Research Article

ENGLISH LEARNING NEEDS OF ISLAMIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Abstract

Prospective teachers of madrasah ibtidaiyah (Islamic elementary schools) increasingly need English for their studies and future work, particularly as Indonesia prepares to make English a compulsory subject in primary schools. This study identifies the English learning needs, including target needs and learning needs, of students in the Islamic Elementary School Teacher Education (PGMI) program at UIN Alauddin Makassar. A quantitative descriptive design was used. A 47-item Likert-scale questionnaire was completed online by 15 PGMI students, and the responses were analysed using frequencies, the percentage of agreement, medians and means. Students showed positive attitudes and motivation: 66.7% enjoyed learning English and the same proportion were motivated to master it for their future. They recognised the need for formal writing (60%), technical terms (60%) and polite, formal English (60%), and they preferred real examples (66.7%), interactive teaching (60%) and direct practice (53.3%). Their self-assessment of all skills, however, was predominantly neutral (53.3–66.7%), and fewer than half clearly reported specific lacks. The findings suggest that English instruction for PGMI students would benefit from an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) orientation that develops pedagogical vocabulary, formal writing and classroom communication through practical tasks. Because the data come from 15 students and rely on self-report, they should be treated as exploratory and complemented by interviews and an analysis of the English used by elementary school teachers.

Keywords: *English for Specific Purposes; Islamic Elementary School Teacher Education; Needs Analysis; Teacher Education*

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of higher education, English has become a vital tool for academic and professional advancement (Richards, 2001). For students in teacher education programs, particularly those in the Islamic Elementary School Teacher Education Study program, English is useful not only for comprehending international educational

literature but also for preparing to teach in elementary classrooms in which English is gaining a more prominent place. Ensuring that language instruction is relevant to their specific field is therefore important.

The Indonesian policy context makes this need more pressing. Indonesia has one of the largest populations of young learners of English in the world, and the status of English in elementary schools has shifted several times, between a local-content subject and an optional subject (Zein, 2017). Primary English teachers have often lacked training in teaching young learners and worked without a clear policy basis or professional support (Diyanti et al., 2020). The government has now announced that English will become a compulsory subject in primary schools from Grade 3 starting in 2027 (Radio Republik Indonesia, 2026). PGMI graduates, who are prepared as classroom teachers in madrasah ibtidaiyah, may therefore be expected to teach or support English at the elementary level, in addition to using English for their own professional development. Teaching English to young learners poses particular challenges, including limited teacher proficiency and difficulties in teaching speaking and grammar (Copland et al., 2014).

General English courses, however, often fail to address the competencies required by specific disciplines. In teacher education, students need to comprehend pedagogical texts, write formal reports, and communicate professionally with students, parents and colleagues. Needs analyses in Indonesian higher education have mostly examined students of health-related programs, such as public health (Arroyyani et al., 2022), midwifery (Hariyanto et al., 2022) and medicine, midwifery and pharmacy (Hidayati & Meisani, 2023), and little is known about the English needs of prospective elementary school teachers.

This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a needs analysis. As highlighted by Richards (2001), identifying learners' needs is a crucial step in designing a suitable language curriculum. The study was conducted in the context of the English for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) course taken by the Islamic Elementary School Teacher Education Study program students; since the Islamic Elementary School Teacher Education Study program graduates teach several subjects, including mathematics and science, the implications for this course are considered in the discussion. The study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the target needs (necessities) of PGMI students in learning English?

RQ2. How do the students assess their current English proficiency, and what are their lacks?

RQ3. What are the students' learning preferences, expectations of the ESP course and perceptions of their learning environment?

