ENGLISH FOR OCCUPATIONAL PURPOSES AND EMPLOYABILITY: INSIGHTS OF COMPUTER SCIENCE ALUMNI

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ABSTRACT

English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) is a critical component of higher education for students in technical disciplines, especially in Riau, Indonesia, where national and multinational corporations demand strong English proficiency. This study aims to investigate the role of EOP instruction in enhancing employment opportunities and professional performance of Computer Science alumni, and identifies challenges in EOP learning. The participants were twelve alumni from three universities, employed in national and multinational companies in Riau province. A qualitative design was employed using semi-structured interviews. Interview data were triangulated with tracer study data from 2023 to 2024, focusing on alumni self-reported workplace competency requirements. Transcripts were analyzed through thematic analysis. Tracer study data were examined through descriptive content analysis to identify competency priority patterns over three years. The findings revealed that EOP instruction significantly benefited alumni during job applications, including writing English CVs and navigating English-medium recruitment interviews. Professionally, EOP facilitated communication with expatriate colleagues, interaction with foreign vendors and auditors, report writing for top management, formal presentations, and comprehension of technical manuals. Tracer study data consistently identified English proficiency alongside soft skills and professional ethics as the most critical workplace competencies across all three universities. EOP instruction substantively supports employability and professional performance; however, persistent challenges including low motivation, limited vocabulary, and insufficient relevant materials continue to constrain outcomes. Innovative, technology-integrated EOP e-modules aligned with Outcome-Based Education principles and responsive to millennial learning preferences are urgently needed, with implications for curriculum designers, instructors, and policymakers across Indonesian higher education.

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1) INTRODUCTION

In the era of accelerating globalization, English has become the dominant medium of international professional communication across virtually all industries and sectors. For graduates of technical programs such as Computer Science, proficiency in English is no longer merely an academic achievement but a professional necessity that directly shapes their access to employment and their capacity to function effectively in the modern workplace (Al-Khalidi et al., 2023; Franchisca et al., 2022; Warman et al., 2024). This is particularly true in Riau Province, Indonesia, where a dense concentration of national and multinational corporations in the oil and gas, manufacturing, and information technology sectors creates substantial and persistent demand for graduates who can communicate confidently and competently in English with international colleagues and management.

English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) is a specialized branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that focuses on equipping learners with the language competencies required in specific professional or occupational contexts (Dudley-Evans & St John., 2012; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Unlike general English instruction, which aims to develop broad communicative competence, EOP is explicitly designed to address the precise communicative demands of learners who are preparing for or already engaged in particular occupational roles (Kamil & Muhammad, 2025; Rico et al., 2019; Urunova, 2022). In the Indonesian higher education system, EOP has been progressively integrated into the curricula of technical and vocational programs in response to growing employer demand for graduates who possess both disciplinary expertise and professional English proficiency.

The importance of EOP for engineering and IT graduates has been documented across multiple international contexts. Al-Khalidi et al. (2023) demonstrated that EOP instruction in engineering programs significantly enhanced students' communicative competence, particularly in areas of professional presentation and formal correspondence. EOP substantially improves students' capacity to engage in technical professional communication,

and that its benefits are especially pronounced in contexts where graduates are expected to interact with international counterparts (Amerian, 2020; Bui & Huong, 2023; Daud, 2019). EOP approaches which explicitly teach the textual conventions of specific occupational genres such as technical reports, business emails, and professional presentations which produce more transferable and occupationally relevant language competencies than conventional general English instruction (Rahman et al., 2019; Rautenbach et al., 2018; Taghipour & Mohseni, 2021). EOP learning materials and pedagogical approaches should be designed not only to develop language proficiency but also to cultivate the critical thinking, collaborative communication, problem-solving, and self-directed learning competencies that employers consistently identify as indispensable in the 21st-century workforce (Mohammed, 2025; Naranjo, 2019). In this view, EOP functions not merely as language instruction but as a broader form of professional preparation that equips graduates with the integrated competencies required for career success in internationally competitive environments.

