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## **Authentic Professional Communication in ESP: A Press Release-Based Learning Model**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The use of authentic materials has become increasingly important in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction, particularly in preparing students for workplace communication contexts. This study investigates the implementation of press releases as authentic materials in teaching English for Business and Professional Communication and examines their impact on students' communication skills and learning perceptions. The study employed a qualitative case study design involving undergraduate students. The participants were 19 students majoring Business and Professional Communication at a university in Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observations, students' writing assignments, and questionnaires. The findings reflect prior studies on authentic materials, which imply that real-world texts improve communicative skills by exposing learners to naturally occurring language and professional practices. It also reveals that press releases were effectively implemented through a genre-based instructional approach consisting of text analysis, collaborative writing, and independent writing activities. The use of authentic press releases contributed positively to students' professional communication skills, particularly in organizing information, using formal language, developing audience awareness, and understanding workplace discourse conventions. In addition, students demonstrated positive perceptions toward the use of press releases, considering them relevant, engaging, and beneficial for future careers. Although students experienced challenges related to vocabulary and formal writing style, instructional scaffolding and collaborative learning activities helped facilitate comprehension and participation. The study concludes that press

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releases are valuable authentic materials for ESP classrooms as they bridge classroom learning and real-world professional communication practices.

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## 1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, the demand for English proficiency in professional settings has significantly increased (Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Sejdiu et al., 2025). English for Specific Purposes (ESP) plays a crucial role in preparing students to meet the linguistic demands of their future careers, particularly in fields such as business and professional communication (Pilla et al., 2025). The increasing demand for workplace communication skills has positioned English as a critical tool in professional contexts (Daiu & Mihali, 2025). Within this landscape, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) emphasizes the development of language competencies tailored to learners' disciplinary and occupational needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

In business-related fields, students are expected not only to understand English but also to use it effectively in professional communication practices. Unlike general English instruction, ESP emphasizes the use of context-specific language tailored to learners' professional needs (Runggo & Hendriyani, 2025). Despite this expectation, many ESP classrooms still rely on decontextualized instructional materials that do not adequately reflect authentic workplace discourse (Pambudi, 2025). This mismatch often results in students' limited ability to transfer classroom knowledge into real-world communication settings. Consequently, the integration of authentic materials has been widely advocated to address this gap (Faiz, 2023).

Authentic materials, defined as texts produced for real-life purposes, offer a promising solution to this issue (Yasrida et al., 2017; Adys, 2025). Authentic materials expose learners to naturally occurring language and discourse structures used in professional environments (Benabdallah, 2017; Ruiz-garrido & Palmer-silveira, 2015; Berardo, 2006). Among various types of authentic materials, press releases stand out as highly relevant for Business and Professional Communication students. Press releases are widely used by companies and organizations to communicate information to the public, making them a valuable source of real-world language use (Catenaccio, 2008). Press releases represent a particularly relevant yet underutilized resource (Foster, 2008). As a genre, press releases combine informative and persuasive elements, making them suitable for teaching professional writing, audience awareness, and organizational structure (Catenaccio, 2008).

Some previous research has been conducted, but there are still several gaps that need to be addressed through further research on teaching business majors using authentic materials. The research used annual reports as authentic materials to provide a realistic corporate image of corporations, as allowing business major students to better comprehend how they operate (Ruiz-Garrido & Palmer-Silveira, 2015). Pavlikova & Zamborova (2021) utilized online authentic texts in business English classes which can significantly improve students' readiness, motivation, logical thinking, and

communication skills whether at home or abroad using technologies. However, empirical studies examining the pedagogical use of press releases in ESP contexts remain limited, particularly in Indonesian higher education.

This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the role of press releases as authentic materials in enhancing students' professional communication skills. This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How are press releases implemented as authentic materials in ESP classrooms?
2. What impacts do they have on students' communication skills?
3. How do students perceive their use in learning?

## **2. Literature Review**

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

Traditionally, when educators and applied linguists discussed the concept of teaching of EFL(English as a foreign language), they referred to the teaching of what is known today as general English (Dou et al., 2023). One of the important issues in looking at the role of material in ESP is that of authenticity. Authenticity is a key concept within the communicative approach (Bonabi 2008). ESP focuses on aligning language instruction with learners' professional needs. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that ESP is learner-centered and driven by specific communicative purposes. In business communication contexts, this includes mastering formal tone, clarity, and strategic information delivery.