The findings are intended to serve as a foundation for designing learning strategies and materials that align with the professional realities of future madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Needs Analysis in English for Specific Purposes

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach to language teaching in which decisions about content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) distinguish target needs, what learners need to do in the target situation, from learning needs, how learners learn best. Target needs comprise necessities, the demands of the target situation; lacks, the gap between learners' current proficiency and these demands; and wants, what learners themselves feel they need. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) extend the analysis to learners' present situation and the learning environment, and Anthony (2018) places needs analysis at the base of ESP course design, together with learning objectives, materials and evaluation. For students in higher education, needs analysis also involves the academic genres and skills required in their disciplines (Hyland, 2006). Finally, Nation (2007) argues that a balanced course should provide meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning and fluency development, which offers a useful lens for interpreting learners' preferences for practice-based learning.

English in Indonesian Elementary Education

Elementary English education in Indonesia has undergone major policy changes, which have affected class sizes, instructional time and the status of teachers (Zein, 2017). A survey of 44 primary English teachers found that most held formal qualifications in English teaching but very few had received training in teaching young learners, and that the absence of a clear policy created job insecurity and unequal professional support (Diyanti et al., 2020). International research shows similar challenges, including large classes, limited teacher proficiency and difficulties in teaching speaking and grammar (Copland et al., 2014). These studies suggest that prospective elementary school teachers need both personal English proficiency and the ability to use simple classroom English with children.

Previous Needs Analyses in Indonesian Higher Education

Needs analyses of Indonesian university students in other fields offer points of comparison. Public health students regarded writing as the most important skill and reported low confidence in grammar (Arroyyani et al., 2022). Midwifery students considered English very useful and wanted English teaching to emphasise speaking and communication with patients (Hariyanto et al., 2022), and medical, midwifery and pharmacy students needed English to participate in and understand professional discourse (Hidayati & Meisani, 2023). No comparable study of PGMI students was found.

METHOD

Research Design and Participants

This research employs a quantitative descriptive approach. The primary goal is to describe the current state of students' needs and proficiency levels numerically and interpret these findings to provide a clear picture of the curriculum requirements. The population comprises students from the Islamic Elementary School Teacher Education (PGMI) program at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Alauddin Makassar. The questionnaire link was distributed to 116 the Islamic Elementary School Teacher Education Study program students in batch 2025, and 89 completed it (76,72). The participation was voluntary, and add the participants' gender, age and whether they had already taken an English course at university.

Instrument

Data collection was conducted using a structured online questionnaire (Google Forms) of 47 statements. The instrument assessed eight dimensions: professional information (5 items), personal background (9 items), self-perceived English proficiency (6 items), learners' lacks (5 items), learning preferences (7 items), professional communication needs (5 items), expectations of the ESP course (5 items), and the learning environment (5 items). The items were measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items were adapted from and reviewed by the course lecturer before use. The questionnaire was administered in Indonesian/English. Internal consistency was report Cronbach's alpha per section, noting the limits of reliability estimates with n = 15. Four pairs of items addressed similar content (items 3 and 36, 5 and 34, 9 and 38, and 11 and 30) and

are used as an informal check on response consistency. All items were worded so that agreement indicates a need, a lack or a positive perception.

Data Analysis

Responses were tabulated into frequencies and percentages for each item. Because Likert responses are ordinal and the sample is small, the percentage of agreement (agree and strongly agree combined) and the median were used as the main indicators, and means are reported for comparison. An item was treated as a clearly expressed need when at least half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed and the median was 4. The results are presented by questionnaire section and summarised in Table 9.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Professional information

Table 1 shows students' perceptions of the role of English in their studies and future profession.

Table 1. Professional information

No.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Agree (%)	Mdn	Mean
1	I often use English in my study or work activities.	0.0	13.3	53.3	26.7	6.7	33.3	3	3.27
2	I need English to read and understand professional or academic texts.	0.0	6.7	46.7	40.0	6.7	46.7	3	3.47
3	I need English to write reports, papers, or formal correspondence.	0.0	13.3	26.7	46.7	13.3	60.0	4	3.60
4	I will use English routinely in my future profession.	0.0	6.7	46.7	40.0	6.7	46.7	3	3.47
5	The English I need must include technical or field-specific vocabulary.	0.0	6.7	40.0	46.7	6.7	53.3	4	3.53

Note. n = 15. Values are percentages of respondents (one respondent = 6.7%). SD = strongly disagree (1); D = disagree (2); N = neutral (3); A = agree (4); SA = strongly agree (5). Agree = A + SA. Mdn = median. Medians and means were calculated from the frequencies.

