



Authentic Content-Based Instruction in EFL Classrooms: Preparing University Students for Real-World Communication

**Rasmah N¹, Ayu Ashari², Emelia Fitri Limchio Sinaga³, Zulkifli
Surahmat⁴, Markuna⁵, Rahmaniar⁶**

¹Universitas Kaltara, Kalimantan Utara,

²Politeknik Ilmu Pelayaran Makassar, Makassar,

³UPT SPF SMP Negeri 2 Makassar,

⁴Institut Agama Islam DDI Sidenreng Rappang,

⁵Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Al-Furqan Makassar,

⁶SMK Negeri 2 Polewali

Article Info	Abstract
<p>Received: 2026-04-30 Revised: 2026 05-07 Accepted: 2026 05-16</p> <p>Keywords: Authentic learning; Communication skills; Content-Based Instruction; EFL; Higher education</p> <p>DOI: 10.24256/ideasv14i1.10362</p> <p>Corresponding Author: Rasmah N Rasmahamrah@gmail.com Universitas Kaltara, Kalimantan Utara</p>	<p><i>This study examines the effectiveness of Authentic Content-Based Instruction (CBI) in enhancing university students' English communication skills and their readiness for real-world communication. It addresses two research questions: whether authentic CBI leads to greater improvement in communication performance compared to conventional instruction, and how students perceive its relevance to real-world contexts. A quasi-experimental design was employed involving 50 undergraduate students divided into experimental and control groups. Data were collected through pre-test and post-test assessments, questionnaires, and supporting qualitative insights, and analyzed using paired and independent sample t-tests alongside effect size estimation. The results indicate that while both groups improved, the experimental group achieved substantially higher gains, with mean scores increasing from 65.21 to 82.45, compared to 64.87 to 72.13 in the control group, reflecting a large effect. Students also reported higher engagement, stronger perceived authenticity, and greater communication readiness. These findings demonstrate that integrating authentic materials and task-based activities fosters meaningful language use and accelerates communicative competence. The study advances Content-Based Instruction by positioning authenticity as a core pedagogical element and provides practical guidance for designing context-driven, real-world-oriented EFL instruction in higher education.</i></p>

1. Introduction

The increasing demand for effective English communication skills in the global workforce has positioned English as a crucial component of higher education. In today's era of international collaboration, digital communication, and cross-cultural interaction, university graduates are expected not only to master linguistic competence but also to apply English effectively in authentic academic and professional contexts (Surahmat, 2026). However, in many EFL contexts, particularly in Indonesia, language instruction still tends to emphasize grammar-oriented learning and theoretical knowledge rather than meaningful communication practice (Muslim & Mahbub, 2023). As a result, many university students experience difficulties in transferring classroom knowledge into real-world communication.

To address this challenge, Content-Based Instruction (CBI) has emerged as a promising instructional approach that integrates language learning with meaningful subject matter content (Vinita & Ilankumaran, 2023). More specifically, Authentic Content-Based Instruction combines language development with real-world materials, contextualized tasks, and discipline-related communication practices (Pérez, 2021). Through activities such as case-study analysis, project presentations, and workplace simulations, students are encouraged to use English in purposeful and communicative ways (Sukying et al., 2023). This integration of authenticity and content learning is expected to enhance not only linguistic competence but also students' readiness for professional communication.

Previous studies have demonstrated that CBI contributes positively to language proficiency, motivation, and engagement (Alghonaim, 2020; Horn, 2024). However, several studies also report limitations in implementation, particularly regarding the lack of authentic materials and insufficient integration between language and content instruction (Cruz, 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). More recent research emphasizes that authentic learning environments significantly improve communicative competence and learner confidence because students are exposed to realistic communication demands (Aghayeva, 2023; Argüelles et al., 2022).

Although previous studies have separately examined CBI and authentic learning, limited research has specifically investigated the integration of Authentic Content-Based Instruction in higher education EFL contexts. This gap is important because university students require opportunities to practice English in contexts that reflect really academic and professional communication. Therefore, this study investigates the effectiveness of Authentic Content-Based Instruction in improving university students' English communication skills and their readiness for real-world communication.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the implementation of authentic Content-Based Instruction in EFL classrooms and its impact on university students' real-world communication skills. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) To what extent does authentic Content-Based Instruction improve university students' English communication skills? (2) How do students perceive the use of authentic CBI in relation to their readiness for real-world communication? It is hypothesized that students exposed to authentic CBI will demonstrate higher levels of communicative competence and engagement compared to those experiencing conventional instruction.

