


Student Teachers' Readiness for Instructional English in Primary Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

This study examines student teachers' readiness to use instructional English in primary classroom contexts. A quantitative survey design was employed involving 133 student teachers from a Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD) program at a public university in Indonesia. Readiness was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing knowledge, classroom language skills, self-confidence, and classroom interaction readiness. Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results indicate a moderate level of readiness across all dimensions. Classroom Language Skills shows the highest mean score ($M = 16.32$, $SD = 3.006$), followed by Classroom Interaction Readiness ($M = 13.62$, $SD = 2.492$) and Self-Confidence ($M = 12.95$, $SD = 2.820$), while Knowledge of Instructional English records the lowest mean ($M = 12.01$, $SD = 1.905$). The findings reveal an imbalance in which performance-related competencies are more developed than conceptual understanding and confidence. This suggests that current ESP practices support functional language use but are less effective in fostering adaptive and confident instructional communication. Strengthening the integration of knowledge, practice, and reflective experience is therefore essential to better prepare student teachers to use English as a medium of instruction.

Keywords: *Instructional English, Student Teachers, Teacher Readiness, English For Specific Purposes (ESP), Primary Education*

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INTRODUCTION

The integration of English in primary education has become increasingly important in supporting students' early language development and preparing them for future academic and global communication demands. In this context, teachers are expected to use English not only as subject content but also as a medium of instruction to facilitate classroom interaction. The use of classroom language—such as giving directions, explaining tasks, and managing discourse—plays a central role in shaping meaningful learning experiences. Empirical evidence indicates that exposure to rich and structured language input contributes significantly to students' language and literacy development (Gámez & Lesaux, 2012; Wanzek et al., 2023). While effective language teaching requires the integration of pedagogical strategies and communicative language use (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Recent studies further highlight that the use of English as a medium of instruction, including teacher talk and multimodal interaction, plays a crucial role in fostering student engagement and learning opportunities (Putri et al., 2025; Sugianto & Khoirunnisa, 2024).

Within teacher education, particularly in Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD) programs, student teachers are prepared as generalist educators responsible for teaching multiple subjects, including English. This expectation presents substantial challenges, as many student teachers lack a strong foundation in English language pedagogy and classroom language use. Previous research suggests that student teachers' readiness to teach English is shaped by pedagogical competence, teaching self-efficacy, and understanding of classroom contexts (Lelong & Yusuf, 2025a). Although field experience provides opportunities to develop

these competencies, it does not necessarily ensure the ability to use English effectively during instruction.

To address these challenges, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has been incorporated into teacher education programs to equip student teachers with context-specific language skills. ESP aims to align language learning with professional needs, particularly in instructional settings. Research indicates that collaborative and practice-oriented approaches can enhance engagement and instructional design skills (Apoko, 2024; Johnson & Johnson, 2005). In addition, reflective practices, such as transcript-based analysis of classroom interaction, can support deeper understanding of language use in teaching contexts (Al-Amri, 2024). However, recent studies argue that ESP implementation often remains focused on linguistic knowledge and product-oriented outcomes, rather than emphasizing authentic classroom communication and interactional competence (Hardman, 2020; Putri et al., 2025).

Consequently, a critical issue arises regarding student teachers' readiness to use English in primary classrooms. Many student teachers demonstrate limited confidence in delivering instructions, managing interaction, and sustaining communication in English. While competencies such as lesson planning and classroom management are recognized as essential components of teacher preparation (Apoko, 2024; Lelong & Yusuf, 2025b), these do not automatically translate into the ability to use English as a pedagogical tool. Classroom communication requires adaptive and context-sensitive language use, involving not only linguistic knowledge but also pedagogical decision-making (Al-Amri, 2024). Furthermore, recent perspectives conceptualize readiness as a multidimensional construct involving cognitive, affective, and contextual dimensions, particularly in relation to language use in instructional settings (Nenko, 2020; Putri et al., 2025). Drawing on this perspective, this study conceptualizes student teachers' readiness as the integration of knowledge, classroom language skills, and self-confidence required for effective instructional communication. Effective assessment practices also depend on teachers' ability to use language strategically to support learning processes (Alkharusi, 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, readiness to use English in teaching is closely associated with the development of teacher identity and professional competence. Teacher identity is constructed through ongoing experiences, social interactions, and reflective processes (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard & Meijer, 2017). It reflects how student teachers perceive their roles and capabilities as future educators, including their positioning as users of English in instructional contexts (Trent, 2012; Varghese et al., 2005). This process is influenced by emotional engagement, commitment to teaching, and the ability to respond to diverse educational demands (Day, 2004; Jenlink, 2021). Additionally, teaching experiences in multilingual contexts can further shape identity development and language use practices (Schneider & Lengeling, 2025). These perspectives suggest that readiness extends beyond language proficiency to include identity formation and professional development.

