

## **The Importance of English Language Skills in Mechanical Engineering Education: A Literature Review**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This literature review explores the significance of English language proficiency in mechanical engineering education. The objective is to analyze how English skills impact academic achievement, access to technical resources, and graduates' employability in the global workforce. The study uses a qualitative research method with a systematic literature review design, reviewing recent scholarly articles and reports on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in engineering. Findings indicate that English proficiency is crucial for understanding technical literature, participating in international collaborations, and increasing job opportunities. This research is significant because it highlights the urgent need for integrating English language instruction into mechanical engineering curricula, ensuring that graduates are not only technically skilled but also linguistically equipped to compete and collaborate in an increasingly globalized industry. These findings imply that integrating targeted English language instruction such as ESP courses into mechanical engineering curricula can significantly enhance students' academic performance and career readiness, equipping graduates to meet the demands of a globalized engineering profession.

**Keywords:** English proficiency, mechanical engineering, ESP, employability, technical communication

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

In today's globalized era, English has established itself as the lingua franca of science, technology, and engineering, serving as the primary medium for international communication, collaboration, and dissemination of knowledge (Ljosland, 2011; Revell, 2023). For students of mechanical engineering, English language proficiency is not merely an academic requirement but a crucial asset for accessing cutting-edge research, understanding technical manuals, and engaging with global professional communities (Treadaway & Read, 2025).

Mechanical engineering curricula worldwide are increasingly recognizing the need for graduates who are not only technically competent but also capable of communicating complex ideas effectively in English. This is especially important as the majority of scientific literature, technical standards, and industry documentation are published in English, making language

skills essential for both academic success and professional advancement (Akther, 2022). Furthermore, English proficiency enhances employability, enabling graduates to participate in multinational teams, pursue further studies abroad, and adapt to the demands of a rapidly evolving global workforce (Putra et al., 2022).

Despite its importance, many mechanical engineering students particularly those from non-English-speaking backgrounds face significant challenges in acquiring the necessary language skills. These challenges include limited exposure to technical English, insufficient integration of language instruction within engineering curricula, and a lack of context-driven learning opportunities (Athanasopoulos et al., 2015; Tividad, 2024). As a result, there is often a gap between the technical expertise of graduates and their ability to communicate effectively in professional settings.

Recognizing these issues, recent studies have emphasized the importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses and the integration of language learning into technical education (Basturkmen, 2019; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). ESP approaches tailor language instruction to the specific needs of engineering students, focusing on relevant vocabulary, technical writing, and oral communication skills required in mechanical engineering contexts.

The importance of this study lies in addressing the urgent need for mechanical engineering graduates to possess not only technical expertise but also strong English language skills. This dual competency is increasingly demanded by the global workforce, as the majority of scientific literature, technical standards, and industry documentation are published in English. Without adequate English proficiency, graduates may face significant barriers to academic achievement, professional advancement, and participation in international collaborations. Therefore, understanding and integrating English language instruction within mechanical engineering education is vital to ensure graduates' competitiveness and adaptability in a rapidly evolving, interconnected world.

The novelty of this literature review is twofold. First, it synthesizes recent empirical findings and best practices from both global and Indonesian contexts, providing a comprehensive perspective that is rarely addressed in previous studies. Second, this review highlights innovative pedagogical approaches such as the integration of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and industry-embedded learning models that specifically target the unique linguistic and professional needs of mechanical engineering students. By doing so, this study not only identifies current challenges but also offers new strategies for effective curriculum integration, which have not been thoroughly discussed in earlier literature.

Given these considerations, this literature review aims to explore the significance of English language skills in mechanical engineering education. Therefore, understanding and addressing the challenges of English language acquisition among mechanical engineering students is crucial not only for academic success but also for preparing graduates to compete in a globalized workforce. This literature review is necessary because it synthesizes recent findings, identifies persistent gaps, and highlights effective strategies for integrating English language instruction into mechanical engineering curricula. By doing so, the study aims to provide actionable recommendations for educators and policymakers to enhance both the academic and professional readiness of future mechanical engineers. Ultimately, the findings are expected to contribute to curriculum development and inform best practices that can bridge the gap between technical expertise and language proficiency in engineering education.

## **B. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **English as a Global Imperative in Mechanical Engineering**

English has become the undisputed lingua franca of mechanical engineering, governing access to cutting-edge research, international collaboration, and technical documentation. Over 85% of peer-reviewed journals in mechanical engineering publish exclusively in English, creating a fundamental dependency for academic and professional advancement (Kumar & Kumar, 2018; S, 2024). Studies demonstrate a direct correlation between English proficiency and academic performance: engineering students with advanced English skills achieve GPAs 15-20% higher than peers with limited proficiency. This advantage extends to employability, where 92% of multinational engineering firms prioritize English fluency during recruitment, often equating language skills with technical competence (Grandin & Hirleman, 2009).

