



## Comparative Analysis of Entry-Level TOEFL Skill Profiles Among Vocational Students: Implications for ESP Curriculum Development

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| Article Info                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <p><b>Received:</b> 2026-04-07</p> <p><b>Revised:</b> 2026-05-19</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> 2026-06-30</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b><br/>English for Specific<br/>Purposes, diagnostic<br/>assessment, TOEFL skill<br/>profiles, vocational higher<br/>education</p> <p><b>DOI:</b><br/>10.24256/ideas.v14i1.10973</p> <p><b>Corresponding Author:</b><br/>Irfiani Bakri<br/>irfiani.bakri@polimdo.ac.id<br/>Politeknik Negeri Manado,<br/>Manado</p> | <p><i>English proficiency has become an essential competency for vocational higher education students due to the increasing demand for effective communication in academic, professional, and workplace contexts. Although the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is widely used to assess English proficiency, previous studies have predominantly focused on overall TOEFL achievement, while limited attention has been given to the diagnostic analysis of TOEFL subskills and their implications for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum development. This study aims to investigate the entry-level TOEFL skill profiles of first-semester vocational students and examine disciplinary differences across Business Management, Business Administration, and Information Technology programs. Employing a quantitative descriptive-comparative design, the study analyzed secondary TOEFL data from 175 first-semester students. The dataset consisted of Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, Reading Comprehension, and overall TOEFL scores. Descriptive statistics, proficiency classification, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to identify students' language proficiency profiles and examine differences among academic programs. The findings revealed that Reading Comprehension achieved the highest mean score, followed by Structure and Written Expression, whereas Listening Comprehension emerged as the weakest skill. The majority of students (76.0%)</i></p> |

were classified within the low proficiency category. Furthermore, significant differences were found among academic programs, with Information Technology students consistently outperforming Business Management and Business Administration students across all TOEFL components. The findings indicate that vocational students demonstrate distinct language proficiency profiles and disciplinary variations in English competence. This study contributes to the ESP literature by demonstrating the value of TOEFL subskill profiling as a diagnostic needs-analysis tool and by providing empirical evidence for the development of discipline-sensitive and evidence-based ESP curricula in vocational higher education.

## 1. Introduction

English has become the dominant language of international communication and plays a crucial role in business, technology, education, and scientific development. As globalization increases cross-border interaction and knowledge exchange, English proficiency has become an essential competency for students preparing for academic and professional environments (Feng & Liu, 2021; Hyland, 2022; Putri et al., 2024). In vocational higher education, English proficiency is particularly important because graduates are expected to communicate effectively in workplace settings where language competence influences employability and career development (Rose, H. & Galloway, 2019).

Unlike general academic education, vocational education emphasizes the development of occupation-specific skills and competencies. Therefore, English instruction in vocational settings should address the communicative requirements associated with particular professional fields. Students in business-related disciplines, for example, may require English for presentations, meetings, negotiations, customer interactions, and professional correspondence. In contrast, students in technology-related disciplines frequently encounter English through software interfaces, technical documentation, project reports, programming resources, and digital communication platforms (Husain & Mahfoodh, 2021). Such differences indicate that students from different vocational disciplines may possess distinct language experiences, learning needs, and proficiency profiles when entering higher education.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become a widely adopted approach in vocational education because it emphasizes language instruction that reflects learners' academic and professional needs rather than a generalized curriculum (Hyland, 2022). Effective ESP programs require an understanding of learners' existing competencies and target communication demands to develop appropriate

learning objectives, instructional materials, and assessment strategies. Consequently, identifying students' entry-level English proficiency is essential for evidence-based curriculum development.

TOEFL is one of the most widely used standardized assessments for measuring English proficiency. It evaluates Listening, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading, providing diagnostic information on learners' strengths and weaknesses across language skills (Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, 2019; Chapelle & Lee, 2021). However, TOEFL results are often interpreted using overall scores, limiting their potential to inform instructional planning and curriculum development.