Despite extensive research on English language teaching, several gaps remain. Previous studies have examined lesson planning practices (Apoko, 2024), speaking skill development through instructional models (Lelong & Yusuf, 2025b), and the role of field experience in shaping teaching readiness (Lelong & Yusuf, 2025b). Research has also explored classroom interaction and reflective practices (Al-Amri, 2024). However, limited attention has been given to how student teachers develop readiness to use English in primary classroom contexts, particularly in relation to how ESP learning is translated into actual teaching practices (Putri et al., 2025; Sugianto & Khoirunnisa, 2024). This gap highlights the need to investigate how they transition from learning English in academic settings to using it as a functional tool for instruction.

Therefore, this study aims to explore student teachers' readiness to use English in primary classroom contexts and to examine the challenges they encounter in transferring ESP knowledge into teaching practice. The findings are expected to contribute to the improvement of teacher education programs, particularly in strengthening the alignment between ESP instruction and classroom practice. Furthermore, this study provides insights for curriculum

development in PGSD programs and supports the preparation of student teachers to use English more effectively as a medium of instruction in primary education.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach that focuses on developing language skills tailored to specific professional needs. In the context of teacher education, ESP is intended to prepare student teachers to use English functionally within instructional settings, rather than merely mastering general language competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). For student teachers in primary education, ESP should ideally emphasize instructional English, including the ability to give instructions, manage classroom interaction, and facilitate learning activities. Recent studies further highlight that the effectiveness of classroom language is closely related to how teachers integrate verbal and non-verbal communication in interaction, including teacher talk and embodied actions (Sugianto & Khoirunnisa, 2024), as well as questioning strategies that promote student engagement (Putri et al., 2025).

However, in practice, ESP instruction often remains oriented toward linguistic knowledge rather than authentic classroom application. This tendency creates a gap between learning English as an academic subject and using English as a tool for teaching. As a result, student teachers may demonstrate understanding of vocabulary and grammar but encounter difficulties when required to use English spontaneously and interactively in classroom contexts. This limitation reflects a broader issue in teacher education, where the development of practical classroom language competence is not always sufficiently emphasized (Hardman, 2020).

Student teachers in Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD) programs are typically prepared as generalist teachers who are expected to teach multiple subjects, including English. Unlike English-major students, they often have limited exposure to English pedagogy and fewer opportunities to develop instructional language competence. This condition presents unique challenges, particularly when they are required to teach English in primary classrooms.

Collaborative and experiential learning approaches, such as team-based projects, have been shown to enhance student teachers' creativity, motivation, and engagement in developing instructional materials (Apoko, 2024; Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Nevertheless, these approaches do not necessarily ensure that student teachers are able to apply English effectively in real teaching situations. The complexity of classroom interaction requires not only pedagogical understanding but also the ability to use language appropriately in dynamic and unpredictable contexts. In this regard, recent classroom-based studies suggest that student engagement and participation are strongly influenced by how teachers use language interactively during instruction (Putri et al., 2025).

Readiness to teach is a multidimensional construct that encompasses pedagogical knowledge, practical skills, and self-efficacy. It reflects the extent to which student teachers feel prepared to perform instructional tasks effectively. Drawing on teacher readiness frameworks, readiness can be understood as the integration of cognitive (knowledge), affective (confidence), and behavioral (classroom performance) dimensions that shape teaching practices (Nenko, 2020). Field experience has been identified as a key factor in developing readiness, as it provides opportunities for student teachers to engage in authentic teaching practices and apply their knowledge in real classroom settings (Lelong & Yusuf, 2025a). Such experiences contribute to the development of classroom management skills, instructional adaptation, and teaching confidence.