The use of English among students in their study or work activities is not yet dominant: 53.3% chose the neutral option, 33.3% agreed or strongly agreed, and 13.3% disagreed. Regarding reading, 46.7% were neutral and 46.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they need English to comprehend professional or academic texts, which indicates that

awareness of English as a tool for academic literacy exists but that many students are not fully convinced of its immediate urgency. The need for formal writing showed a stronger consensus: 60% agreed or strongly agreed that they need English to write reports, papers or formal correspondence, although 13.3% disagreed. Expectations of future use were more uncertain, with 46.7% neutral and 46.7% agreeing that they would use English routinely in their profession. 53.3% agreed or strongly agreed that their English instruction must include technical or field-specific vocabulary, which supports the need for an ESP curriculum.

Personal background

Table 2 presents students' learning experiences, attitudes and motivation.

Table 2. Personal background

No.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Agree (%)	Mdn	Mean
6	I have had a positive experience learning English previously.	6.7	6.7	40.0	46.7	0.0	46.7	3	3.27
7	My cultural background influences how I learn English.	0.0	20.0	40.0	33.3	6.7	40.0	3	3.27
8	I am taking this course to improve my English skills in my field of study or work.	0.0	13.3	33.3	46.7	6.7	53.3	4	3.47
9	I hope this course helps me communicate better in my field.	0.0	13.3	26.7	46.7	13.3	60.0	4	3.60
10	I enjoy learning English and think it is important.	0.0	6.7	26.7	46.7	20.0	66.7	4	3.80
11	I prefer learning through discussion or group work.	0.0	0.0	66.7	26.7	6.7	33.3	3	3.40
12	I often find it difficult to understand English grammar.	0.0	0.0	60.0	26.7	13.3	40.0	3	3.53
13	I want to learn more about the culture of English speakers.	0.0	0.0	40.0	53.3	6.7	60.0	4	3.67
14	I am motivated to master English for my future.	0.0	0.0	33.3	40.0	26.7	66.7	4	3.93

Note. n = 15. Values are percentages of respondents (one respondent = 6.7%). SD = strongly disagree (1); D = disagree (2); N = neutral (3); A = agree (4); SA = strongly agree (5). Agree = A + SA. Mdn = median. Medians and means were calculated from the frequencies.

The affective aspect of learning shows promising results. 66.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoy learning English and consider it important, and the same proportion were motivated to master English for their future. 60% hoped that the course would help them communicate better in their field, and 60% wanted to learn more about the culture of English speakers. The motivation for taking the course appears to be largely instrumental: 53.3% were taking it to improve their English skills for their study or work, although 13.3%

disagreed. Nearly half of the students (46.7%) had had positive experiences of learning English, and opinions on the influence of cultural background were divided. Students showed a surprising tendency towards neutrality about group work (66.7% neutral). Grammar remains a challenge, as 40% agreed or strongly agreed that they often find it difficult and no student disagreed.

Self-perceived English proficiency

Table 3 shows students' self-assessment of their English skills.

Table 3. Self-perceived English proficiency

No.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Agree (%)	Mdn	Mean
15	My speaking ability is good enough for daily conversation.	13.3	6.7	60.0	20.0	0.0	20.0	3	2.87
16	I can understand lectures, presentations, or conversations in English.	6.7	6.7	53.3	26.7	6.7	33.3	3	3.20
17	I am able to read and understand academic or professional texts in English.	0.0	20.0	60.0	20.0	0.0	20.0	3	3.00
18	I am able to write formal reports, essays, or emails in English.	0.0	13.3	66.7	20.0	0.0	20.0	3	3.07
19	I have sufficient vocabulary in my field of study or work.	0.0	13.3	60.0	26.7	0.0	26.7	3	3.13
20	My English pronunciation is clear enough and easy to understand.	0.0	13.3	60.0	26.7	0.0	26.7	3	3.13

Note. n = 15. Values are percentages of respondents (one respondent = 6.7%). SD = strongly disagree (1); D = disagree (2); N = neutral (3); A = agree (4); SA = strongly agree (5). Agree = A + SA. Mdn = median. Medians and means were calculated from the frequencies.