Recent developments in language assessment have emphasized the importance of diagnostic approaches that support educational decision-making and curriculum improvement by identifying learners' strengths, weaknesses, and instructional needs (Kunnan, 2013; Vogt et al., 2020). In vocational education, such information is particularly valuable because students are expected to develop communication skills that support both academic learning and professional practice. Despite the widespread use of TOEFL in higher education, research on vocational students has primarily focused on overall TOEFL achievement, factors affecting test performance, or the effectiveness of TOEFL preparation programs. Comparatively fewer studies have examined TOEFL subskill profiles as diagnostic indicators of learners' language readiness, particularly among first-semester students before they receive ESP instruction. Consequently, empirical evidence on vocational students' entry-level English proficiency profiles remains limited, reducing the potential use of TOEFL diagnostic data to inform evidence-based ESP curriculum planning.

Another limitation concerns the limited integration of TOEFL assessment into ESP curriculum development. Although TOEFL is widely used as a proficiency assessment, its potential as a diagnostic needs-analysis tool remains underexplored. Few studies have compared TOEFL subskill profiles across vocational disciplines or examined how such information can support discipline-sensitive ESP curriculum planning. The use of TOEFL score profiles as diagnostic information emphasizes that TOEFL assessments can be used to guide teaching, monitor progress, inform placement decisions, and support educational decision-making (Hsieh, 2024). Addressing this issue is particularly important because students from different academic programs may demonstrate distinct language proficiency profiles and communication needs upon entering higher education.

To address these gaps, the present study investigates the TOEFL skill profiles of first-semester students from Business Management, Business Administration, and Information Technology programs in vocational higher education. Specifically, the study examines students' performance in Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension and compares TOEFL profiles across academic disciplines. The study also explores how the resulting

proficiency profiles can inform ESP curriculum planning and instructional priorities.

This study offers three contributions. First, it shifts the focus from overall TOEFL scores to diagnostic subskill profiling. Second, it compares proficiency profiles across business- and technology-oriented vocational programs. Third, it demonstrates how TOEFL diagnostic data can inform evidence-based and discipline-sensitive ESP curriculum development.

## **2. Method**

### ***Research Design***

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-comparative research design to investigate the TOEFL skill profiles of vocational students and examine their implications for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum development. A quantitative approach was selected because the study utilized numerical TOEFL score data and aimed to identify patterns of English proficiency across different language skills and academic disciplines. The descriptive component was intended to provide a comprehensive overview of students' performance in Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension, while the comparative component was used to examine differences among academic programs.

The study adopted a cross-sectional design because the data were collected at a single point in time. The TOEFL scores were obtained during students' first semester of study before they had received formal ESP instruction. Consequently, the results represent students' entry-level English proficiency and provide a baseline for understanding their language readiness prior to discipline-specific English learning.

### ***Participants and Data Source***

The study utilized secondary data obtained from institutional TOEFL Institutional Testing Program (TOEFL ITP) records administered to first-semester students during the 2025 academic year. The participants consisted of 175 vocational students enrolled in the Business Management, Business Administration, and Information Technology programs. A total sampling technique was employed, whereby all available TOEFL records from the selected cohort were included in the analysis. The institutional TOEFL ITP was administered as part of the institution's English proficiency assessment for newly enrolled students using the standardized TOEFL ITP format under supervised testing conditions in accordance with institutional testing procedures. The dataset included students' scores in Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, Reading Comprehension, and overall TOEFL performance. Since the study relied on secondary data, no additional testing procedures were conducted. To ensure confidentiality and comply with ethical research standards, all personal identifiers were removed prior to analysis, and only aggregated data were reported.

***Research Instrument***

The study used the Test of English as a Foreign Language Institutional Testing Program (TOEFL ITP) as the primary source of data. TOEFL ITP is a standardized English proficiency assessment that is widely used in educational institutions to evaluate students' academic English abilities.

The test consists of three sections. The Listening Comprehension section measures students' ability to understand spoken English in academic and everyday contexts. The Structure and Written Expression section evaluates grammatical competence through the assessment of sentence structure, syntax, and language accuracy. The Reading Comprehension section measures learners' ability to understand written texts, identify main ideas, interpret information, and draw inferences from academic passages.