However, readiness is not solely determined by experience. It is also closely linked to the formation of teacher identity, which involves the ongoing process of constructing beliefs, roles, and professional self-concepts (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard & Meijer, 2017). Teacher identity influences how student teachers perceive their capabilities and respond to instructional challenges (Trent, 2012; Varghese et al., 2005). When student teachers do not perceive themselves as competent English users, their readiness to use English in classroom contexts may be limited, even if they possess adequate theoretical knowledge. This indicates that readiness involves not only competence but also how student teachers position themselves as language users in instructional settings.

Instructional English refers to the use of language for teaching purposes, including giving instructions, asking questions, managing classroom behavior, and facilitating interaction. It plays a central role in shaping classroom communication and learning processes. Classroom interaction is fundamentally constructed through language, making teachers' ability to use instructional English a critical component of effective teaching (Al-Amri, 2024). Recent studies further demonstrate that classroom interaction is supported by multimodal resources, including gestures, gaze, and visual materials, which together enhance students' participation and learning opportunities (Sugianto & Khoirunnisa, 2024).

Research also highlights the importance of meaningful language exposure in supporting students' learning. Teachers who use varied and contextually appropriate language can enhance students' vocabulary development and comprehension (Gámez & Lesaux, 2012; Wanzek et al., 2023). Therefore, the ability of student teachers to use instructional English effectively is not only essential for classroom management but also for creating rich learning environments that support language development.

In addition, other aspects of teaching practice, such as assessment and instructional strategies, further illustrate the complexity of teaching English in primary classrooms. Effective assessment practices require teachers to align instructional goals with evaluation methods Alkharusi (2021), while interactive approaches such as storytelling have been shown to support students' speaking skills and engagement (Lelong & Yusuf, 2025b). Teaching itself is also influenced by personal commitment and professional development, which shape how teachers approach their instructional responsibilities (Day, 2004; Jenlink, 2021; Schneider & Lengeling, 2025).

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative survey design to examine student teachers' readiness to use instructional English in primary classroom contexts. Readiness was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive (knowledge), behavioral (classroom language use), and affective (self-confidence) dimensions (Nenko, 2020). The participants were 133 student teachers from a Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD) program at a public university in Indonesia. A purposive sampling technique was used, selecting those who had completed English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses.

Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire consisting of three dimensions: (1) knowledge of instructional English, (2) ability to use English for classroom interaction, and (3) self-confidence in using English during teaching. The items were measured using a Likert scale. Content validity was established through expert judgment, and the reliability of the instrument was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha > 0.70$). The questionnaire was distributed online, and participants responded based on their learning experiences. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and percentages, to identify the overall level of readiness and its dimensions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section further describes how student teachers' readiness is distributed across each dimension using frequency analysis. The distribution of scores is presented to show the pattern of responses within each indicator.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of student teachers' readiness across four dimensions: Knowledge of Instructional English, Classroom Language Skills, Self-Confidence, and Classroom Interaction Readiness.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics Data

Dimension	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Knowledge of Instructional English	133	12.01	1.905	7	16
Classroom Language Skills	133	16.32	3.006	8	24
Self-Confidence	133	12.95	2.820	6	20
Classroom Interaction Readiness	133	13.62	2.492	6	20

Overall, the results indicate that student teachers demonstrate a moderate level of readiness across all dimensions. Classroom Language Skills shows the highest mean score, while Knowledge of Instructional English has the lowest mean, suggesting variation in different aspects of readiness.

Distribution Student Teachers' Dimension of Readiness

This section presents the distribution of student teachers' readiness across its key dimensions, namely *Knowledge of Instructional English*, *Classroom Language Skills*, *Self-Confidence (Self-efficacy)*, and *Classroom Interaction Readiness*. The distribution is described using frequency analysis to provide a detailed account of how the scores are spread across each indicator.

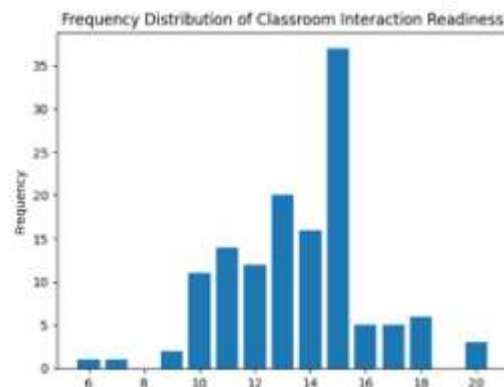


Figure 1. Knowledge of Instructional English

Knowledge of Instructional English

The scores range from 7 to 16, with most responses concentrated around the mid-range, particularly at a score of 12. Lower (7–9) and higher scores (14–16) occur less frequently, indicating that the distribution is centered within a moderate level of knowledge. This pattern suggests that most student teachers possess a sufficient understanding of instructional English, although relatively few demonstrate either very low or very high levels..