To address these questions, this study employs a quantitative research design, supplemented by qualitative data to provide deeper insights into students' experiences. Data are collected through pre-test and post-test assessments to measure improvements in communication skills, as well as questionnaires and interviews to explore students' perceptions. It is predicted that the integration of authentic tasks within CBI will lead to significant improvements in both linguistic competence and practical communication ability.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by extending the application of CBI through the integration of authentic learning practices in higher education EFL contexts. Theoretically, it advances understanding of how authenticity enhances language acquisition within content-based frameworks. Practically, it offers insights for educators and curriculum designers in developing more relevant, contextualized, and effective language learning environments. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this study aims to support the development of students' readiness for real-world communication in an increasingly globalized world.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative quasi-experimental design using a non-equivalent control group model to examine the effectiveness of Authentic Content-Based Instruction (CBI) in enhancing university students' English communication skills. Two intact classes were assigned as the experimental and control groups. Both groups completed pre-test and post-test assessments to measure changes in communication performance.

The experimental group received instruction through Authentic Content-Based Instruction integrating authentic materials, project-based tasks, and real-world communication activities. Meanwhile, the control group received conventional textbook-based instruction focusing on grammar exercises and teacher-centered learning. The comparison between the two groups was intended to determine the effectiveness of authentic CBI in improving students' real-world communication skills.

2.2 Research Setting

This study was conducted at STAI Al-Furqan Maros, Indonesia, within an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom context. The participants were undergraduate students enrolled in a General English course aimed at developing academic and communicative competence. The setting was selected due to its relevance to the implementation of Authentic Content-Based Instruction in higher education EFL learning. Therefore, this setting provides an appropriate environment for implementing Authentic Content-Based Instruction (CBI), which emphasizes the integration of language learning with meaningful, real-world content.

2.3 Participants

The participants consisted of 50 undergraduate students majoring in Islamic Education at STAI Al-Furqan Maros, Indonesia. All participants were enrolled in a compulsory General English course. Purposive sampling was used to select students with relatively similar English proficiency levels based on academic

records and course placement.

The participants were divided into two intact classes: an experimental group (n = 25) and a control group (n = 25). The experimental group received Authentic Content-Based Instruction, while the control group received conventional instruction.

2.4 Instructional Treatment (Authentic CBI Implementation)

The instructional treatment was conducted over eight weeks with two 90-minute sessions per week. The experimental group received Authentic Content-Based Instruction integrating authentic materials, case studies, role-plays, presentations, and project-based activities related to students' academic and professional contexts. These activities were designed to promote meaningful communication and real-world language use.

In contrast, the control group received conventional instruction emphasizing textbook-based learning, grammar exercises, and teacher-centered activities with limited communicative practice.

2.5 Instruments

The language competence test was administered as both a pre-test and post-test to assess students' English communication skills. The test consisted of performance-based speaking and writing tasks reflecting authentic communication contexts, including role-plays, presentations, and practical written responses.

Students' performance was evaluated using an analytic scoring rubric covering fluency, grammatical accuracy, coherence, and appropriateness of language use. Each criterion was rated using a five-point scale.

2.5.1 Language Competence Test

The primary instrument used to assess students' English communication skills was a language competence test administered as both a pre-test and a post-test. The purpose of the pre-test was to determine the students' initial level of proficiency, while the post-test measured their progress after the instructional treatment. The test focused on three key aspects of communication skills: speaking, writing, and overall functional communication in real-world contexts.

The test consisted of performance-based tasks designed to reflect authentic language use. For the speaking component, students participated in role-play activities simulating real-life communication situations, such as giving instructions, explaining concepts, or responding to questions. In addition, students were required to deliver short presentations based on assigned topics or case scenarios, allowing them to demonstrate their ability to organize and express ideas clearly in English. The writing component involved structured tasks, such as composing short explanations or responses related to practical contexts. A scoring rubric was

used to evaluate students' performance based on criteria such as fluency, accuracy, coherence, and appropriateness of language use. Students' performance was assessed using an analytic scoring rubric covering four criteria: fluency, grammatical accuracy, coherence, and appropriateness of language use. Each criterion was rated on a five-point scale to ensure objective and consistent evaluation across participants.