The existing literature reveals several significant limitations that constrain its applicability to the Indonesian context. First, the majority of empirical EOP studies have been conducted in East Asian and Middle Eastern higher education settings, where the sociolinguistic conditions, including the status of English, baseline student proficiency levels, and the nature of industry-university relationships, differ substantially from those prevailing in Indonesia (Rahman et al., 2019; Rautenbach et al., 2018; Taghipour & Mohseni, 2021). In addition, most existing studies have examined EOP from the perspective of current students or instructional designers, focusing on what students learn in EOP courses rather than on how these competencies are actually applied in the professional workplace (Kamil & Muhammad, 2021; Ke & Yang, 2018; Staňková, 2017). These limitations in the existing literature point to three critical research gaps. First, there is a lack of empirical, experience-based evidence documenting how Computer Science alumni in Indonesia perceive and apply their EOP competencies in actual professional settings. Second, the specific occupational English demands facing IT professionals in Riau, a region shaped by the demands of the oil and gas and technology sectors have not been systematically mapped through the lens of alumni

experience. Third, the potential of triangulating tracer study data with qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive and ecologically valid account of EOP's professional impact remains unexploited in the Indonesian EOP literature.

The present study directly addresses these gaps. Guided by the overarching research question, namely: To what extent does EOP instruction contribute to the employment opportunities and professional performance of Informatics Engineering graduates at universities in Riau, Indonesia and what are the challenges in EOP learning? The novelty of this study lies in its adoption of an alumni-centred, post-graduation perspective, its multi-method triangulation of interview and tracer study data, and its focus on a geographically and industrially specific context that has been largely overlooked in the EOP literature. Thus, this study aims to investigate the role of EOP instruction in enhancing employment opportunities, professional performance of Computer Science alumni, and identifies challenges in EOP learning.

2) METHODS

Research Design

A qualitative research design was adopted for this study, as it was deemed most appropriate for generating in-depth, contextually rich accounts of participants' lived professional experiences with EOP (Creswell and Creswell, 2018) and their challenges during EOP learning. Two complementary data sources were utilized: semi-structured interviews conducted with Computer Science alumni, and tracer study documents collected from three universities in Riau, Indonesia. The combination of these data sources was considered essential for ensuring that individual experiential accounts were situated within a broader institutional and longitudinal evidence base. The use of qualitative methods was justified by the nature of the research questions, which sought to capture the subjective, experience-based dimensions of EOP's contribution to professional employability.

Population and Sample

The target population of this study comprised all alumni of Computer Science study programs at three universities in Riau, Indonesia, who had completed EOP coursework as part of their undergraduate curriculum and had subsequently entered the professional workforce. The three universities were selected on the basis of their established Computer Science study programs and the availability of multi-year tracer study data covering the period 2023 to 2024. As the population was large and distributed across multiple industries and geographic locations within and beyond Riau, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to select a sample that was both informative and manageable within the scope of the study.

A total of 12 alumni were selected as the research sample. Participants were required to meet the following criteria: (1) they had graduated from an Computer Science study program; (2) EOP had been studied as part of their undergraduate coursework; (3) they were currently employed in a national or multinational company at the time of the study; and (4) they were willing to participate voluntarily and to provide informed consent for the recording and use of their interview data. They have worked as software engineer, IT support staff, network engineer, systems analyst, data analyst, and team leader in the technology or engineering divisions of their employing organizations. The employing companies ranged from large multinational corporations in the oil and gas and technology sectors to national companies in manufacturing, telecommunications, and financial services. The diversity of roles and organizational contexts represented within the sample was considered strength of the study, as it enabled a broad mapping of the occupational English demands faced by Computer Science graduates across different professional settings in Indonesia and beyond. The identities of all informants were kept confidential, and each was assigned a pseudonym code (P1–P12) for the purposes of data reporting.

Data Collection

Two instruments were used for data collection in this study: a semi-structured interview guide and institutional tracer study documents. The semi-structured interview guide was

developed based on a review of the relevant EOP literature and the research questions. The guide was piloted with two alumni who were not included in the main sample, and minor revisions were made to improve the clarity and sequencing of the questions prior to the main data collection phase.

