESP trends emphasizing contextualization and learner engagement (Hyland, 2023), their novelty lies in foregrounding character-driven pedagogy within vocational English teaching.

Consequently, the Indonesian CoE-ESP model may serve as a benchmark for value-based vocational education globally, offering a paradigm that balances professional readiness with moral responsibility, a harmony crucial in the evolving world of work (Rahmawati & Rahayu, 2023; Wahyudi & Jufrizal, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study has explored teachers' perspectives on the development of Character of Excellence (CoE)-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks in Indonesian vocational education. The findings reveal that while teachers demonstrate a strong understanding of CoE principles and the pedagogical intent of ESP, they face multifaceted

challenges including limited ESP-specific training, lack of contextualized materials, and weak industry linkage. These constraints have often led to reliance on generic textbooks that fail to capture the authentic communicative demands of vocational contexts.

To address these issues, teachers proposed a set of integrated strategies emphasizing collaboration, authenticity, and innovation including collaborative textbook development, project-based and simulation learning, digital and multimedia integration, continuous professional development, and structured industry feedback mechanisms. Together, these strategies form a systemic reform model that connects pedagogy with workplace realities while embedding moral and ethical values central to the CoE framework.

The study underscores that CoE-based textbook development transcends technical adaptation; it represents a paradigm shift toward holistic vocational English education that merges linguistic competence, employability skills, and character formation. This approach resonates with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's (1977) vision of education as the cultivation of intellectual, ethical, and social virtues. Importantly, the integration of CoE within ESP pedagogy introduces a novel, value-based dimension that positions Indonesian vocational English as a globally relevant model, balancing professional readiness with moral responsibility.

Ultimately, the research suggests that sustainable improvement in ESP instruction depends on multi-stakeholder collaboration, continuous teacher empowerment, and a curriculum ecosystem responsive to both industry needs and national values. The CoE-ESP framework thus holds promise not only for Indonesia's vocational education reform but also as a reference for other contexts seeking to harmonize technical proficiency with ethical excellence in 21st-century language education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to convey their sincere appreciation to the Indonesian Education Scholarship (BPI), BPPT, and LPDP for funding the doctoral scholarship that supported this research. The authors also express deep gratitude to Universitas Banten Jaya for its continuous encouragement and institutional support throughout the study. This collaboration was made possible through shared commitment and collective effort, and the authors hope that the outcomes of this research will contribute meaningfully to the development of teacher education and benefit the wider academic community.

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p-ISSN 2301-7554, e-ISSN 2541-3643
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