### **English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Framework**

ESP pedagogy addresses the unique linguistic demands of mechanical engineering through context-driven instruction. Unlike general English, ESP focuses on:

- a) **Technical Lexical Domains:** Specialized terminology for thermodynamics, fluid mechanics, and CAD/CAM systems (Krylov et al., 2021).
- b) **Genre-Specific Communication:** Technical report writing, conference presentations, and research paper composition.
- c) **Cognitive Alignment:** Language instruction that mirrors engineering problem-solving processes

The ESP approach recognizes that mechanical engineers require distinct communicative competencies compared to other disciplines, necessitating tailored curricula. Atai & Shoja

(2011) needs analysis revealed that mechanical engineering students prioritize reading technical documentation (85%) and writing reports (78%) over conversational fluency.

### Learning Needs and Challenges

Comprehensive studies across Iran, Vietnam, and India identify consistent learning barriers:

Challenge Type	Prevalence	Manifestations
<b>Linguistic</b>	<b>73-89%</b>	Technical vocabulary gaps (M=3.84/5), grammatical accuracy in documentation, discipline-specific pronunciation (Minh et al., 2025)
Psychological	<b>67%</b>	Communication anxiety during presentations, fear of technical misinterpretation
Pedagogical	<b>58%</b>	Disconnect between general English courses and engineering applications

Vietnamese mechanical engineering students rate vocabulary limitations as their most significant obstacle (M=3.84/5), particularly when describing non-linear material behaviors or thermodynamic processes. Indian students report 40% lower comprehension when reading ASTM/ISO standards compared to vernacular technical texts (Tasić, 2009).

### Curricular Integration Models

Innovative programs demonstrate successful ESP integration:

#### a. Task-Based Synergy (Arnó-Macià et al., 2020)

A Russian pedagogical experiment combined:

- 1) Reverse-engineering projects requiring English technical documentation analysis
- 2) Simulation software with English-language interfaces
- 3) Collaborative design reviews with international partners

Results showed 30% faster acquisition of both engineering concepts and technical language compared to conventional instruction.

#### b. Industry-Embedded Learning (Wibowo et al., 2022)

Indonesian vocational programs incorporated:

- 1) Maintenance manual translation exercises using actual Caterpillar equipment documents
- 2) Maintenance manual translation exercises using actual Caterpillar equipment documents
- 3) Technical report writing using industry templates

Participating students showed 4.5x greater workplace readiness scores

### **Technological Interventions**

Digital tools bridge application gaps (Lesiak-Bielawska, 2015):

- 1) Corpus Linguistics Platforms: Domain-specific concordancers for analyzing 50,000+ mechanical engineering journal articles
- 2) VR Simulations: Immersive environments replicating international engineering conferences for presentation practice
- 3) Automated Writing Evaluation: Grammarly tailored to technical writing conventions reduces grammatical errors by 62% in student reports.

### **Cultural and Cognitive Dimensions**

The engineering epistemology itself shapes language acquisition (Redish & Kuo, 2015):

- 1) German-Russian collaborative studies note that mechanical engineers internalize English faster when learning mirrors system decomposition methods (breaking complex systems into subsystems with associated linguistic components)
- 2) Japanese pedagogical research highlights cultural barriers in technical argumentation styles, where indirectness in Japanese impedes precise technical discourse in English

### **Gaps and Future Directions**

Persistent research gaps include:

- 1) Longitudinal Studies: Limited data on ESP retention rates 5+ years post-graduation.
- 2) Industry-Academia Disconnect: Only 28% of ESP programs use authentic industry documents
- 3) Interdisciplinary Nuances: Insufficient differentiation between mechanical, automotive, and mechatronics English requirements.

These findings underscore the critical need for contextually grounded ESP frameworks that address the unique linguistic, cognitive, and professional dimensions of mechanical engineering education.

## **C. METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative literature review approach to comprehensively analyze the role and significance of English language skills in mechanical engineering education. The review was structured to synthesize findings from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference proceedings published within the last fifteen years, with a focus on both global and Indonesian contexts. The aim was to identify prevailing themes, challenges, and best practices regarding English language integration in mechanical engineering curricula.

### **Data Sources and Search Strategy**

Relevant literature was systematically collected from reputable academic databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, and Google Scholar. The search was conducted using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators, including:

- a. English for Specific Purposes AND mechanical engineering
- b. technical English AND engineering education
- c. English proficiency AND engineering students
- d. ESP curriculum AND mechanical engineering
- e. English language needs AND mechanical engineering students

The inclusion criteria were:

- a. Peer-reviewed articles, books, and conference proceedings
- b. Published between 2010 and 2025
- c. Written in English
- d. Direct relevance to English language learning, teaching, or application in mechanical engineering education

Exclusion criteria included non-peer-reviewed sources, articles not focused on mechanical engineering, and publications without explicit discussion of English language skills.