### **2.2 *Authentic Materials in ESP***

Authentic materials are texts created for real communicative purposes (Harmer, 2007). They provide exposure to genuine language use and are believed to increase learners' motivation and contextual understanding. However, their complexity necessitates pedagogical adaptation. Authentic materials refer to texts created for real-life communication rather than for pedagogical purposes (Kozhevnikova, 2014). These materials provide learners with exposure to natural language use, including vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structures. Previous studies suggest that authentic materials increase learners' motivation and help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application (Fitriana et al., 2019).

### **2.3 *Press Release as Professional Genre***

A press release is a formal document issued by an organization to announce newsworthy information. It serves both informative and promotional purposes. Typically, a press release consists of several key components: headline, lead paragraph, body, boilerplate, and contact information. Press releases function as strategic communication tools used by organizations to disseminate information. According to Bhatia (1993), professional genres are shaped by communicative purposes and discourse conventions. Press releases typically follow a structured format and reflect corporate identity and audience awareness.

## ***2.4 Genre-Based Approach***

The genre-based approach, particularly Swales' (1990) move analysis, provides a framework for understanding how texts achieve communicative goals. Applying this approach enables students to analyze and produce texts aligned with professional expectations.

## **3. Method**

### ***3.1 Research Design***

This study employed a qualitative case study design (Baxter & Jack, 2008) to investigate the use of press releases as authentic materials in teaching English for Business and Professional Communication. A case study design was selected because it allows an in-depth exploration of classroom practices, students' learning experiences, and the pedagogical implementation of authentic materials within a specific educational context.

The study was grounded in the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the genre-based approach. It focused on how authentic corporate communication texts, particularly press releases, were integrated into classroom instruction and how students responded to such materials in developing professional communication skills.

### ***3.2 Participants and Context***

The study was conducted at a private university in Indonesia involving undergraduate students enrolled in a Business and Professional Communication course. The course is part of the English language curriculum designed to prepare students for workplace communication contexts.

The participants consisted of 19 second-year students with intermediate English proficiency levels. The participants were selected using purposive sampling because they were taking a course directly related to professional and business communication.

The students had previously studied general English courses; however, they had limited exposure to authentic professional texts such as press releases. Therefore, the implementation of press release-based learning was expected to provide new learning experiences related to workplace communication practices.

### ***3.3 Instruments***

The instructional materials consisted of authentic press releases collected from official corporate and organizational website. The selected press releases represented hospitality industry. The materials were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Relevance to business and professional communication contexts
2. Clear organizational structure
3. Appropriate language level for intermediate learners
4. Authenticity and accessibility

Each press release typically contained the following elements: Headline, Dateline, Lead paragraph, Body paragraphs, Boilerplate, Media contact information. The materials were

adapted minimally to preserve their authenticity while ensuring comprehensibility for students.

### **3.4 Procedure**

The instructional intervention was conducted over four weeks with one meeting per week. The teaching activities were designed using a genre-based instructional cycle consisting of modeling, joint construction, and independent construction. The instructional intervention was conducted over four weeks:

- **Week 1: Introduction to press releases**  
The lecturer introduced the concept, purpose, and communicative functions of press releases. Students discussed the differences between press releases, advertisements, and news articles.
- **Week 2: Genre analysis of authentic texts**  
Students analyzed authentic press releases in groups. They identified rhetorical structures, language features, audience orientation, and persuasive elements. The lecturer guided students using move analysis adapted from Swales' genre framework.
- **Week 3: Guided writing practice**  
Students worked collaboratively to write a press release based on a simulated company event, such as a product launch or corporate partnership announcement. Teacher scaffolding was provided through vocabulary support, writing templates, and peer discussion.
- **Week 4: Independent writing and peer feedback**  
Students individually produced their own press releases based on selected business scenarios. Peer review sessions were conducted to provide feedback on structure, clarity, grammar, and professional tone.

### **3.5 Data Collection Techniques**

Data were collected using multiple instruments to ensure triangulation and credibility (Meydan & Akkas, 2024).

1. Classroom observations were conducted throughout the instructional process to examine students' participation, engagement, and interaction during learning activities. Field notes were used to document classroom dynamics and students' responses to authentic materials.
2. Students' press release writing assignments were collected and analyzed to evaluate their understanding of genre structure, language use, and professional communication conventions.
3. A Likert-scale questionnaire was administered at the end of the instructional intervention to investigate students' perceptions regarding: learning motivation, material relevance, language improvement, classroom engagement, and perceived usefulness of press releases. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items using a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively to support qualitative findings. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis involved several stages:

1. Familiarizing with the data
2. Coding significant responses
3. Identifying recurring themes
4. Interpreting findings in relation to ESP and genre theory

The students' written texts were analyzed using genre analysis focusing on organizational structure, communicative purpose, lexical choices, audience awareness, and professional tone. Questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively using percentages and mean scores to support qualitative findings.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

This section presents the findings and discussion based on the three research questions of the study. The data were obtained from classroom observations, students' writing assignments, and questionnaire responses from students enrolled in the Business and Professional Communication course. The findings of this study were derived from classroom observations, students' written assignments, and a needs analysis questionnaire distributed to 19 students enrolled in the Business and Professional Communication course.