Self-confidence in English skills appears to be low. For every proficiency item, between 53.3% and 66.7% of students chose the neutral option, and all means were close to the scale midpoint. Only 20% agreed that their speaking skills were sufficient for daily conversation, while 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 33.3% agreed or strongly agreed that they could understand lectures or presentations. Reading academic texts showed an even split, with 20% agreeing and 20% disagreeing, and writing showed the highest neutrality (66.7%), with only 20% agreeing that they could write formal documents. 26.7% considered their field vocabulary sufficient and 26.7% considered their pronunciation clear. These results indicate that most students were uncertain about their proficiency; possible explanations are considered in the Discussion.

Learners' lacks

Table 4 presents the difficulties students reported.

Table 4. Learners' lacks

No.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Agree (%)	Mdn	Mean
21	I need to improve my grammar and vocabulary to support my study/work needs.	0.0	0.0	53.3	33.3	13.3	46.7	3	3.60
22	There is a big gap between my current English proficiency and what is needed in my field.	0.0	0.0	60.0	33.3	6.7	40.0	3	3.47
23	I struggle to speak English fluently in academic or professional contexts.	6.7	0.0	66.7	26.7	0.0	26.7	3	3.13
24	I have difficulty understanding native English speakers.	6.7	0.0	46.7	46.7	0.0	46.7	3	3.33
25	My writing skills are not sufficient for reports or academic papers.	0.0	6.7	53.3	40.0	0.0	40.0	3	3.33

Note. n = 15. Values are percentages of respondents (one respondent = 6.7%). SD = strongly disagree (1); D = disagree (2); N = neutral (3); A = agree (4); SA = strongly agree (5). Agree = A + SA. Mdn = median. Medians and means were calculated from the frequencies.

Students acknowledged several lacks. 46.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they need to improve their grammar and vocabulary, 46.7% had difficulty understanding native English speakers, and 40% agreed that their writing was not yet sufficient for academic tasks. 40% perceived a big gap between their current proficiency and the demands of their field, and 26.7% reported struggling to speak fluently in formal contexts. As in the proficiency section, however, neutral responses were frequent (46.7% to 66.7%), and very few students disagreed with any statement about their lacks. None of the lacks items met the criterion for a clearly expressed need. Because all items were worded so that agreement indicates a difficulty, the low agreement here, together with the mostly neutral self-ratings in Table 3, suggests that many students were uncertain about their own abilities rather than clearly aware of specific weaknesses.

Learning preferences

Table 5 shows students' preferred learning methods and habits.

Table 5. Learning preferences

No.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Agree (%)	Mdn	Mean
26	I hope the lecturer uses interactive teaching methods.	0.0	0.0	40.0	46.7	13.3	60.0	4	3.73
27	I understand the material better when the lecturer provides real examples.	0.0	0.0	33.3	60.0	6.7	66.7	4	3.73
28	I enjoy it when learning activities involve direct practice.	0.0	0.0	46.7	33.3	20.0	53.3	4	3.73
29	I prefer to learn through real activities and simulations.	0.0	6.7	46.7	46.7	0.0	46.7	3	3.40
30	I learn better through discussion and group work.	0.0	13.3	53.3	33.3	0.0	33.3	3	3.20
31	I often review English lessons outside of class.	0.0	0.0	60.0	40.0	0.0	40.0	3	3.40
32	I often use videos, apps, or the internet to learn English.	0.0	6.7	40.0	40.0	13.3	53.3	4	3.60

Note. n = 15. Values are percentages of respondents (one respondent = 6.7%). SD = strongly disagree (1); D = disagree (2); N = neutral (3); A = agree (4); SA = strongly agree (5). Agree = A + SA. Mdn = median. Medians and means were calculated from the frequencies.

