

Students' Perceptions of Practitioner-led Teaching in a Public Speaking Course

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Abstract

Effective communication skills are among the key drivers of employability, and involving industry practitioners in teaching has become a common strategy for linking classroom instruction to workplace practice. Yet practitioner-led teaching in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Public Speaking course remains underexplored, particularly in Indonesian vocational higher education. This qualitative descriptive study examined the perceptions of 11 students in a Public Speaking course within a Diploma IV (D4) program at an Indonesian state polytechnic institution, following four sessions taught entirely by an invited industry practitioner who used pedagogical translanguaging, delivering roughly 70% of instruction in English and drawing on Indonesian for the remainder. An anonymous, open-ended questionnaire was administered, and responses were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. Three broader themes were identified: practice, feedback, and confidence-building as an interconnected learning loop; the value of authentic industry insight alongside the complementary roles of the practitioner and the lecturer; and students' comfort with the practitioner's flexible use of Indonesian alongside majority-English instruction. Students valued repeated practice, immediate feedback, and the practitioner's real-world experience, and several reported feeling more at ease when the practitioner drew on Indonesian than when their regular lecturer taught exclusively in English. Because instruction with the practitioner remained majority English, this comfort appears tied to the availability of strategic first-language support rather than to an absence of English altogether, suggesting that deliberate, majority-English translanguaging can lower affective barriers to participation without abandoning ESP's core aim of building English communicative competence. Because the findings reflect students' self-reported perceptions rather than observed performance, the study is best read as an exploration of perceived value rather than a demonstration of improved English competence.

Keywords: authentic learning, English for Specific Purposes, public speaking, industry practitioner, vocational higher education

1. Introduction

Vocational higher education institutions are in a unique position to equip students for professional practice, as their curricula integrate academic learning with workplace skills. It is here that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become a major pedagogical tool for equipping students with the language and communication skills they need for their future professions. In comparison with general English, which focuses on general communicative competence, ESP is shaped by the specific academic and professional needs of learners and aims to develop communicative skills within the context of a discipline or occupation (Basturkmen, 2010; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hyland, 2006). Recent ESP scholarship holds that effective teaching should not rest solely on language forms but should engage learners in real-life communicative tasks that resemble those they could perform in the workplace (Anthony, 2018; Basturkmen, 2021b). This has made authenticity central to ESP pedagogy, shaping the content and classroom experience of instruction as well as the learning environment and teaching methodologies

Among the various communication skills taught in vocational ESP programs, speaking in front of others is particularly significant, as students frequently need to present, arrange meetings, promote ideas, negotiate with customers, and represent their companies at work. Vocational education in public speaking goes beyond the prepared speech itself, covering confidence, audience awareness, persuasive speech, critical thinking, and the ability to apply this knowledge in practice (Lucas, 2020b; Morreale et al., 2007). Previous research demonstrates that experiential speaking practice, structured feedback, and reflection can improve students' oral communication competence, confidence, and readiness to communicate (De Grez et al., 2009; Ditta, 2025). Literature syntheses identify repeated opportunities to practice, feedback, and self-evaluation as key design principles for building oral presentation competence (Van Ginkel et al., 2017), and the source and immediacy of feedback have been shown to affect the development of competence, even in the context of ESP business communication (Van Ginkel et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2021). Similarly, Tsang (2020) argues that the most effective way to develop oral presentation and delivery skills is to expose learners to real-life communication contexts that build both competence and confidence. Affective factors also shape oral performance: anxiety about speaking a foreign language inhibits the desire to communicate (Lin et al., 2025), while self-efficacy, built through successful practice, strengthens it (Bandura, 1997). These findings point to the value of instructional approaches that give students ample opportunity to engage in professional communication rather than merely study it.

Growing interest in involving industry practitioners in higher education has also been driven by heightened concern with authenticity. From the perspectives of authentic and situated learning, practitioner-led instruction allows students to learn under the guidance of professionals who possess both up-to-date job knowledge and hands-on experience in professional communication. These learning experiences can offer students real-life examples, practical feedback, and job-related communication practices that may be less readily available in traditional classroom learning (Billett, 2011; Herrington et al., 2014; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Empirical studies suggest that practitioner engagement can support greater engagement, career readiness, professional identity, and perceived relevance of university learning by helping close the gap between theoretical learning and real-world job environments (Cowan, 2025; Phan et al., 2024; Rodriguez-Martin et al., 2024). This connects with the literature on work-integrated learning, which proposes that university-industry collaboration can positively influence students' employability, professional identity, and workplace-practice preparedness (Jackson, 2015; Smith et al., 2014). Taken as a whole, this literature suggests that industry practitioners can play a meaningful pedagogical role in closing the gap between classroom training and professional communication needs.