### **4.1 Implementation of Press Releases as Authentic Materials in ESP Classrooms**

The questionnaire indicates almost all participants believed that understanding or creating press releases would be necessary in their future careers. A significant majority of students (94.7%) answered "Yes," while only 5.3% responded "No." This finding demonstrates that students perceive press release knowledge as highly relevant to workplace communication and professional contexts. Therefore, integrating press releases into ESP classrooms can support students' future professional communication needs. On the other hand, the questionnaire results reveal that students strongly recognized the importance of English writing skills for professional purposes. 57.9% considered writing skills "very important," while 36.8% considered them "important."

It brings the lecturer to bring press release to bridge the students' need of professional competencies. Press releases were implemented through a genre-based instructional approach that integrated authentic corporate texts into classroom activities. The instructional process involved introducing students to the communicative purpose, structure, and language features of press releases commonly used in professional settings.

The implementation was conducted in several stages. First, students were introduced to the concept and functions of press releases in workplace communication. Classroom discussions focused on the role of press releases in promoting events, announcing company achievements, and communicating information to the public.

Second, students analyzed authentic press releases collected from corporate websites. During this stage, students identified key structural components such as headlines, lead paragraphs, body sections, and boilerplate information. The classroom observation data showed that students actively participated in identifying the rhetorical organization of the texts and discussing their communicative purposes.

Third, collaborative writing activities were conducted in groups. Students worked together to create press releases based on business-related scenarios such as product launches, company events, and organizational announcements. The lecturer provided scaffolding through writing templates, vocabulary support, and guided discussion.

Finally, students independently produced their own press releases and participated in peer review sessions. Through this activity, students evaluated each other's work in terms of structure, clarity, professional tone, and language use.

The implementation process demonstrated that press releases were not merely used as reading materials but also as models for professional writing practice. This supports the ESP principle that instructional materials should reflect authentic workplace communication contexts (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

The findings also indicate that the genre-based approach helped students understand how professional texts are organized to achieve communicative goals. In line with Swales' (1990) genre theory, students learned to recognize how headlines attract attention, how lead paragraphs summarize key information, and how body sections provide supporting details. Therefore, the integration of press releases into ESP classrooms provided students with meaningful exposure to authentic business communication practices.

#### ***4.2 Impacts of Press Releases on Students' Communication Skills***

The findings demonstrate that the use of press releases positively contributed to students' professional communication skills, particularly in writing, vocabulary development, audience awareness, and organizational skills.

One major impact was observed in students' writing ability. Students showed improvement in organizing information systematically and producing texts with clearer structures. Their written assignments reflected a better understanding of professional writing conventions, including concise language use, formal tone, and information sequencing.

The analysis of students' writing also revealed improvements in their ability to create effective headlines and lead paragraphs. Initially, many students struggled to summarize key information clearly and professionally. However, after analyzing authentic examples and participating in guided writing activities, students demonstrated greater competence in presenting information more effectively (see Dunlosky et al., 2013; Putri et al., 2019; Sitompul et al., 2025). Another important impact involved vocabulary development. Students were exposed to authentic business-related vocabulary and formal expressions commonly used in corporate communication. Although some students initially experienced difficulties understanding unfamiliar terminology, repeated exposure to

authentic texts gradually improved their comprehension and language awareness.

The findings further indicate that students developed stronger audience awareness. Through genre analysis activities, students learned that press releases are written not only to inform but also to persuade and maintain corporate image. Consequently, students became more aware of how language choices and text organization influence readers. In addition, collaborative activities such as peer review and group discussions contributed to students' communication skills. Students actively exchanged ideas, discussed language use, and provided feedback on each other's writing. These activities encouraged interaction and critical thinking during the learning process.

The findings support previous studies on authentic materials which argue that real-world texts enhance communicative competence by exposing learners to naturally occurring language and professional discourse practices (Harmer, 2007). Furthermore, the results align with ESP principles emphasizing the importance of workplace-oriented language learning. However, the study also identified several challenges. Many students considered press release writing difficult due to complex vocabulary, formal writing style, and unfamiliar organizational structures. These difficulties indicate that authentic materials may require instructional scaffolding to ensure accessibility for language learners. Despite these challenges, teacher guidance, collaborative learning, and genre-based instruction helped students gradually develop confidence in producing professional communication texts.