TOEFL ITP was selected because it is a standardized English proficiency assessment that has been widely adopted by higher education institutions for academic placement and proficiency evaluation. The test provides separate scores for Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension, making it appropriate for identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses across language skills. Since this study utilized official institutional TOEFL ITP scores obtained from secondary data, no additional reliability or validity analysis was conducted by the researchers.

***Data Analysis***

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures.

The first stage involved descriptive statistical analysis to identify students' TOEFL skill profiles using SPSS version 30.0. Measures of central tendency and dispersion, including mean, standard deviation, minimum score, and maximum score, were calculated for Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, Reading Comprehension, and overall TOEFL scores. These statistics were used to describe students' entry-level English proficiency and identify general performance patterns.

The second stage focused on TOEFL skill-profile analysis. The mean scores of the three TOEFL components were compared to determine students' strongest and weakest language skills. Skill-gap patterns were identified by calculating the differences among the mean scores of Listening, Structure, and Reading. This analysis provided a more detailed understanding of the relative development of students' language competencies.

The third stage involved proficiency-level classification. Students' overall TOEFL scores were categorized into three proficiency levels based on commonly used TOEFL ITP classifications. Scores below 450 were categorized as low proficiency, scores between 450 and 500 were categorized as intermediate

proficiency, and scores above 500 were categorized as high proficiency. Frequency and percentage analyses were subsequently conducted to determine the distribution of students across proficiency categories.

The fourth stage involved comparative analysis across academic programs. Mean TOEFL scores for Business Management, Business Administration, and Information Technology students were compared to identify disciplinary differences in English proficiency. Prior to conducting the one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were examined using the Shapiro–Wilk and Levene's tests, respectively. A one-way ANOVA was then performed to determine whether significant differences existed among the three academic programs in Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, Reading Comprehension, and overall TOEFL scores. A significance level of 0.05 was adopted. In addition, partial eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) was calculated to determine the magnitude of the observed differences among academic programs.

Finally, the statistical findings were interpreted from the perspective of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) needs analysis. The identified TOEFL profiles were used to formulate recommendations for evidence-based and discipline-sensitive ESP curriculum development.

### **3. Result**

#### ***Overall TOEFL Skill Profiles of Vocational Students***

To identify students' entry-level English proficiency, descriptive statistics were calculated for Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, Reading Comprehension, and overall TOEFL scores. The results are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of TOEFL Skill Components*

| Skill       | Mean   | SD    | Min | Max |
|-------------|--------|-------|-----|-----|
| Listening   | 40.53  | 5.80  | 20  | 58  |
| Structure   | 42.73  | 4.80  | 35  | 58  |
| Reading     | 45.10  | 4.44  | 32  | 56  |
| Total TOEFL | 427.85 | 39.45 | 363 | 517 |

*Source: Research data processed using SPSS version 30.0*

As presented in Table 1, Reading Comprehension was the strongest TOEFL component, followed by Structure and Written Expression, whereas Listening Comprehension represented the weakest skill. This pattern indicates that students were generally more proficient in processing written texts than understanding spoken English.

The observed difference of approximately five points between Reading and Listening indicates that students' English proficiency was not equally developed across language skills. Although the gap appears moderate, it suggests that

students experienced greater difficulty in understanding spoken English than in processing written information. Furthermore, Listening displayed the highest standard deviation among all TOEFL components, indicating that students' listening abilities were more diverse than their performance in Structure and Reading. In contrast, Reading exhibited the lowest standard deviation, suggesting relatively consistent performance among participants.