Classroom Language Skills

The figure presents the frequency distribution of *Classroom Language Skills* scores, ranging from 8 to 24. The highest frequency is observed at a score of 18, with approximately 36 responses. Scores between 12 and 17 also appear frequently, each accounting for approximately 10 to 13 responses. In contrast, scores above 20 (i.e., 21–24) occur less frequently, with only a few responses in each category. Similarly, scores below 12 are relatively rare.

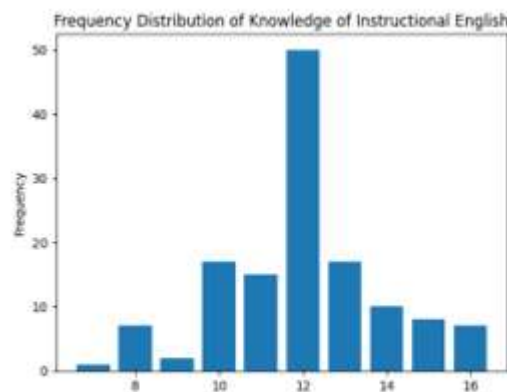


Figure 2. Classroom Language Skill

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Self-Confidence

Scores range from 6 to 20, with most responses concentrated in the mid-range, particularly around a score of 15. The distribution shows a clustering between 12 and 15, while both lower and higher extremes are relatively limited. This pattern indicates that most student teachers possess a moderate level of confidence in using English during instruction.

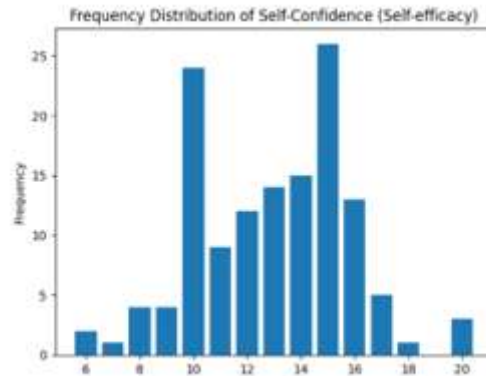


Figure 3 Self-Confidence

Classroom Interaction Readiness

Scores range from 6 to 20, with most responses concentrated around the mid-range, particularly at a score of 15. The distribution shows a clustering between 12 and 15, while both lower and higher extremes are relatively limited. This indicates that student teachers generally demonstrate a moderate level of readiness in managing classroom interaction using English. The distribution appears relatively symmetrical, with no pronounced skewness across the score range.

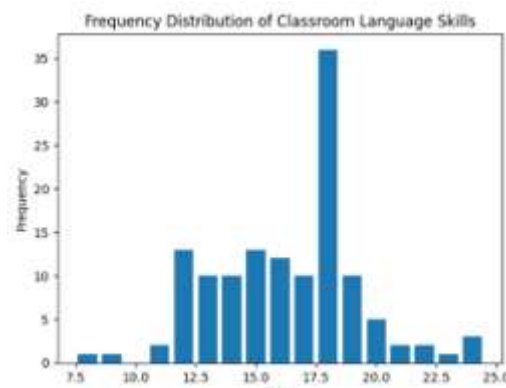


Figure 4. Classroom Interaction

Discussions

Knowledge of Instructional English

The findings indicate that student teachers demonstrate a moderate level of knowledge of instructional English, suggesting that their understanding remains largely limited to basic classroom expressions rather than more flexible and context-sensitive language use. This may be attributed to the tendency of teacher education programs to emphasize general language competence over the pedagogical functions of language in classroom settings.

This pattern reflects a persistent issue in ESP implementation, where language instruction is not always aligned with authentic teaching practices (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As a result, student teachers may possess theoretical knowledge but lack the ability to apply it effectively in instructional contexts. Considering that instructional language plays a central role in facilitating classroom interaction (Al-Amri, 2024), limited mastery in this area may constrain their ability to deliver effective instruction.

Furthermore, this finding supports the view that teacher readiness extends beyond knowledge acquisition to include the ability to enact knowledge in practice (Lelong & Yusuf, 2025a). The moderate level observed here thus indicates a gap between conceptual understanding and pedagogical application.