Contextualization is key to students' comprehension: 66.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they understand better when the lecturer gives real examples, and 60% hoped the lecturer would use interactive teaching methods, with no student disagreeing. 53.3% enjoyed activities involving direct practice and 46.7% preferred real activities and simulations. Collaborative learning was viewed less favourably, with 33.3% agreeing that they learn better through discussion and group work and 13.3% disagreeing. Digital autonomy is a bright spot: 53.3% often used videos, apps or the internet to learn English, whereas 40% often reviewed their lessons outside class.

Professional communication needs

Table 6 presents students' needs for communication in their future profession.

Table 6. Professional communication needs

No.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Agree (%)	Mdn	Mean
33	I need to learn how to communicate professionally in my field.	0.0	0.0	46.7	40.0	13.3	53.3	4	3.67
34	I need to master the technical terms used in my field.	0.0	0.0	40.0	46.7	13.3	60.0	4	3.73
35	I need to use polite and formal English when speaking with supervisors or clients.	0.0	0.0	40.0	46.7	13.3	60.0	4	3.73
36	I need to understand how to write formal reports or documents in English.	0.0	0.0	46.7	46.7	6.7	53.3	4	3.60
37	I need to understand how professionals in my field interact using English.	0.0	0.0	46.7	40.0	13.3	53.3	4	3.67

Note. n = 15. Values are percentages of respondents (one respondent = 6.7%). SD = strongly disagree (1); D = disagree (2); N = neutral (3); A = agree (4); SA = strongly agree (5). Agree = A + SA. Mdn = median. Medians and means were calculated from the frequencies.

No student disagreed with any of the professional communication items. 60% agreed or strongly agreed that they need to master the technical terms used in their field and to use polite and formal English with supervisors or clients, and 53.3% that they need to learn to communicate professionally, to write formal reports or documents, and to understand how professionals in their field interact in English. These results suggest that the curriculum should address not only grammatical correctness but also technical vocabulary, register and models of professional interaction.

Expectations of the ESP course

Table 7 shows students' expectations of the ESP course.

Table 7. Expectations of the ESP course

No.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Agree (%)	Mdn	Mean
38	I hope this course helps me communicate effectively in my field.	0.0	6.7	46.7	40.0	6.7	46.7	3	3.47
39	I want this course to focus on skills relevant to my studies/work.	0.0	6.7	40.0	46.7	6.7	53.3	4	3.53
40	I want practical materials that are relevant to the world of work.	0.0	0.0	53.3	40.0	6.7	46.7	3	3.53
41	The topics in this course must be relevant to real-life situations in my field.	0.0	0.0	46.7	46.7	6.7	53.3	4	3.60
42	I am confident that this ESP course will be beneficial for my future career.	0.0	0.0	60.0	33.3	6.7	40.0	3	3.47

Note. n = 15. Values are percentages of respondents (one respondent = 6.7%). SD = strongly disagree (1); D = disagree (2); N = neutral (3); A = agree (4); SA = strongly agree (5). Agree = A + SA. Mdn = median. Medians and means were calculated from the frequencies.

Students' expectations of the course were positive but cautious. 53.3% agreed or strongly agreed that the course should focus on skills relevant to their studies or work and that its topics must be relevant to real-life situations in their field. 46.7% hoped that the course would help them communicate effectively and wanted practical materials relevant to the world of work. 40% were confident that the course would benefit their future career, while 60% remained neutral, suggesting that many students were waiting to experience the course before forming a strong conviction.

Learning environment

Table 8 presents students' perceptions of their learning environment.