#### ***4.3 Students' Perceptions toward the Use of Press Releases in Learning***

The questionnaire results reveal that students perceived press release writing as challenging. 36.8% categorized it as "difficult," while 10.5% considered it "very difficult." However, the data indicate positive student attitudes toward the use of press releases as learning materials. As shown in Table 7, 57.9% of students were "interested," while 31.6% were "very interested." In addition, students also showed strong interest in studying text structure through genre analysis. The result demonstrates that 89.5% expressed interest in learning press release structure more deeply.

It means that the findings reveal students generally responded positively to the use of press releases as authentic learning materials. Most participants expressed strong interest in learning through authentic corporate texts because they perceived the materials as practical, relevant, and connected to future workplace communication.

The questionnaire data indicate that students considered press releases highly relevant to business and professional communication contexts. Approximately 94.7% of the participants stated that understanding or producing press releases would be beneficial for their future careers. Students believed that these skills would be useful in fields such as marketing, public relations, hospitality, media communication, and corporate administration.

Students also reported that authentic materials made classroom learning more engaging and meaningful. Unlike textbook-based materials, authentic press releases exposed students to real communication practices used by companies and organizations.

This increased students' motivation and curiosity during classroom activities. Another significant finding concerns students' interest in genre analysis activities. Most participants stated that analyzing the structure and language features of press releases helped them understand professional communication more clearly. Students felt that genre analysis improved their awareness of how workplace texts are constructed and how information is communicated strategically.

In addition, students appreciated collaborative learning activities such as group discussions, text analysis, and peer feedback sessions. These activities created opportunities for interaction and active participation, making the learning process more dynamic and student-centered. Nevertheless, some students reported challenges related to difficult vocabulary and formal language use. Several participants stated that authentic texts were initially intimidating because they contained unfamiliar expressions and complex sentence structures. However, students also acknowledged that teacher explanations and vocabulary support helped them overcome these difficulties.

Overall, the findings suggest that students perceived press releases as valuable learning materials that enhanced both language skills and professional knowledge. The use of authentic texts provided students with exposure to workplace discourse while simultaneously increasing their engagement and motivation in ESP learning contexts.

The positive perceptions identified in this study support the argument that authentic materials can bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-world communication practices. By integrating press releases into ESP instruction, students not only learned language skills but also gained insight into professional communication practices relevant to their future careers.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study investigated the use of press releases as authentic materials in teaching English for Business and Professional Communication within an ESP context. The findings demonstrate that the integration of authentic press releases through a genre-based instructional approach provided meaningful learning experiences for students and contributed positively to the development of their professional communication skills.

Regarding the first research question, the study found that press releases were implemented through several instructional stages, including introduction to the genre, analysis of authentic texts, collaborative writing activities, and independent writing practice. The use of genre analysis enabled students to identify the organizational structure, communicative purpose, and language features of professional texts. This implementation aligned with ESP principles emphasizing workplace-oriented and context-based language learning.

In relation to the second research question, the findings revealed that press releases positively impacted students' communication skills. Students demonstrated improvements in organizing information, using formal and professional language, developing audience awareness, and understanding workplace communication conventions. The use of authentic texts also enriched students' vocabulary and enhanced

their ability to produce structured professional writing. Although students initially experienced difficulties with complex vocabulary and formal language style, instructional scaffolding and collaborative learning activities helped them overcome these challenges.

Concerning the third research question, the study found that students generally perceived press releases positively as learning materials. Students considered authentic press releases relevant, engaging, and beneficial for their future careers. They also appreciated the opportunity to learn through real-world corporate communication practices rather than relying solely on textbook-based materials. Furthermore, students believed that genre analysis activities helped them better understand how professional communication is constructed in workplace contexts.

Overall, this study highlights the pedagogical value of integrating authentic materials, particularly press releases, into ESP classrooms. The findings suggest that press releases can function not only as reading materials but also as effective tools for developing professional writing and communication competence. By exposing students to authentic workplace discourse, ESP instruction can better prepare learners for future professional communication demands.

This study recommends that ESP lecturers incorporate more authentic professional texts into classroom instruction and provide sufficient scaffolding to support learners' comprehension and production of complex texts. Future research may explore the effectiveness of press releases in different ESP contexts, employ mixed-method or experimental designs, and investigate the long-term impact of authentic materials on students' workplace communication readiness.

### **Conflict of interest**

There is no conflict of interest

### **Authors' contribution**

The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the results. The authors also read and approved the final manuscript.

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