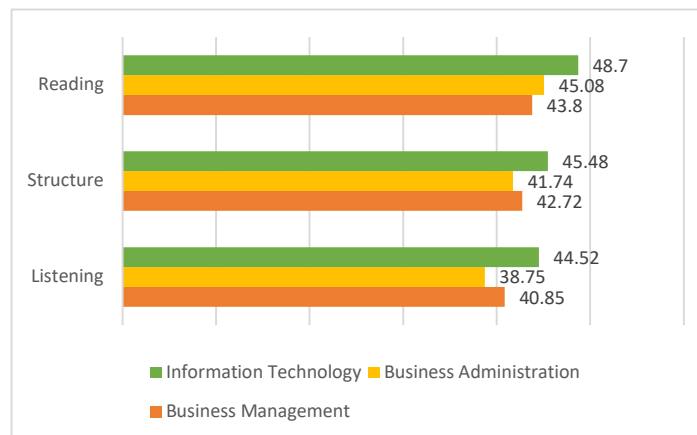
The wide range of minimum and maximum scores across TOEFL components indicates considerable variation in students' entry-level English proficiency. This finding suggests that the cohort included students with diverse language competencies, ranging from relatively proficient learners to those who may require additional English language support during their early stages of study.

Based on commonly used TOEFL proficiency classifications, the average TOEFL score falls within the low proficiency category. This finding indicates that most first-semester vocational students entered higher education with limited English proficiency, suggesting the need for systematic language support during the early stages of their academic programs.

Overall, the findings indicate a clear hierarchy of TOEFL subskills, with Reading Comprehension as the strongest component and Listening Comprehension as the weakest. This entry-level proficiency profile provides a useful baseline for understanding students' language needs prior to ESP instruction.

### ***Comparative TOEFL Skill Profiles across Academic Programs***

To investigate disciplinary differences in English proficiency, students were grouped into Business Management, Business Administration, and Information Technology programs. The results are presented in Figure 1.



*Figure 1. Comparative TOEFL Skill Profiles by Academic Program*

As shown in Table 2, students from the Information Technology program consistently achieved the highest performance across all TOEFL components and

in the overall TOEFL score, indicating stronger English proficiency than students in the two business-related programs.

Among the business-related programs, Business Management students performed slightly better in Listening Comprehension and Structure and Written Expression, whereas Business Administration students demonstrated relatively stronger Reading Comprehension. Despite these differences, both programs recorded overall TOEFL scores within the low proficiency category.

A similar proficiency pattern was observed across all academic programs. Reading Comprehension remained the strongest TOEFL component, whereas Listening Comprehension consistently represented the weakest skill. This finding suggests that students from different disciplines shared comparable strengths and weaknesses in English proficiency despite differences in their overall performance.

The comparison of overall TOEFL scores further highlights disciplinary variation. Information Technology students achieved substantially higher overall TOEFL scores than both Business Management and Business Administration students, indicating that students' academic backgrounds may be associated with differences in entry-level English proficiency.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that vocational students should not be regarded as a homogeneous group in terms of language competence. Instead, distinct TOEFL proficiency profiles emerged across academic programs, suggesting that disciplinary context may influence students' English proficiency prior to receiving ESP instruction.

### ***One-Way ANOVA Results***

To determine whether the observed differences in TOEFL performance among academic programs were statistically significant, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.

*Table 3. One-Way ANOVA Results across Academic Programs*

| Variable                         | F (2,172) | p-value | Partial $\eta^2$ |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|------------------|
| Listening Comprehension          | 11.18     | < .001  | .115             |
| Structure and Written Expression | 6.36      | .002    | .069             |
| Reading Comprehension            | 13.86     | < .001  | .139             |
| Total TOEFL Score                | 14.61     | < .001  | .145             |

*Source: Research data processed using SPSS version 30.0.*

The one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences among Business Management, Business Administration, and Information Technology students across all TOEFL components and overall TOEFL performance. These findings indicate that students' English proficiency varied significantly across academic programs. The effect size analysis showed that academic program had a moderate effect on Listening Comprehension and Structure and Written

Expression, whereas the effects were larger for Reading Comprehension and overall TOEFL performance. These findings suggest that academic program was meaningfully associated with variations in students' entry-level English proficiency, particularly in Reading Comprehension and overall TOEFL performance. Overall, the ANOVA results confirm that vocational students from different academic programs entered higher education with distinct English proficiency profiles. The significant differences identified across all TOEFL components provide statistical evidence that students' English proficiency varied according to their disciplinary backgrounds prior to receiving English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction.

### ***TOEFL Proficiency Classification***

To provide a clearer picture of students' English proficiency levels, TOEFL scores were categorized into low, intermediate, and high proficiency levels. The results are presented in Table 4.