Table 8. Learning environment

No.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Agree (%)	Mdn	Mean
43	The classroom environment supports the English learning process well.	0.0	6.7	53.3	40.0	0.0	40.0	3	3.33
44	Facilities and learning resources (e.g., LCD, internet, books) are adequate.	0.0	0.0	53.3	40.0	6.7	46.7	3	3.53
45	The English class schedule suits my study time.	0.0	0.0	53.3	40.0	6.7	46.7	3	3.53
46	The duration of each meeting is sufficient to understand the material.	0.0	0.0	60.0	33.3	6.7	40.0	3	3.47
47	I have the opportunity to practice English outside of class.	0.0	6.7	46.7	33.3	13.3	46.7	3	3.53

Note. n = 15. Values are percentages of respondents (one respondent = 6.7%). SD = strongly disagree (1); D = disagree (2); N = neutral (3); A = agree (4); SA = strongly agree (5). Agree = A + SA. Mdn = median. Medians and means were calculated from the frequencies.

Students' perceptions of the learning environment were largely neutral. 40% agreed that the classroom environment is supportive, and 46.7% agreed or strongly agreed that facilities and learning resources are adequate and that the class schedule suits their study time. 40% considered the duration of each meeting sufficient, and 46.7% reported having opportunities to practise English outside class. The environment is therefore not seen as a major hindrance, although there is room to make it more conducive to active language learning.

Overview and response consistency

Table 9 summarises the responses by section and shows where students' needs were most clearly expressed.

Table 9. Overview of responses by questionnaire section

Section	Items	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Clear needs
Professional information	5	48.0	42.7	9.3	2
Personal background	9	51.9	40.7	7.4	5
Self-perceived English proficiency	6	24.4	60.0	15.6	0
Learners' lacks	5	40.0	56.0	4.0	0
Learning preferences	7	50.5	45.7	3.8	4
Professional communication needs	5	56.0	44.0	0.0	5
Expectations of the ESP course	5	48.0	49.3	2.7	2
Learning environment	5	44.0	53.3	2.7	0

Note. Percentages are averages across the items in each section. Clear needs = items with at least 50% agreement and a median of 4.

Eighteen of the 47 items met the criterion for a clearly expressed need (at least 50% agreement and a median of 4). All five professional communication items met it, with the highest agreement for mastering technical terms (60%) and using polite and formal English with supervisors or clients (60%). Five personal background items, concerning attitudes, motivation and expectations, and four learning preference items, concerning real examples (66.7%), interactive teaching (60%), direct practice (53.3%) and digital resources (53.3%), also met it. No proficiency, lacks or environment item met the criterion. Neutral responses averaged between 40.7% (personal background) and 60% (proficiency) per section, and disagreement was rare in every section except proficiency (15.6%).

The four pairs of similar items produced broadly consistent results. Agreement was 60% and 53.3% for the two formal writing items (items 3 and 36), 53.3% and 60% for the two technical vocabulary items (items 5 and 34), and 33.3% for both group work items (items 11 and 30). The two items on communicating in the field differed more (60% for item 9 and 46.7% for item 38), possibly because item 9 concerned communicating better and item 38 communicating effectively in the course context. With 15 respondents, a difference of one or two students produces such gaps, so the responses can be regarded as reasonably consistent.

Discussion

The results of this needs analysis highlight a contrast between students' positive attitudes and their uncertain view of their own readiness. Interpreting these findings through Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) framework of target needs and learning needs reveals several implications for curriculum design.

First, the necessities that students recognised most clearly concern professional communication: technical terms, polite and formal English, formal writing and models of professional interaction. These are the needs of a teacher who must read educational materials, write reports and communicate with students, parents and colleagues. The lacks, by contrast, were not clearly expressed. Neutral responses dominated the self-assessment of speaking (60%) and writing (66.7%) and most lacks items. This neutrality may reflect a "hidden lack", in which students are unsure of their proficiency because they have rarely used English in authentic professional contexts, but it may also reflect the midpoint option of the scale, unclear item wording, low involvement, or limited knowledge of the target situation. The questionnaire data cannot distinguish between these explanations, so follow-up interviews would be needed to clarify what neutral responses mean for these students.