Although research on ESP, authentic learning, and public speaking pedagogy has been increasing, three gaps remain. First, much of the earlier literature has treated authenticity as a matter of learning activities, materials, or simulated work, with comparatively little attention paid to the educational role of industry professionals as instructors in ESP courses. Second, research on public speaking has focused mainly on outcomes, such as speaking performance, confidence, and communication anxiety, rather than on how students perceive the process of being taught by a practitioner. Third, empirical evidence from Indonesian vocational higher education remains scarce, despite growing interest in strengthening partnerships between institutions and industry. The perceptions of students taught by practitioners, and the specific features of that teaching they find most useful for developing workplace oral communication, remain insufficiently studied.

For clarity, this study distinguishes *practitioner-led teaching* from related but distinct practices discussed in the literature. Guest lecturing typically involves a single, non-recurring visit by an outside speaker; co-teaching involves a practitioner and an academic instructor sharing responsibility for the same sessions; and work-integrated learning more broadly describes institutional arrangements that connect academic study with workplace experience, such as internships. In the present study, practitioner-led teaching refers to instruction delivered independently by an invited industry professional across a defined block of sessions, without the course lecturer co-instructing during those sessions. This is distinct from *regular teaching*, in which the same content is delivered solely by the course lecturer without practitioner involvement. This distinction matters because it isolates the pedagogical effect of practitioner autonomy in the classroom, rather than a more diffuse form of industry exposure, such as a single guest talk.

To address these gaps, this study explores students' perceptions of practitioner-led teaching in an ESP Public Speaking course at an Indonesian vocational higher education institution. Specifically, it investigates (1) how students perceive the teaching practices employed by an industry practitioner, (2) which aspects of the practitioner's instruction they consider most beneficial for developing workplace oral communication competence, and (3) how they compare the practitioner's teaching with that of their regular lecturer. This research is relevant to current discourse on authentic learning and practitioner roles in language education because it offers empirical evidence from the Indonesian vocational ESP context and practical implications for incorporating industry knowledge into ESP education. The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows: the next section reviews the pertinent literature and proposes a conceptual framework; subsequent sections present the research methods, findings, discussion, and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English for Specific Purposes and Authentic Learning

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is defined by its focus on the specific educational and professional needs of learners, in contrast to the general language knowledge targeted by General English (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hyland, 2006). The design of ESP courses is therefore driven by an analysis of the communicative needs of a specific discipline or workplace, treating language as a tool for performing professional duties (Basturkmen, 2010). Recent accounts of the field describe ESP as shifting toward preparing learners for real-world professional communication by incorporating workplace tasks and industry experience (Anthony, 2018; Basturkmen, 2021a; Hyland, 2022).

This orientation aligns ESP with the wider theories of authentic and situated learning. Situated learning holds that competence develops through engagement in community practices rather than decontextualized instruction (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and authentic learning environments expose students to realistic contexts, expert practice, and challenging tasks that resemble professional

practice (Herrington et al., 2014). Cognitive apprenticeship describes how learners acquire expertise by observing skillful practitioners and moving toward increasingly autonomous practice (Collins et al., 1989), while experiential learning theory frames learning as a cycle of concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Combined, these views imply that vocational ESP is most effective when students repeat authentic communicative tasks under conditions that resemble the workplace (Belcher, 2006; Billett, 2011).

These strands of theory converge on a similar claim but from different angles: situated learning and authentic learning describe the conditions under which learning should occur, while cognitive apprenticeship and experiential learning describe the process by which it occurs within those conditions. Practitioner-led teaching sits at the intersection of both: it supplies the authentic, situated context these theories call for, while the practitioner's modelling and feedback approximate the apprenticeship relationship through which learners are expected to progress.