2.5.2 Questionnaire

To complement the test data, a questionnaire was administered to measure students' perceptions of the use of Authentic Content-Based Instruction. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). It was designed to capture students' responses across three main dimensions: engagement, authenticity, and communication readiness.

The engagement dimension assessed the extent to which students were actively involved and interested in the learning process. The authenticity dimension evaluated students' perceptions of how closely the learning activities reflected real-world situations. The communication readiness dimension measured students' confidence and preparedness to use English in practical contexts. The questionnaire provided valuable insights into students' experiences and supported the interpretation of the quantitative findings from the language competence test.

2.6 Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert judgment involving two English language teaching specialists who evaluated the relevance and clarity of the instruments. Revisions were made based on their feedback to improve task instructions and item clarity.

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. A pilot test involving students with similar characteristics was also conducted to ensure the practicality and clarity of the instruments.

2.7 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted in four stages: pre-test administration, instructional treatment, post-test administration, and questionnaire distribution. The experimental group received Authentic Content-Based Instruction for eight weeks, while the control group received conventional instruction during the same period.

Following the treatment, post-tests were administered to both groups to measure communication skill improvement. Questionnaires were distributed to the experimental group to examine students' perceptions regarding engagement, authenticity, and communication readiness.

Ethical considerations were maintained by obtaining participants' consent and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study.

2.8 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using paired sample t-tests and independent sample t-tests to compare within-group and between-group differences. Effect size analysis was also conducted to determine the magnitude of the instructional impact.

Prior to inferential testing, normality and homogeneity assumptions were examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test and Levene's Test. The results indicated that the data met the assumptions for parametric analysis ($p > 0.05$).

Qualitative data from questionnaires and interviews were analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to engagement, authenticity, and communication readiness.

3. Result & Discussion

3.1 Baseline Equivalence Between Groups

Pre-test analysis showed that the experimental group ($M = 65.21$, $SD = 6.34$) and the control group ($M = 64.87$, $SD = 6.11$) had comparable levels of English communication skills prior to the instructional treatment. An independent sample t-test revealed no statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p > 0.05$), indicating baseline equivalence before the intervention.

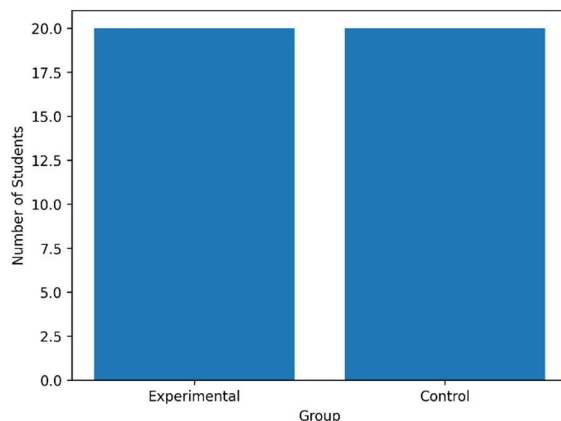


Figure 1. Distribution of Participants by Group

The chart visually compares the pre-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups. Both groups display nearly identical mean values, with only a slight difference between them. This visual representation reinforces the statistical findings, showing that there was no substantial gap in initial proficiency levels. The uniform height of the bars indicates a balanced starting point for both groups, which is essential in quasi-experimental research. By illustrating the similarity between the two groups, the chart supports the validity of the study design and

ensures that any differences observed in the post-test results can be more confidently attributed to the instructional treatment rather than initial disparities.

3.2 Within-Group Improvement

The results of the paired sample t-test revealed a statistically significant improvement in English communication skills within both the experimental and control groups after the instructional period ($p < 0.05$). These findings indicate that students in both groups demonstrated measurable progress following the instructional intervention.

In the experimental group, the mean score increased from 65.21 in the pre-test to 82.45 in the post-test, reflecting a substantial gain in performance. This increase represents a notable improvement in students' ability to perform communication tasks, including speaking and structured responses. The magnitude of improvement within this group suggests a considerable change in students' performance levels across the instructional period.