Second, students' learning preferences point to practical and contextualised instruction. 66.7% understood the material better with real examples, 60% wanted interactive teaching, and 53.3% enjoyed direct practice, while group work was less popular (33.3%). This aligns with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, in which language is learned through meaningful use (Richards, 2006), and with Nation's (2007) call for meaning-focused output and fluency development. For future madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers, simulated classroom tasks, such as micro-teaching segments in English, giving instructions to children and writing short reports or lesson materials, would connect these preferences to their professional needs.

Third, the findings can be compared with needs analyses of other Indonesian university students. As with public health students (Arroyyani et al., 2022), PGMI students recognised the importance of formal writing and found grammar challenging (40%). Unlike midwifery and medical students, who clearly identified communication with patients and professional discourse as their main target situation (Hariyanto et al., 2022; Hidayati & Meisani, 2023), PGMI students expressed uncertainty about their future use of English (46.7% agreement). This uncertainty is understandable given the shifting status of English in Indonesian elementary schools (Zein, 2017; Diyanti et al., 2020), but it may change as

English becomes a compulsory primary subject from 2027 (Radio Republik Indonesia, 2026). Finally, students showed high motivation (66.7%), interest in the culture of English speakers (60%) and frequent use of digital resources (53.3%), which suggests that authentic materials and digital media, such as videos of English-speaking teachers, can sustain engagement.

For the English for STEM course in which this study was conducted, these findings suggest focusing on the language that PGMI graduates will use when teaching mathematics and science to children, such as giving instructions for simple experiments, naming shapes, numbers and quantities, and describing observations, taught through real examples and practice. Because the questionnaire did not include STEM-specific items, these suggestions need to be examined in future research.

CONCLUSION

This exploratory needs analysis of 15 PGMI students at UIN Alauddin Makassar shows that the students hold positive attitudes towards English and are motivated to master it. The needs they recognised most clearly concern professional communication, including technical terms, polite and formal English, formal writing and models of professional interaction, and they prefer real examples, interactive teaching and direct practice. Their self-assessment of English skills and their views on specific lacks were, however, predominantly neutral, which indicates uncertainty about their own proficiency and about the English their future work will require.

These findings suggest that English instruction for PGMI students would benefit from an ESP orientation that integrates pedagogical vocabulary, formal writing for the teaching profession and classroom communication, taught through practical tasks that reflect the reality of Islamic elementary education. The study has several limitations. It involved 15 self-selected students from one program, relied on self-reported questionnaire data, and did not report the reliability or validity of the instrument. All items were worded positively, which may have encouraged acquiescent responding, and the necessities were inferred from students' perceptions without data from the target situation. The current English course was not evaluated, so the study cannot show whether it meets students' needs. Future research should involve larger samples, combine questionnaires with interviews and proficiency tests, include the perspectives of lecturers and practising madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers, and include items on the English needed for teaching mathematics and science.

AI USE AND DISCLOSURE

The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to support language refinement, improve the organization of ideas, and enhance the readability of the manuscript. The tool was also used to assist in identifying potentially relevant academic literature. All AI-generated suggestions were critically evaluated, and relevant references were verified against their original sources. The authors independently reviewed and revised the manuscript and assume full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the published work.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND INFORMED CONSENT

Participation in the study was voluntary. The students were informed about the purpose of the research before completing the online questionnaire, and their responses were collected and reported anonymously and used only for academic purposes.

CRediT AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

- Muh Haidir: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing – original draft.
- Muhammad Fawwas Putra Iskandar: Data curation, Formal analysis, Visualization, Writing – original draft.
- Muh Ikhsan Darwis: Investigation, Resources, Validation, Writing – review & editing.
- Reza Ananda Febrian: Supervision, Project administration, Writing – review & editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The questionnaire and the anonymised response data are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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