2.2 Public Speaking and the Development of Oral Communication Competence

Vocational and professional communication emphasizes public speaking, as graduates are often expected to present, persuade, and represent their organizations (Lucas, 2020a; Morreale et al., 2007). Studies generally agree that competence in oral presentation develops through repetitive, systematic practice combined with feedback and reflection (De Grez et al., 2009; Van Ginkel et al., 2015). The source and timing of feedback affect this development, and prompt, targeted feedback has the potential to narrow the gap between actual and desired performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Van Ginkel et al., 2015), including in the context of ESP business communication (Xu et al., 2021). Self-regulated, authentic presentation teaching can further support the development of competence and confidence in learners (Tsang, 2020).

Affective factors are also important alongside skills. Fear of speaking hinders learners' willingness to communicate, while a supportive environment and repeated practice reduce anxiety and build confidence (Ditta, 2025; Lin et al., 2025; Woodrow, 2006). These results are consistent with social cognitive theory, which holds that self-efficacy is established chiefly through mastery experiences of successful performance (Bandura, 1997). What is less consistent across this literature is the extent to which these gains transfer beyond the classroom: most of the cited studies measure confidence and self-reported anxiety rather than observed communicative performance in authentic settings, leaving open the question of whether classroom-based confidence gains generalize to workplace speaking.

2.3 Practitioner Involvement, Co-Teaching, and Work-Integrated Learning

There is a growing literature on the role of industry professionals in higher education. Research on work-integrated learning indicates that collaboration between higher education institutions and industry can enhance employability, professional identity, and workplace readiness by connecting theoretical learning with practice (Jackson, 2015; Smith et al., 2014). Studies of guest speakers and practitioner participation report gains in engagement, perceived relevance, and professional awareness, though the value students derive appears to depend on the practitioner's relatability and credibility rather than expertise alone (Cowan, 2025; Phan et al., 2024). Studies of co-teaching similarly show that students benefit when academics and practitioners offer complementary rather than duplicated knowledge within the same course (Friend & Cook, 2017; Rodriguez-Martin et al., 2024).

These studies are not uniform in their conclusions, however. Positive outcomes are consistently reported when practitioner involvement is structured and sustained, but studies of one-off guest talks report more modest and inconsistent effects, suggesting that the format and duration

of practitioner involvement, rather than its mere presence, shape its pedagogical value. Few studies specify the conditions under which practitioner-led teaching might fail to add value, for instance, when a practitioner lacks pedagogical skill or when students perceive a mismatch between the practitioner's field and their own. This is a tension the present study's Indonesian vocational ESP setting is well placed to speak to, since it examines a sustained, multi-session practitioner-led block rather than a single guest appearance.

2.4 The Indonesian Vocational Context and the Research Gap

Research on ESP, workplace communication needs among vocational higher education students, the pedagogy of spoken communication, and multilingual classroom practices has been gaining attention in Indonesian vocational higher education (Apriyanti et al., 2025; Kuncoroningtyas et al., 2025; Reski & Fitriani, 2025). Specific studies on translanguaging suggest that the controlled use of the first language can reduce anxiety and enhance readiness to communicate in vocational classrooms (Kuncoroningtyas et al., 2025; Miftakh et al., 2025). Together, this literature points to the value of authentic, practice-based, feedback-intensive instruction and to the potential of practitioner involvement to reinforce professional communication. However, most existing studies examine short-term practitioner engagement, internships, or general teaching practices rather than sustained, practitioner-led teaching within a regular ESP course, and little is known about how students in Indonesian vocational settings perceive that specific arrangement. This is the gap the current study addresses.

Claims in this literature, including in the paragraphs above, are not uniformly strong. Statements such as "industry practitioners can play a prominent role in pedagogy" or "authenticity has become a significant principle of ESP pedagogy" are widely repeated but are supported mainly by studies with small samples, single institutions, or self-report measures, much like the present study. These claims are therefore treated here as plausible and well-supported directions in the field rather than settled findings, and the present study is positioned as one further, modest contribution to that evidence base rather than a confirmation of it.