*Table 4. TOEFL Proficiency Levels*

| Proficiency Level      | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Low (<450)             | 133       | 76.0       |
| Intermediate (450–500) | 26        | 14.9       |
| High (>500)            | 16        | 9.1        |

*Source: Research data processed using SPSS version 30.0*

As shown in Table 4, most students were classified in the low proficiency category, while only a relatively small proportion achieved intermediate or high proficiency. This distribution indicates that the English proficiency of first-semester vocational students was predominantly concentrated at the lower proficiency level upon entering higher education.

The predominance of low TOEFL proficiency is consistent with the descriptive findings presented in the previous analyses and suggests that many students require further English language development during the early stages of their academic programs. These findings provide additional evidence for the need to strengthen English instruction before students undertake discipline-specific English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning.

## **4. Discussion**

The present study investigated TOEFL skill profiles among first-semester vocational students and examined disciplinary differences across Business Management, Business Administration, and Information Technology programs. The findings revealed three major patterns. First, Reading Comprehension emerged as the strongest TOEFL component. Second, Listening Comprehension represented the weakest skill. Third, statistically significant differences were identified among academic programs, with Information Technology students

consistently outperforming students from the two business-related programs. Together, these findings provide important insights into students' entry-level English proficiency and demonstrate the value of TOEFL subskill profiling as a diagnostic basis for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum development.

The predominance of students in the low proficiency category complements the descriptive and comparative findings by showing that limited English proficiency characterized most first-semester vocational students at the beginning of their studies.

One of the most notable findings was the consistently higher performance in Reading Comprehension across all academic programs. This finding supports Bachman's (1990) Communicative Language Ability framework, particularly the concept of textual competence, which emphasizes learners' ability to interpret written discourse and construct meaning from texts. While previous studies have similarly reported that reading is often the strongest language skill among EFL learners because of frequent exposure to written materials and the use of metacognitive reading strategies (Hossain, 2025; William Grabe, 2020), the present study extends this evidence by demonstrating that the same pattern was consistently observed across three different vocational disciplines. This suggests that although students' academic backgrounds influenced their overall TOEFL performance, they did not substantially alter the relative hierarchy of TOEFL subskills, with Reading remaining the strongest component.

The stronger Reading performance may be explained by the characteristics of English instruction in many EFL contexts, including Indonesia, where reading activities continue to receive greater emphasis than listening practice. Throughout secondary education, learners are frequently exposed to reading passages, grammar exercises, and written examinations, whereas opportunities to interact with authentic spoken English are comparatively limited. In addition, reading enables learners to regulate their own pace of comprehension, revisit unfamiliar sections, and apply cognitive and metacognitive strategies more effectively than listening, which requires immediate processing of incoming information. These instructional and cognitive factors may collectively explain the consistently stronger Reading performance observed in the present study.

In contrast, Listening Comprehension emerged as the weakest TOEFL component across all academic programs, indicating that students experienced greater difficulty in processing spoken English than written language. Listening is widely recognized as one of the most cognitively demanding language skills because it requires learners to process pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, discourse markers, and contextual information simultaneously under time constraints (Rose, H. & Galloway, 2019). While previous studies have similarly identified listening as a persistent challenge for EFL learners due to the complexity of real-time language processing and limited opportunities to review incoming information (Aryadoust & Jia, 2026; Field, 2019), the present study extends this evidence by showing that this pattern was consistently observed across different

vocational disciplines. This finding suggests that the weakness in listening is not specific to a single academic program but represents a common challenge among first-semester vocational students.

One possible explanation for the relatively low listening performance is students' limited exposure to authentic spoken English before entering higher education. In many EFL contexts, listening instruction remains largely examination-oriented and classroom-based, providing relatively few opportunities for learners to engage with authentic spoken communication. As a result, students may acquire vocabulary and grammatical knowledge through reading activities while continuing to experience difficulties in recognizing pronunciation, processing natural speech, and interpreting meaning in real-time interactions. Previous research has shown that listening comprehension is strongly influenced by learners' exposure to authentic input, familiarity with spoken discourse, and opportunities for meaningful interaction with the target language (Bibby, 2021; Khan & Khan, 2024; Li et al., 2026). These findings underscore the importance of strengthening listening-oriented instruction within ESP programs by incorporating authentic audio materials, workplace communication simulations, professional interactions, and multimedia resources that better reflect real-world communicative demands.