Individual interviews were conducted between November 20 and December 11, 2024. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was carried out either face-to-face or via video call, depending on the informant's geographic location and availability. The interview guide was organized around four thematic areas: (1) the relevance of EOP instruction to the job application process; (2) the role of EOP competencies in daily professional communication; and (3) challenges encountered in learning EOP. Interviews were conducted in both Indonesian and English, in accordance with each informant's preference, to ensure that language barriers did not impede the quality or depth of the data obtained. All interviews were audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder, and recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim using a combination of manual transcription and computer-assisted transcription software. Written informed consent was obtained from all informants prior to recording.

Tracer study documents were obtained from the career development centers of the three participating universities. These documents comprised annual graduate tracking survey reports for the Computer Science programs covering the academic cohorts of 2023 and 2024. The tracer study documents were reviewed to identify sections pertaining to alumni's self-reported assessments of the competencies most demanded by their employers, from which data relevant to English language proficiency, soft skills, and professional ethics were specifically extracted for analysis.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the first phase, the transcripts were read repeatedly to ensure thorough familiarization with the data. In the second phase, initial codes were generated by systematically labeling meaningful features of interest across the dataset. In

the third phase, the codes were collated into potential themes. In the fourth phase, the candidate themes were reviewed against the coded extracts and the full dataset to assess their coherence and coverage. In the fifth phase, the themes were defined and named. In the sixth and final phase, the completed analysis was written up in relation to the research questions and the existing literature. Two overarching thematic clusters were identified through this process: the role of EOP in the employment process, and the role of EOP in professional workplace performance. To enhance the credibility of the analysis, member checking was conducted with three of the informants, who were invited to review the researcher's interpretations and confirm whether the findings accurately reflected their experiences.

The tracer study data were analyzed separately using descriptive content analysis. Competency-related response items were extracted from the documents, tabulated, and compared across the two cohort years (2023 and 2024) and three institutions to identify patterns and cross-institutional consistencies in alumni's workplace competency priorities. Frequency counts and percentage distributions were calculated for each competency category to determine the relative prominence of English language proficiency in relation to other competencies. Upon completion of both analyses, the thematic analysis findings and the tracer study findings were subjected to data triangulation. This triangulation procedure was employed to enhance the internal validity of the overall study findings and to ensure that conclusions were grounded in multiple, independent sources of evidence.

3) RESULTS

The interview data revealed that EOP instruction provided significant and tangible benefits to alumni during the job application process. The majority of participants reported that the companies they applied to require all application materials to be submitted in English, including formal application letters and comprehensive CVs. Several participants noted that their ability to communicate competently in English during recruitment interviews gave them a competitive advantage over other candidates who lacked similar preparation.

EOP also plays a crucial role in preparing university graduates to meet the communication demands of the global workplace. Alumni experiences indicate that EOP

instruction significantly enhances their ability to communicate and collaborate with expatriate supervisors and international colleagues, particularly in multinational companies where English serves as the primary medium of communication. In addition, EOP equips graduates with the necessary skills to interact professionally with foreign vendors, auditors, and visitors through both written and oral communication. These competencies extend to producing formal reports and technical documentation for top management, delivering presentations in professional settings, and effectively participating in meetings with international stakeholders. Furthermore, EOP training strengthens graduates' ability to comprehend English-language technical manuals and references, which are essential in fields such as engineering and information technology. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of integrating EOP into higher education to support students' readiness for real-world professional communication.

The thematic analysis identified five distinct areas in which EOP competencies contributed to effective professional performance in the workplace, as follows:

a. EOP competencies support alumni's communication and collaboration with expatriate supervisors and colleagues. A substantial number of participants worked in multinational companies where English functioned as the primary medium of workplace communication. Participants stated that EOP instruction had equipped them with the vocabulary, pragmatic knowledge, and conversational fluency necessary to interact effectively with non-Indonesian colleagues and supervisors on a daily basis.
b. EOP competencies support alumni's communication with foreign vendors, auditors, and visitors. Participants regularly engaged with foreign vendors, auditors, and visitors through both written channels namely, email, formal correspondence, technical specifications, and oral communication. EOP training was instrumental in enabling them to conduct these interactions professionally, including writing clear business emails, comprehending technical proposals and audit reports, and participating in face-to-face meetings with foreign counterparts.