Similarly, the control group also showed an increase in mean scores, from 64.87 in the pre-test to 72.13 in the post-test. Although the improvement was statistically significant, the magnitude of change was smaller compared to that observed in the experimental group. The difference in score progression between the two groups highlights varying levels of within-group development over time.

In terms of score progression, both groups exhibited an upward trend from pre-test to post-test, indicating that learning occurred in both instructional settings. However, the degree of increase differed between groups, with the experimental group showing a larger gain in mean scores compared to the control group.

Pedagogically, these findings suggest that authentic learning activities provide students with greater opportunities to practice meaningful communication rather than merely completing language exercises. The integration of contextualized tasks appears to facilitate more active participation and practical language use, which may contribute to stronger communicative development.

3.3 Between-Group Differences

The analysis of post-test scores was conducted to examine the differences in English communication skills between the experimental and control groups after the instructional intervention. An independent sample t-test was applied to determine whether the observed differences between the two groups were statistically significant.

Post-test analysis revealed that the experimental group achieved a higher mean score ($M = 82.45$, $SD = 5.98$) than the control group ($M = 72.13$, $SD = 6.45$). The independent sample t-test showed that the difference between the two groups was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

In addition, effect size analysis demonstrated a large practical effect, indicating that Authentic Content-Based Instruction produced meaningful

improvement in students' English communication performance beyond statistical significance alone. In terms of distribution, both groups exhibited a relatively similar spread of scores, as indicated by their standard deviation values. However, the higher mean score in the experimental group suggests a higher overall level of performance in English communication skills compared to the control group.

In addition to statistical significance, the effect size analysis indicated a large practical effect of the instructional intervention. This suggests that the implementation of Authentic Content-Based Instruction produced not only statistically measurable improvement but also meaningful educational impact on students' communication performance.

3.4 Overall Score Trends

Overall, both groups demonstrated improvement from pre-test to post-test; however, the experimental group showed a substantially greater increase. The experimental group gained 17.24 points, compared to 7.26 points in the control group. These results indicate that students exposed to Authentic Content-Based Instruction experienced stronger progress in English communication skills throughout the instructional period. The observed trends in both groups reflect a positive change in performance over time, with distinct differences in the extent of improvement between the two instructional conditions.

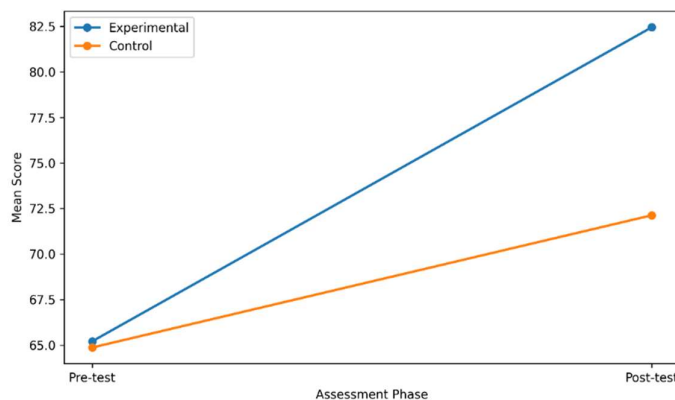


Figure 2. Overall Score Trends: Pre-test vs Post-Test Comparison

The chart illustrates the progression of mean scores from pre-test to post-test for both the experimental and control groups using a line graph. Both groups show an upward trend, indicating improvement over time. However, the experimental group displays a steeper increase compared to the control group, reflecting a larger gain in scores. The parallel visualization of both groups allows for direct comparison of their performance trajectories. The use of markers and continuous lines enhances readability and highlights the change between assessment phases. This visual representation provides an intuitive understanding of score development and clearly demonstrates the difference in magnitude of improvement between groups.

4. Discussion

This study examined the effectiveness of Authentic Content-Based Instruction (CBI) in enhancing university students' English communication skills. The findings demonstrated that students exposed to authentic CBI achieved significantly greater improvement than those receiving conventional instruction. In addition, students responded positively to learning activities that reflected real-world communication contexts (Putri et al., 2025). These findings suggest that authentic CBI promotes meaningful language use by encouraging students to apply English communicatively rather than merely learning isolated language forms.