2.5 Toward an Integrated Conceptual Framework

The theoretical perspectives reviewed above, authentic learning, situated learning, cognitive apprenticeship, work-integrated learning, and ESP pedagogy, are often invoked separately in the literature but are treated here as complementary layers of the same phenomenon. Authentic and situated learning describe why practitioner-led teaching should matter: it places students in a context that resembles the workplace itself rather than a simulation of it. Cognitive apprenticeship describes how that context becomes learning: the practitioner models professional communication, gives feedback grounded in workplace standards, and gradually hands responsibility for performance to the student. Work-integrated learning provides the institutional frame, positioning practitioner-led sessions as a structured, curriculum-embedded form of industry engagement rather than an incidental one. ESP pedagogy supplies the disciplinary anchor, specifying that the relevant competence being developed is workplace-oriented English communication.

This framework treats practitioner-led teaching as a hybrid construct: a form of authentic and situated learning, operationalized through a cognitive apprenticeship relationship between student and practitioner, and structurally functioning as a compact form of work-integrated learning within an ESP course. This framing directly informs the study's three research questions, which examine, respectively, how students experience the apprenticeship relationship (RQ1), which features of that relationship they find most valuable for workplace communication (RQ2), and how they position the practitioner relative to the lecturer within this hybrid structure (RQ3).

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative descriptive design (Sandelowski, 2000) was used to understand students' perceptions of practitioner-led teaching. This design is appropriate for producing a low-inference description of participants' experiences that stays close to their own words, rather than a highly interpretive or theory-driven account. Framed this way, the study describes students' perceptions of practitioner-led teaching; it does not evaluate, and should not be read as evidence of, whether the approach improved their communication competence, since no observational or performance-based data were collected.

The study was conducted in a Public Speaking course within the Diploma IV English for Communication, Business and Professionals program at the State Polytechnic of Madiun, Indonesia. The course ran for a full semester, with sixteen class meetings. Twelve of these meetings were taught by the course lecturer, who is also the first author of this study; the remaining four meetings, each lasting six hours, were led entirely and independently by an invited industry practitioner, with the course lecturer present only briefly during these sessions. This arrangement means that, for the purposes of this study, practitioner-led teaching refers specifically to these four sessions, during which the practitioner had sole responsibility for instruction. During these sessions, he used pedagogical translanguaging, delivering instruction predominantly in English, estimated at roughly 70 % of instructional talk, while drawing on Indonesian for the remainder, typically to build rapport, clarify a point, or ease a student into a speaking attempt. This differed from the course lecturer's twelve sessions, which followed the course's standard English-medium approach. The practitioner's sessions, therefore, remained majority English rather than a wholesale switch to the students' first language, a distinction that matters for how the language-related findings in Sections 4 and 5 should be read.

3.2 Participants

The invited practitioner holds a master's degree in communication science from Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) and has worked as a national television reporter since 2015. Alongside this role, he independently teaches and trains public speaking courses and is based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He was invited as an external collaborator for this course and held no other formal teaching appointment at the institution; his involvement in the study was limited to the four sessions described above.

Because the first author was also the students' regular course lecturer for the other twelve sessions, the participants were her own students rather than an unfamiliar sample. This dual role is disclosed here as a matter of positionality: it likely made students more willing to complete the questionnaire, but it may also have shaped what they felt comfortable disclosing, including a reluctance to offer critical feedback about either the practitioner or the course. To limit this influence, individual responses were not linked to identities during analysis or reporting, and participants are referred to only by pseudonymous labels (P1-P11) throughout.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling: all twenty students enrolled in the course were eligible and invited, and eleven usable responses were retained for analysis, as described in Section 3.3. All participants were fourth-semester students, with varying levels of English proficiency, and none had prior experience being taught by an industry practitioner. Gender and age were intentionally not collected, as part of the anonymity design described above, and given the first author's dual role as the students' own lecturer. This means the sample cannot be further characterized by gender or age balance, which limits how precisely readers can assess the

transferability of the findings to other vocational ESP settings. However, the shared semester level and the absence of prior practitioner-led exposure give the sample a clear, comparable baseline.

Eleven respondents are a modest sample in numeric terms, and its adequacy for inductive thematic analysis rests on information power rather than size alone (Malterud et al., 2016). The sample was highly specific: all participants were drawn from a single, homogeneous group, enrolled in the same course, exposed to the same four practitioner-led sessions, and responding to a narrowly focused set of eight questions that concentrated rather than diluted the information relevant to the study aim in each response. This specificity, combined with an established analytic framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and a study aim limited to describing perceptions rather than building or testing theory, supports the adequacy of eleven detailed responses for identifying recurring, well-evidenced themes. The findings should nonetheless be read as descriptive of this course rather than generalizable beyond it.