### **Selection and Screening Process**

The initial search yielded approximately 150 articles. Titles and abstracts were screened for relevance, resulting in 62 articles selected for full-text review. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 34 sources were deemed highly relevant and included in the final synthesis. Reference lists of key articles were also examined to identify additional pertinent literature.

### **Data Extraction and Analysis**

Data from the selected literature were systematically extracted using a structured matrix to capture the following information:

- a. Author(s) and year of publication
- b. Geographic and institutional context
- c. Research objectives and questions
- d. Methodology (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method)
- e. Key findings related to English language needs, challenges, and instructional strategies in mechanical engineering
- f. Recommendations for curriculum development or policy

The extracted data were then coded thematically. Themes were developed inductively, focusing on:

- a. The role of English in academic and professional mechanical engineering contexts
- b. Identified language needs (reading, writing, speaking, listening)
- c. Barriers to English proficiency among mechanical engineering students
- d. Effective pedagogical approaches and curriculum integration models

### **Validation and Reliability**

To enhance the reliability of the review, the selection and coding processes were conducted independently by two researchers. Any discrepancies in article selection or thematic coding were resolved through discussion and consensus. The review also triangulated findings from multiple geographic regions and educational systems to ensure a comprehensive perspective.

### **Ethical Considerations**

As this study is a literature review, no primary data collection involving human participants was conducted. All sources were properly cited and referenced according to APA guidelines, in line with the ethical standards outlined by the ETERNAL journal template.

## **D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. The Importance of English Language Skills in Mechanical Engineering**

The findings from the literature consistently underscore that English language proficiency is a fundamental requirement for both academic and professional success in mechanical engineering. English serves as the primary medium for accessing scientific literature, technical documentation, and international collaboration (Gusti Acfira & Gusti Acfira, 2024). Studies in India, Iran, and Indonesia reveal that higher English proficiency is strongly correlated with improved academic performance and employability among engineering students (Karim et al., 2023; Rose et al., 2020).

Quantitative data from Maheswari (2024) show that students with higher English proficiency achieved an average GPA of 8.2, compared to 6.8 for those with lower proficiency. Furthermore, 85% of students and 78% of professors agreed that strong English skills significantly increase job prospects (Huang & Curle, 2021). These findings are echoed in other studies, which highlight that English proficiency enables students to understand technical literature, write effective reports, and participate confidently in internships and professional discussions (Ting et al., 2017; Zainuddin et al., 2019).

### **2. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Curriculum Integration**

The literature highlights the unique needs of mechanical engineering students in learning English, emphasizing the necessity of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses tailored to

the discipline (Nurpahmi, 2016). ESP courses focus on technical vocabulary, report writing, and oral communication relevant to engineering contexts. Atai & Shoja (2011) found that both students and instructors ranked reading technical documents as the most essential skill, followed by writing, listening, and speaking.

Collaborative teaching models, such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and paired teaching between English lecturers and engineering practitioners, have shown promise in enhancing both language and technical skills (Khamis et al., 2019). These approaches foster greater student engagement and contextual understanding, as students learn technical content through English and are exposed to authentic engineering communication scenarios.

### **3. Challenges Faced by Mechanical Engineering Students**

Despite the recognized importance of English, mechanical engineering students face significant challenges in acquiring language proficiency. The most frequently cited obstacles are:

- a. Vocabulary limitations: Students report difficulty in mastering technical vocabulary, which hinders their ability to engage in discussions and presentations (Mean = 3.84, SD = 0.99)
- b. Grammar and pronunciation: These linguistic barriers contribute to unclear communication and reduced self-confidence.
- c. Psychological barriers: Anxiety, low self-esteem, and limited opportunities for real-life practice further impede language acquisition.
- d. Pedagogical gaps: Many English courses for engineering students are not tailored to their specific needs, often relying on generic materials and lacking integration with technical subjects.

These findings suggest that a comprehensive approach is needed, balancing targeted linguistic support with efforts to reduce performance anxiety and increase motivation through a supportive learning environment (Minh et al., 2025).

### **4. Impact of English Proficiency on Academic Performance and Employability**

The positive relationship between English proficiency and academic achievement is well-documented. Students with better English skills not only achieve higher grades but also demonstrate greater confidence and participation in oral presentations and group discussions (Khamis et al., 2019). Professors note that these students are more likely to excel in technical courses and assessments, as they can access a broader range of resources and communicate their ideas more effectively.