c. EOP competencies support alumni in writing reports and documentation for top management. Several participants were required to produce formal written reports and technical documentation addressed to senior management, including expatriate executives. EOP training had provided them with the genre knowledge and language skills necessary to structure reports appropriately, maintain a formal register and present information clearly and coherently.

d. EOP competencies support alumni in delivering presentations and meetings with expatriate management and foreign visitors. Participants who held senior or leadership roles frequently delivered presentations to expatriate managers and foreign visitors. EOP courses had included presentation skills training, enabling alumni to organize and deliver clear, professional presentations in English that contributed positively to their professional reputations and career advancement.

e. EOP competencies support alumni in comprehending of English-language manual books and technical references. As IT professionals and engineers, participants routinely consulted technical manuals, software documentation, and reference materials written in English. EOP instruction had developed their reading competency in technical English, described by participants as indispensable in a field where technical knowledge evolves rapidly and key resources are predominantly available in English.

In light of these findings, it is evident that EOP instruction provides a strong foundation for professional communication in international and multilingual work environments. The ability to communicate effectively with expatriate professionals, engage in cross-border business interactions, produce high-quality documentation, and understand technical materials in English is indispensable for career success in today's globalized industries. Therefore, strengthening students' EOP competencies during their academic studies is essential to bridge the gap between educational outcomes and workplace expectations. This study thus seeks to further enhance these competencies through the implementation of an ethnopedagogy-based

EOP e-module, which is expected to provide a more contextualized and culturally relevant learning experience for university students.

Tracer study data collected from the three universities, specifically for Computer Science study programs, provided institutional corroboration of the interview findings. English language proficiency was consistently identified by employed alumni as one of the three most critical competencies for workplace success, alongside soft skills and professional ethics. This pattern was stable across the two-year period, affirming that EOP instruction constitutes a strategically important element of the undergraduate Computer Science curriculum.

The interviews also surfaced challenges that had characterized participants' EOP learning experiences during their undergraduate studies. The challenges experienced by alumni are following: (1) Low motivation to learn English due to insufficient awareness of its professional relevance; (2) Limited mastery of vocabulary and grammatical structures; (3) Insufficient opportunities for authentic English practice inside and outside the classroom; and (4) A scarcity of EOP-specific learning resources in the Indonesian higher education context.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the pivotal role of EOP competencies in equipping graduates with the communication skills required to thrive in globalized and multilingual professional environments. Alumni experiences, supported by tracer study data, consistently highlight English proficiency as a critical determinant of workplace success, particularly in fields such as Computer Science where international collaboration and access to English-based technical resources are essential. However, persistent challenges in students' EOP learning experiences, ranging from low motivation and limited linguistic mastery to insufficient contextualized learning materials that indicate a significant gap between current instructional practices and workplace demands. Therefore, there is a pressing need to develop more engaging and relevant EOP learning resources that enhances students' motivation, language proficiency, and readiness for real-world professional communication.

4) DISCUSSION

The present study set out to investigate the extent to which EOP instruction contributes to the employment opportunities and professional workplace performance of Computer Science graduates at three universities in Riau, Indonesia. Three principal findings emerged from the analysis. First, EOP competencies were found to play a significant and tangible role in alumni's job application experiences, including the preparation of English-language CVs and application letters and the navigation of English-medium recruitment interviews. Second, EOP learning was identified as directly applicable across five key areas of professional practice: communication with expatriate supervisors and colleagues, interaction with foreign vendors and auditors, writing reports and technical documentation, delivering formal presentations, and comprehending English-language manuals and references. Third, tracer study data from the three universities spanning 2022 to 2024 consistently corroborated these experiential findings at the institutional level, with English proficiency emerging as one of the most frequently cited workplace competencies alongside soft skills and professional ethics. In addition, there were challenges found by the alumni in EOP learning. Taken together, these findings provide compelling evidence that EOP instruction constitutes a strategically important investment in the professional preparation of Computer Science graduates in Indonesia.