3.3 Instruments

An anonymous, open-ended questionnaire was administered via Google Forms after the semester ended, rather than during class time, so students could complete it independently and without the time pressure of the course itself. It was distributed to all 20 students enrolled in the course for the 2025/2026 academic year. The questionnaire began with a short background section, followed by eight open-ended questions, presented bilingually in Indonesian and English, asking students how the practitioner taught, which techniques they found most memorable, how the practitioner drew on workplace experience, what benefited their speaking most, what could be improved, and how they compared the practitioner's teaching with that of their lecturer. Participation was voluntary and did not affect grades; no personal data were collected, and both the practitioner and the lecturer were referred to by pseudonyms in the instrument itself. One of the twelve responses received was a pilot response completed by the first author before distribution, used to check the clarity of the questions, and was excluded from analysis, leaving eleven responses for analysis (a 55 % response rate).

Students answered in Indonesian, which allowed them to respond candidly without the added burden of composing in a second language; their responses were then translated into English by the first author for reporting. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the process: individual responses were not shared with the practitioner, and no information that could identify individual students was disclosed in analysis or reporting.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

The responses were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis, following the six-step approach of Braun & Clarke (2006): familiarization through repeated reading, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final analysis. Representative excerpts in English are used throughout to illustrate each theme. To support trustworthiness, the coding and themes were revisited and refined several times against the original responses to ensure the analysis remained grounded in the data. The study context and procedures are described in detail so that readers can judge the transferability of the findings to comparable vocational ESP settings.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Because responses were anonymous and no contact information was retained, member checking was not possible. Data were drawn from a single questionnaire administered at a single institution and course, without observational or performance-based measures, so the findings describe students' perceptions rather than demonstrate actual gains in communication competence. The first author's dual role as both the students' regular lecturer and the researcher is also acknowledged as a

potential influence on participants' responses, as discussed above. Given the small sample size and single-site setting, these constraints limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized beyond this course.

4. Results

The eleven students' responses were analyzed and grouped into three broader, interconnected themes describing their perceptions of the practitioner-led sessions: (1) practice, feedback, and confidence as a connected learning loop; (2) authentic industry insight and the complementary roles of the practitioner and lecturer; and (3) comfort with the practitioner's flexible, majority-English translanguaging. Across these themes, students consistently linked the practitioner's teaching to hands-on practice, timely feedback, real-world experience, and a relaxed classroom climate, while also treating the practitioner's role as additive to, rather than a replacement for, the lecturer's. Snippets of participants' answers are presented in English translation, and participants are numbered P1-P11. Notably, none of the eleven responses raised critical or negative feedback about the practitioner-led sessions; this near-uniform positivity is addressed as a possible feature of the questionnaire's retrospective, open-ended format in the Discussion section.

4.1 Practice, feedback, and confidence as a connected learning loop

Students did not describe practice, feedback, and confidence as separate benefits of the practitioner-led sessions, but as stages of a single, repeating cycle: a brief explanation, followed immediately by practice, followed by specific correction, which, in turn, made the next attempt easier. P3 summarized this rhythm concisely as being *"straight from theory into practice,"* and P9 described the same structure as effective precisely because the gap between input and application was so short: *"[the practitioner] explains the material and then immediately follows it with practice; in my opinion, this is very effective."* P2 and P11 both emphasized the volume of practice this rhythm allowed, with P2 noting there was *"not too much theory, a lot of practice,"* and P11 recalling that *"in one meeting, we could practice two to three times."*

What made this repetition useful, rather than merely frequent, was the feedback attached to it. P9 described being *"immediately corrected, and then there was an explanation of the correction,"* and P7 similarly valued being shown both the problem and the fix, recalling that the practitioner *"tells me where my mistakes are in public speaking, then tells me how to do better."* P6 described an impromptu practice round followed by feedback on *"what we did well and what we need to work on."* Because the feedback arrived immediately after a specific attempt, students could connect it directly to something they had just done, rather than to a general rule they had to apply later from memory; this immediacy, more than the content of the feedback itself, appears to be what students found instructive.