The findings can be explained through constructivist learning theory and the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Authentic tasks such as presentations, role-plays, and project-based activities enabled students to actively construct knowledge through meaningful interaction and contextualized communication (Rezai et al., 2025). In line with ESP principles, the integration of discipline-relevant materials connected classroom learning with real-world communication demands, thereby facilitating more purposeful language use (Alfallaj & Al-Ahdal, 2017).

The findings may be synthesized into a progressive instructional model in which authenticity promotes learner engagement, and engagement subsequently enhances communication competence. Authentic learning tasks encouraged students to participate more actively in meaningful interaction, while contextualized communication practices increased their confidence and ability to use English effectively. This suggests that authenticity functions as a catalyst for deeper engagement and more successful communicative performance.

The present findings are consistent with previous studies reporting that Content-Based Instruction improves language proficiency and communicative competence (Zarfsaz & Yeganehpour, 2021; Anh & Nguyen, 2024). However, this study extends earlier research by emphasizing the role of authenticity and engagement as central factors contributing to communication development among non-English major students in higher education contexts.

This study contributes theoretically by extending Content-Based Instruction through the integration of authenticity as a central pedagogical element in EFL learning. It also reinforces constructivist and ESP perspectives by demonstrating how contextualized communication tasks support meaningful language acquisition. Methodologically, the study contributes by combining a quasi-experimental design, authentic task implementation, and effect size analysis to evaluate communication competence in higher education EFL contexts.

Practically, the findings suggest that language instructors should incorporate authentic materials and real-world communication tasks into classroom instruction. Curriculum designers and policymakers are also encouraged to support contextualized and task-based approaches that better prepare students for

academic and professional communication demands.

This study has several limitations. The use of a quasi-experimental design without random assignment limits causal generalization. In addition, the relatively small sample size and single institutional setting may reduce the broader applicability of the findings. The short treatment duration and reliance on predominantly quantitative data may also limit deeper understanding of long-term learning development.

Future studies should involve larger and more diverse samples across multiple institutions and employ longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to examine the long-term impact of authentic CBI. Further research may also explore the integration of digital technologies and investigate the effects of authentic CBI on specific language skills such as speaking, writing, and critical thinking.

Overall, the findings provide strong evidence that Authentic Content-Based Instruction effectively enhances students' English communication skills by integrating meaningful tasks and real-world communication contexts. The study highlights the importance of authenticity in promoting engagement, contextual understanding, and communicative competence in higher education EFL learning.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that Sally Rooney successfully portrays the This study examined the effectiveness of Authentic Content-Based Instruction (CBI) in improving university students' English communication skills and their readiness for real-world communication. The findings demonstrate that integrating authentic content and task-based activities into EFL instruction provides measurable benefits compared to conventional teaching approaches.

Several key findings emerged from this study. First, students exposed to authentic CBI showed greater improvement in English communication skills than those receiving traditional instruction. Second, both groups improved over time, but the magnitude of improvement was significantly higher in the experimental group. Third, students in the experimental group demonstrated higher engagement and more consistent performance. Fourth, authentic learning tasks contributed to more meaningful and contextualized language use. Finally, the results confirmed that authentic CBI supports both skill development and communicative readiness.

This study contributes to theory by reinforcing the role of authenticity within Content-Based Instruction and extending constructivist and ESP frameworks into non-English major contexts. Practically, it highlights the importance of designing instruction that integrates real-world materials and communicative tasks. Educators are encouraged to adopt authentic, task-based learning activities, while curriculum designers and policymakers should support the development of context-relevant instructional models that align language learning with professional demands.

Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples, employ

longitudinal designs to examine long-term effects, and integrate qualitative approaches to capture deeper learning experiences. Further studies may also explore the use of digital technologies in implementing authentic CBI and its impact on different language skills.

Overall, this study underscores the significance of authenticity in language education and provides evidence that innovative instructional approaches are essential for preparing students to communicate effectively in real-world contexts.