The finding that EOP competencies function as a gatekeeping requirement in the job application process is consistent with recent researchers on the role of English in professional labor markets across Southeast Asia. Phan et al. (2022) and Biesmans et al. (2026) documented similar patterns among graduates, finding that English proficiency in CV writing and interviews was a decisive factor in employment outcomes at multinational firms (Lu, 2021). Likewise, English-medium recruitment practices are deeply embedded in the hiring protocols of international companies where candidates must demonstrate EOP-level competencies, including the ability to write genre-appropriate professional documents and to engage in formal spoken interaction in English (Kamil & Muhammad, 2021; Kaur et al., 2020). The present findings extend this body of evidence to the specific context of Riau's oil and gas and

technology sectors, and suggest that EOP instruction at the tertiary level functions as a direct enabler of professional social mobility for Computer Science graduates who aspire to employment in high-value organizations.

The five occupational domains identified in this study intercultural workplace communication, vendor and auditor interaction, technical report writing, professional presentations, and technical reading collectively profile the communicative landscape that Computer Science graduates must navigate in Riau's multinational corporate environment. EOP curricula must be explicitly organized around the authentic communicative genres of the target occupational context rather than around decontextualized language forms (Kamil & Muhammad, 2025). Each of the five domains identified corresponds to a distinct set of genre conventions namely, business email, audit response, technical report, oral presentation, and technical manual reading that require targeted genre knowledge and disciplinary literacy rather than general English competence. This finding also aligns with the conclusions of Campillo-Ferrer and Miralles-Martínez (2021), who demonstrated that university EOP courses which explicitly modeled the professional genres of the target occupation produced significantly greater gains in students' occupational readiness than courses that focused primarily on vocabulary and grammar development. These findings collectively underscore the case for a genre-informed redesign of EOP curricula for Computer Science programs in Riau.

The corroboration provided by the tracer study data is particularly significant. The consistent identification of English proficiency as a top-ranked workplace competency across all three universities and all three cohort years suggests that employer demand for English-proficient IT graduates is a stable, structural feature of the Riau labor market rather than a transient or context-specific trend. This finding is aligned with the Indonesian national higher education policy framework, which has increasingly emphasized the development of internationally competitive graduates capable of operating in multilingual professional environments (Al Hinai et al., 2020; Warman et al., 2023). It also corroborates the findings of Isbah et al. (2023) and Zainuddin et al. (2019), who found that English proficiency was ranked among the top five professional competency requirements across all technical disciplines

studied, with particular prominence in regions with high concentrations of foreign direct investment.

The co-prominence of soft skills and professional ethics alongside English proficiency in the tracer study data warrants careful attention. This finding reflects the growing consensus in the higher education literature that occupational readiness is a multidimensional construct that cannot be reduced to language competence alone (DeIuliis, 2024; Wahab et al., 2025; Winnie et al., 2023). Indonesian employers consistently rated soft skills including communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and self-management as equally or more important than technical subject knowledge when evaluating the suitability of fresh graduates for employment (Abelha et al., 2020; Warman et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2023). Phan et al. (2022) similarly found that graduates who demonstrated integrated professional competencies combining English proficiency with soft skills and ethical professional conduct were more likely to be retained and promoted within their organizations than those who possessed only one of these competencies in isolation (Alhawsawi & Jawhar, 2023; Hossain et al., 2021; Trisdiono et al., 2019). These findings strongly suggest that EOP instruction for Computer Science students should be reconceptualized as an integrated professional preparation program that deliberately and systematically develops language competence, soft skills, and professional values in tandem, rather than treating English proficiency as a standalone curricular objective.