Classroom Language Skills

The findings reveal that Classroom Language Skills is the strongest dimension, indicating that student teachers are relatively capable of using English for practical classroom purposes. This suggests that they are more proficient in performing instructional tasks than in developing deeper conceptual understanding.

This result may be explained by the emphasis on performance-based activities in teacher education programs, such as microteaching and lesson simulations. These activities provide repeated opportunities for structured language use, which supports the development of functional competence. This aligns with the view that language proficiency develops more effectively through active use rather than theoretical instruction alone (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In addition, collaborative learning approaches contribute to increased engagement and practice opportunities (Apoko, 2024; Johnson & Johnson, 2005). However, while such approaches enhance performance, they may not sufficiently promote flexibility or deeper linguistic awareness, which are necessary for adaptive classroom communication.

Self-Confidence (Self-efficacy)

The findings indicate a moderate level of self-confidence, with noticeable variability among student teachers. This suggests that, despite having adequate knowledge and skills, many still experience uncertainty when using English in instructional contexts.

Self-confidence is shaped not only by competence but also by psychological and experiential factors, such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and limited teaching experience. Teaching in English requires real-time language use, which can intensify these challenges. Consequently, student teachers may hesitate to use English even when they are capable.

This finding aligns with the multidimensional nature of teacher readiness, which integrates cognitive, behavioral, and affective aspects (Lelong & Yusuf, 2025a). It also highlights the role of teacher identity, as student teachers who do not perceive themselves as competent English users are less likely to demonstrate confidence in practice (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard & Meijer, 2017). Thus, the moderate confidence level reflects an ongoing process of professional identity development.

Classroom Interaction Readiness

The findings show that student teachers demonstrate a relatively high level of readiness in classroom interaction, indicating their ability to engage in communicative practices using English. This suggests that they are generally prepared to initiate and respond to interaction in instructional settings.

This may be influenced by frequent exposure to interactive learning activities, such as peer teaching and group discussions, which promote the use of language in dynamic contexts. As classroom interaction is inherently constructed through language, repeated engagement in such activities can strengthen responsiveness and adaptability (Al-Amri, 2024).

From the perspective of communicative competence, effective interaction requires not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately in context. Exposure to meaningful input further supports this development (Gámez & Lesaux, 2012; Wanzek et al., 2023). Therefore, the relatively high level observed may reflect the cumulative effect of interactive and practice-oriented learning experiences.

Taken together, the findings reveal a consistent pattern in which performance-oriented dimensions – particularly Classroom Language Skills and Classroom Interaction Readiness – are more developed than knowledge and self-confidence. This suggests that student teachers are more accustomed to using English in structured practice than to fully understanding or confidently applying it in authentic contexts.

This imbalance indicates that readiness to use instructional English is not solely determined by linguistic ability, but by the integration of knowledge, practice, and self-efficacy (Lelong & Yusuf, 2025a). It also highlights a limitation in current teacher education practices, where emphasis on performance does not always translate into deeper understanding or confidence.

These findings have important implications for teacher education, particularly in PGSD programs. ESP instruction should be more explicitly connected to authentic classroom

use, ensuring that student teachers understand not only how to use instructional language but also when and why it is used.

In addition, teacher education programs need to better integrate cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions of learning. Providing more opportunities for authentic or reflective teaching experiences may help strengthen both competence and confidence, while also supporting the development of teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard & Meijer, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights that student teachers' readiness to use instructional English is shaped by an imbalance between performance and internalized competence. While they are able to engage in classroom practices using English, this readiness is largely supported by structured training experiences rather than a fully developed understanding of instructional language or a strong sense of confidence. This indicates that readiness should not be viewed merely as the ability to perform instructional tasks, but as the integration of knowledge, practice, and self-efficacy within authentic teaching contexts. The findings suggest that current ESP practices in teacher education may facilitate functional language use, yet remain limited in fostering adaptive, confident, and context-sensitive instructional communication. Therefore, strengthening the connection between ESP learning and real classroom application becomes essential. Teacher education programs need to move beyond practice-oriented training by incorporating reflective and context-based experiences that support deeper understanding and professional identity development. In this way, student teachers can be better prepared to use English not only as a tool for instruction, but as a meaningful medium for classroom interaction.

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