6. References

- Aghayeva, J. Q. (2023). AUTHENTIC MATERIALS AND AUTHENTICITY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING. In ICSP «NEW SCIENCE» eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.46916/01112023-1-978-5-00215-129-5>
- Alfallaj, F. S. S., & Al-Ahdal, A. A. M. H. (2017). Authentic Assessment: Evaluating the Saudi EFL Tertiary Examination System. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 7(8), 597. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0708.01>
- Alghonaim, A. S. (2020). Impact of Related Activities on Reading Comprehension of EFL Students. *English Language Teaching*, 13(4), 15. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v13n4p15>
- Anh, V. T. K., & Nguyen, H. (2024). Generative Artificial Intelligence and ChatGPT in Language Learning: EFL Students' Perceptions of Technology Acceptance. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 21(6). <https://doi.org/10.53761/fr1rkj58>
- Argüelles, M. J. M., Plana-Erta, D., & Bertran, À. F. (2022). Impact of using authentic online learning environments on students' perceived employability. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 71(2), 605–627. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-022-10171-3>
- Cruz, A. A. de la. (2021). EFL Teachers' Challenges to Write Content and Language Objectives for CBI Lesson Plans at a Mexican University. *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*, 13(2), 215–240. <https://doi.org/10.5294/lacil.2020.13.2.4>
- Furwana, D., Muin, F. R., Zainuddin, A. A., & Mulyani, A. G. (2024). Unlocking the Potential: Exploring the Impact of Online Assessment in English Language Teaching. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 12(1), 653-662.
- Husnaini, H. (2022). Development of Self Esteem-Oriented Micro Teaching Materials for IAIN Palopo English Education Students. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 10(1), 538-560.
- Horn, K. Van. (2024). ChatGPT in English Language Learning: Exploring Perceptions and Promoting Autonomy in a University EFL Context. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language--TESL-EJ*, 28(1). <https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.28109a8>

- Khasawneh, M. A. S., & Belton, B. (2025). Disclosing the effects of automated feedback on reading comprehension, reading motivation, reading engagement, and reading anxiety through personalized technology-enhanced learning. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 20, 100817. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2025.100817>
- Muslim, B. Z., & Mahbub, Moh. A. (2023). The role of self-regulated learning on foreign vocabulary learning: a multi-case study. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 13(1), 78–101. <https://doi.org/10.23971/jefl.v13i1.5238>
- Pérez, M. del M. S. (2021). Predicting content proficiency through disciplinary-literacy variables in English-medium writing. *System*, 97, 102463. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102463>
- Putri, D., Sumarni, T., Sukmawati, I. D., & Kristanto, B. (2025). Foreign language anxiety and nursing clinical communication competence in Indonesian pre-elementary nursing students: A mixed methods study. *Journal of Language and Pragmatics Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.58881/JLPS.V4I1.69>
- Rezai, A., Ahmadi, R., Ashkani, P., & Hosseini, G. H. (2025). Implementing active learning approach to promote motivation, reduce anxiety, and shape positive attitudes: A case study of EFL learners. *Acta Psychologica*, 253, 104704. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.104704>
- Roodsari, S. Z., & Harrison, J. (2024). Content-Based Instruction In Communicative Language Teaching. *Journal of Classroom Action Research*, 3(2), 24–35. <https://doi.org/10.52622/jcar.v3i2.265>
- Sukyng, A., Supunya, N., & Phusawisot, P. (2023). ESP Teachers: Insights, Challenges and Needs in the EFL Context. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 13(2), 396–406. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1302.14>
- Surahmat, Z., & Sinaga, E. F. L. (2026). A Systematic Examination of Digital Technology Integration in English Language Teaching at Vocational High Schools: Challenges and Opportunities. *INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa*, 13(1), 277-291.
- Vinita, V. J., & Ilankumaran, M. (2023). Teaching Grammar through Content-Based Instruction in a Second Language Classroom. *World Journal of English Language*, 14(1), 145. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n1p145>
- Zarfsaz, E., & Yeganehpour, P. (2021). The Impact of Different Context Levels on Vocabulary Learning and Retention. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 9(4), 24–34. <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v9i4.4049>
- Zhang, L., Li, Q., & Liu, W. (2022). A Study on the Effectiveness of College English Teaching Based on Content-Based Instruction Teaching Philosophy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 921654. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.921654>