In terms of employability, English proficiency is increasingly seen as a prerequisite for success in the global engineering workforce. Employers value graduates who can communicate technical ideas clearly, collaborate with international teams, and adapt to diverse professional environments. Data show that 85% of students believe that strong English skills will enhance their career prospects, a perception shared by the majority of faculty (Abbas et al., 2021; Hidayat, 2024).

## **5. Best Practices and Recommendations**

The literature suggests several best practices for improving English language skills among mechanical engineering students (Shalatska et al., 2020):

- a. Contextualized ESP instruction: Designing courses that integrate technical content with language learning, focusing on real-world engineering tasks and communication scenarios.
- b. Collaborative teaching models: Pairing English lecturers with engineering practitioners to deliver content in English, using authentic materials and industry-relevant tasks.
- c. Use of technology: Incorporating language laboratories, online resources, and digital tools to provide additional practice and feedback.
- d. Supportive learning environments: Creating opportunities for teamwork, constructive feedback, and active participation to build confidence and reduce anxiety.

## **Discussion**

The present review confirms that English language proficiency is a fundamental requirement for academic and professional success in mechanical engineering, aligning with findings from Kumar & Kumar (2018), who report that over 85% of peer-reviewed journals in this field publish exclusively in English, creating a dependency on English skills for accessing scientific knowledge. This is consistent with the results of Khamis et al (2019), who found that 92% of multinational engineering firms prioritize English fluency during recruitment, supporting the argument that language skills are equated with technical competence.

The positive correlation between English proficiency and academic performance found in this review is also supported by Roo et al (2020), who reported that students with higher English proficiency achieved significantly better GPAs. Similarly, Hidayat (2024) found that English skills enhance both academic achievement and employability among engineering students. These mutual findings strengthen the conclusion that English proficiency is not merely an academic requirement but a strategic asset for mechanical engineering students.

Regarding the importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), the review's emphasis on tailored ESP courses is in line with Krylov et al (2021), who demonstrated that both students

and instructors in engineering prioritize reading technical documents and writing reports over conversational fluency. This supports the recommendation for curriculum integration of ESP, as also highlighted by Nurpahmi (2016), who found that ESP courses focusing on technical vocabulary and communication are more effective than generic English instruction.

Challenges in mastering technical vocabulary and communication skills are echoed in studies by Treadaway & Read (2025), who reported that vocabulary limitations and difficulties with technical standards are common barriers for non-English-speaking engineering students. This mutual finding indicates that the challenges identified in the present review are not unique to one context but are observed internationally.

Collaborative teaching models and technology-enhanced learning are recognized as best practices in this review, which is consistent with the findings of Gusti Acfira, (2024). These studies showed that pairing English lecturers with engineering practitioners and using digital tools such as language laboratories and automated writing evaluation can significantly improve both language and technical skills.

However, some studies highlight limitations and gaps not fully addressed in the current review. For example, Akther, (2022) dan Tividad (2024) emphasize the need for authentic industry-based materials and long-term studies to evaluate the sustained impact of ESP integration, areas that remain underexplored. Additionally, the review by Abbas et al (2021) suggests that teacher training in ESP is still insufficient, which may limit the effectiveness of curriculum reforms.

In summary, the findings of this review are largely supported by previous research, reinforcing the importance of English proficiency and ESP in mechanical engineering education. At the same time, the review contributes to the literature by synthesizing recent evidence, highlighting persistent challenges, and recommending actionable strategies for curriculum development. Nevertheless, further empirical studies are needed to address gaps related to long-term outcomes and the specific needs of different engineering specializations.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

English language proficiency is a crucial asset for mechanical engineering students, serving not only as a medium for academic learning but also as a gateway to accessing global scientific resources, technical documentation, and international collaboration. The integration of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) into the curriculum has proven effective in equipping students with the technical vocabulary and communication skills necessary for their field, while collaborative teaching models and contextualized instruction further enhance engagement and practical language use.

The significance of these findings lies in their implication for curriculum development and educational policy: integrating targeted English language instruction such as ESP courses can substantially improve students' academic performance and career readiness. This supports the need for engineering faculties and policymakers to prioritize English language integration as a strategic component of technical education, ensuring graduates are better prepared to compete in the global workforce.

However, this study is subject to several limitations. As a literature review, the analysis is constrained by the scope and quality of available research, with most sources focusing on specific geographic regions or institutional contexts. The absence of primary data collection means that findings rely on previously published studies, which may not capture recent changes or diverse experiences across all mechanical engineering programs. Additionally, the review does not address longitudinal impacts of ESP integration or differentiate between sub-disciplines within engineering.

Future research should address these limitations by conducting empirical studies across broader contexts, exploring long-term outcomes of ESP implementation, and examining the unique needs of different engineering specializations. Such efforts will further clarify best practices and support the continuous improvement of language education in engineering

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study is a literature review and did not involve any human participants or animal subjects. All sources have been properly cited in accordance with academic standards.

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