Another important finding concerns the statistically significant differences among Business Management, Business Administration, and Information Technology students. Information Technology students consistently achieved the highest scores in Listening, Structure, Reading, and overall TOEFL performance. The ANOVA results further confirmed that disciplinary background was associated with variations in English proficiency. While previous studies have suggested that students' language development is influenced by disciplinary learning environments and literacy practices (Bartlett, 2026; Wingate, 2016), the present study extends this evidence by demonstrating that these differences are already evident among first-semester vocational students before they receive formal English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction.

This finding suggests that students enter higher education with distinct language proficiency profiles that may reflect differences in their prior learning experiences and disciplinary exposure. Students in technology-related programs, for instance, are more likely to engage with English-language technical resources, digital platforms, software documentation, and specialized texts, creating greater opportunities for incidental language learning. This interpretation is also supported by recent studies indicating that disciplinary practices influence learners' access to English-language resources and professional discourse, thereby contributing to differences in language proficiency development (Airey, 2024; Rose et al., 2020). The effect size estimates further suggest that these disciplinary differences were not only statistically significant but also educationally meaningful, indicating that academic program contributed meaningfully to variations in

students' entry-level English proficiency.

One possible explanation for the superior performance of Information Technology students is their greater exposure to English-language digital environments. Unlike students in many other disciplines, they frequently interact with software interfaces, programming languages, technical manuals, online forums, coding platforms, and digital documentation that are predominantly written in English. Such engagement creates opportunities for incidental language learning, enabling students to acquire vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and reading skills while performing discipline-related tasks rather than through formal language instruction.

Over time, continuous interaction with these resources may contribute to stronger receptive language skills, particularly Reading and Listening. While previous studies have shown that technology-rich learning environments and digital resources facilitate language development by increasing learners' access to authentic English materials and specialized disciplinary discourse (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020; Krasova & Moroz, 2024; Rodney H. Jones ; Christoph A. Hafner, 2021), the present study extends this evidence by demonstrating that these benefits are reflected in higher entry-level TOEFL performance among Information Technology students.

These findings suggest that students' superior English proficiency may not solely reflect individual language aptitude but also the linguistic demands and digital literacy practices embedded within their academic environment. Differences were also observed between Business Management and Business Administration students. Although both programs belong to the broader business domain, Business Management students demonstrated slightly stronger Listening and Structure performance, whereas Business Administration students achieved higher Reading scores. While the differences were relatively modest, they suggest that language development may vary even within closely related disciplines. Such variation may reflect differences in learning experiences, academic tasks, reading habits, and exposure to English-language materials. The findings therefore challenge the assumption that students within the same disciplinary cluster possess identical language needs.

The findings suggest that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum development should be guided by students' actual language proficiency profiles rather than a uniform instructional approach. The variation observed across TOEFL components and academic programs indicates that vocational students possess different strengths, weaknesses, and discipline-specific communication needs. In particular, the consistently low Listening Comprehension scores across all programs highlight listening as a priority area for ESP instruction. Rather than emphasizing grammar and reading activities alone, ESP courses should incorporate authentic spoken English through workplace communication simulations, business meetings, technical briefings, project discussions, customer-service interactions, professional presentations, and other real-world

communication tasks. Such activities have been shown to enhance listening comprehension and better prepare learners for professional communication in workplace settings (Mahdian Rad & Baleghizadeh, 2025; Putri, 2026; Qiu & Xu, 2022; Sadeghi & Richards, 2021). Therefore, tailoring ESP instruction to students' proficiency profiles and future occupational demands may improve the relevance and effectiveness of vocational English education (Taupik, 2025).