Notwithstanding the positive contributions of EOP instruction documented in this study, the challenges identified by informants, namely low motivation, inadequate vocabulary and grammar knowledge, limited authentic practice, and poor engagement with existing learning materials are consistent with the findings of Wahyuni et al. (2023) and Warman et al. (2023), who have documented these same challenges across multiple cohorts of Indonesian non-English major university students. In addition, Jiang (2019) and Taghipour et al. (2020) argued that these problems are not merely individual learning deficits but reflect structural inadequacies in EOP course design, particularly the continued reliance on generic textbooks that are neither occupationally specific nor pedagogically engaging for students in technical

programs. The implication of these findings is that even though EOP instruction ultimately benefited the alumni in this study, the full potential of EOP to enhance professional readiness remains substantially unrealized due to the poor quality and low relevance of available instructional materials.

The developments of technology-integrated EOP e-modules or digital material are proposed as the most contextually appropriate response to these instructional challenges. Digital materials offer several advantages over conventional print-based materials that are particularly relevant to the challenges identified in this study. Naranjo (2019) and Al-Khalidi et al. (2023) demonstrated that EOP e-modules incorporating interactive exercises, authentic workplace videos, and self-assessment tools produced significantly greater gains in student engagement and language performance than traditional textbook-based instruction among Indonesian engineering students. Xie (2016) similarly found that digitally-delivered materials were more effective in developing occupationally relevant communicative competencies than conventional course materials, and that students reported higher levels of motivation and self-efficacy when learning through e-modules than through standard classroom instruction. These findings provide strong empirical support for the e-module development recommendations arising from the present study and suggest that investment in the design and production of high-quality, context-specific EOP e-modules for Computer Science programs.

Several limitations of the present study must be acknowledged. First, the sample was limited to 12 alumni from three universities in a single province of Indonesia. Although data saturation was achieved within this sample, the findings may not be fully generalizable to Computer Science and institutional tracer study documents. Self-reported accounts are subject to recall bias and social desirability effects, particularly when informants reflect retrospectively on their undergraduate educational experiences. Third, the tracer study documents used in this study were not originally designed to investigate the specific relationship between EOP instruction and professional performance; rather, they were general graduate competency surveys whose EOP-relevant dimensions had to be extracted and interpreted by the

researcher. This limits the precision with which causal claims about EOP instruction's contribution to workplace outcomes can be made.

These limitations point to several productive directions for future research. The geographic limitation of the present sample calls for larger-scale, multi-provincial studies that compare the EOP experiences and outcomes of Informatics Engineering alumni across diverse Indonesian regions with different industrial and sociolinguistic profiles. The reliance on self-reported alumni data suggests that future studies would benefit from the inclusion of employer and HR manager interviews or surveys, which would enable a triangulation of graduate and employer perspectives on EOP competency requirements and gaps.

5) CONCLUSION

The study revealed that EOP competencies are actively applied across diverse professional contexts. These include job applications, communication with expatriate colleagues and foreign vendors, technical report writing, formal presentations, and comprehension of English-language technical materials. Tracer study findings consistently affirmed that English proficiency ranks among the most valued competencies in today's workplace, underscoring the strategic relevance of EOP in higher technical education. Nevertheless, the study also revealed persistent challenges that hinder effective EOP learning, namely low student motivation, limited vocabulary and grammatical competence, insufficient exposure to authentic language practice, and a shortage of contextually relevant instructional materials.

These obstacles reflect a broader gap between current EOP instruction and the actual communicative demands of the Informatics Engineering workplace. In light of these findings, several implications and suggestions are worth noting. From a curricular standpoint, EOP programs in technical faculties need to be redesigned with greater alignment to real workplace communication needs, incorporating authentic materials, task-based activities, and integrated soft skills development. For instructional practice, the adoption of technology-integrated learning tools, such as interactive e-modules developed within an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) framework holds strong potential for addressing both motivational and material

deficiencies, particularly given the digital learning preferences of today's students. From a policy perspective, universities and program coordinators should treat EOP not as a peripheral language course but as a core professional competency subject, supported by adequate resources and qualified instructors. Future research should experimentally investigate the effectiveness of EOP e-modules through quasi-experimental or design-based research approaches. Additionally, EOP needs analyses should be expanded to encompass a wider range of technical disciplines and geographic regions across Indonesia, ensuring that findings and recommendations can inform national-level curriculum policy in technical higher education.

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