The findings have important implications for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum development in vocational higher education. Rather than adopting a uniform instructional approach, ESP programs should be designed based on learners' existing competencies, language needs, and target workplace communication requirements. In this regard, the TOEFL subskill profiles identified in the present study can serve as a form of diagnostic needs analysis, providing evidence of students' strengths and weaknesses to support curriculum planning and instructional decision-making (Mazidah & Masrurroh, 2024).

This interpretation is consistent with recent studies emphasizing that effective ESP curriculum development requires systematic assessment of learners' current abilities and future communicative demands to ensure that instructional content aligns with academic and professional contexts (Stansfield & Abas, 2025; Zafar & Singh, 2026). Consequently, integrating diagnostic TOEFL information into curriculum planning may facilitate more learner-centered, context-sensitive, and evidence-based ESP programs that better address students' academic and workplace communication needs (Putri, 2026).

The findings further suggest that a uniform English curriculum may not adequately address the diverse language needs of vocational students. Instead, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses should be differentiated according to students' disciplinary contexts, existing language proficiency, and future occupational communication demands. Given the consistently low Listening Comprehension scores across all academic programs, listening should become a priority component of ESP instruction through authentic spoken materials, workplace simulations, professional dialogues, presentations, and other interactive communication tasks that reflect real-world professional settings.

The findings also provide practical implications for curriculum designers, vocational institutions, and policymakers. Curriculum designers may use TOEFL subskill profiles to establish discipline-sensitive learning outcomes and prioritize language competencies according to each academic program. Vocational institutions may integrate diagnostic TOEFL assessment into curriculum planning, student placement, and program evaluation to support evidence-based instructional decisions. At the policy level, the findings support the development of flexible ESP curricula that better reflect students' entry-level proficiency and workplace communication needs. Accordingly, Business Management students may benefit from greater emphasis on business communication, presentations, negotiations, and customer interaction; Business Administration students from

administrative communication, report writing, business correspondence, and document management; and Information Technology students from technical documentation, software manuals, project reporting, technical presentations, and digital collaboration.

Finally, this study contributes to the growing body of research on vocational English education by demonstrating that TOEFL subskill profiling can serve not only as a language assessment instrument but also as a valuable diagnostic tool for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum development. Unlike approaches that rely solely on overall TOEFL scores, the analysis of Listening, Structure, and Reading subskills provides more detailed evidence of students' strengths and weaknesses across language competencies. Such diagnostic information enables educators and vocational institutions to make more informed, evidence-based decisions regarding curriculum planning and instructional design (Mazidah & Masruroh, 2024). By identifying students' language needs at the beginning of their academic journey, institutions can develop more targeted, discipline-sensitive, and relevant English curricula that better prepare learners for academic success and future professional communication.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study examined the TOEFL skill profiles of first-semester vocational students and their implications for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum development. The findings showed that Reading Comprehension was the strongest TOEFL component, whereas Listening Comprehension represented the weakest skill. Significant differences were also identified among academic programs, with Information Technology students demonstrating higher TOEFL performance than students in Business Management and Business Administration.

The findings demonstrate that analyzing TOEFL subskills provides richer diagnostic information than relying solely on overall TOEFL scores, thereby offering a stronger basis for evidence-based and discipline-sensitive ESP curriculum development. TOEFL subskill profiling can therefore serve as a practical diagnostic tool for identifying students' language strengths and weaknesses and informing curriculum planning in vocational higher education.

This study is limited to a single cohort of first-semester students from one vocational institution and relies on secondary institutional TOEFL data. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted within this context and may not be generalizable to other vocational institutions or educational settings.

Vocational institutions are encouraged to incorporate TOEFL subskill profiles into ESP needs analysis and curriculum planning, with particular emphasis on strengthening listening competence through authentic and discipline-related learning activities. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples, include additional vocational disciplines, and examine changes in students' language proficiency over time. Further studies may also investigate the implementation of diagnostic TOEFL subskill profiling in ESP curriculum design

and evaluate its impact on students' academic performance and workplace communication readiness.

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State the contributing parties or institutions which help your research. It is important to acknowledge those who help you in funding, research facilities, or meaningful suggestions in improving your article. If your article has been presented in a seminar or conference, you can also mention the forum in this section.

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