Students also linked their growing confidence to this same cycle rather than to encouragement alone. P6 called practicing on the spot *"a total game-changer for building up confidence and overcoming public speaking anxiety,"* and P4 explicitly linked confidence to repeated exposure to risk, observing that *"being brave enough to make mistakes when performing in front" mattered because "confidence is trained through daily habit."* P8 framed the same process in terms of a specific skill, learning *"how to handle nervousness"* through repetition rather than reassurance. Taken as a set, these responses suggest that what built confidence was not the practitioner's encouragement in isolation, but repeated, low-stakes exposure to the same practice-feedback cycle described above. Students appear to have come to see mistakes as a routine, recoverable part of the process rather than a threat.

This cycle was also supported by the classroom climate that the practitioner created. P10 described being invited to introduce themselves and talk about their hobbies at the outset, which *"made the class atmosphere become more comfortable for speaking,"* and P6 described the sessions as *"super chill and never rushed."* P4 and P11 both linked this relaxed style to their willingness to keep participating, with P11 describing the practitioner as *"very interactive... always involving the students in practice."* This atmosphere appears to function less as a separate, fourth benefit and more as the condition that made the practice-feedback-confidence cycle possible in the first place: without it, the repeated public risk of speaking and being corrected in front of peers described above would plausibly have been harder for students to sustain.

4.2 Authentic industry insight and complementary roles

Students placed particular value on the practitioner's professional experience outside academia, treating his workplace stories as a distinct source of learning rather than an illustrative aside. Several recalled a specific account of the practitioner reporting under pressure during an assignment in Saudi Arabia. As P5 recounted, *"when a pilgrimage-agency fraud happened in Mecca, [he] stayed calm and kept tirelessly searching for a new topic."* P2 found such examples *"relatable to the working world, so it was easier to picture how public speaking is used in the field,"* and P6 said the practitioner *"always backs up their points with real-world work experience,"* which *"opened my eyes to what being a reporter or a practitioner out there actually looks like."* P11, who was drawn to journalism, singled out moments when the practitioner *"explained something in journalist mode, such as vocal technique and improvisation."* For these students, the practitioner's credibility rested less on formal expertise than on the specificity and relatability of these accounts, which echoes findings elsewhere that relatability can matter as much as expertise in how students value practitioner involvement (Phan et al., 2024).

At the same time, students consistently positioned the practitioner and the lecturer as complementary rather than competing sources of instruction. P2 captured this balance directly: *"A practitioner tells more real experiences, so it is more relatable. A lecturer usually focuses more on theory, but there is still practice. Both are equally important."* P10 offered a similar contrast, noting that the practitioner *"discussed more real field experience, whereas a lecturer usually focuses more on theory,"* and concluding that *"the two complement each other."* P8 located the difference specifically in the practitioner's habit of drawing on *"his own experience."* None of the eleven students framed the practitioner-led sessions as superior to or a replacement for the lecturer's teaching; instead, they consistently described a division of labor in which the lecturer supplied conceptual grounding and the practitioner supplied field-tested application.

4.3 Comfort with the practitioner's translanguaging

A further theme, distinctive to this ESP setting, concerned the language of instruction itself. The practitioner's four sessions were conducted predominantly in English, with roughly 70 % of instructional talk in English, and the remaining 30 % in Indonesian, while the lecturer's twelve sessions followed the course's standard English-medium approach. Several students nonetheless described the practitioner's classroom as markedly more comfortable, framing the contrast in terms of Indonesian rather than the smaller proportion of Indonesian actually used. P3 explained the difference directly: *"with a lecturer, we use English and feel pressured when using English; it is different with the practitioner, who uses Indonesian, so it just flows."* P4 linked this to independent learning, noting that *"when taught by a lecturer, I feel I cannot learn on my own because it uses English, whereas I am not good at English."* P5 offered a more measured version of the same contrast, observing that while nervousness remained in both settings, *"practicing with a lecturer, I am nervous, but with the practitioner, I am a little less nervous."* Set against the actual language composition of the sessions, these responses suggest that what students reacted to was the presence

of an Indonesian option at all, available whenever needed, rather than a session conducted mostly or entirely in their first language.

This theme deserves particular attention because it qualifies, rather than undercuts, the value of practitioner-led teaching in an English-medium ESP course. Because roughly 70% of the practitioner's instructional talk remained in English, the comfort students describe cannot be explained simply as relief from English altogether; students continued to practice speaking in English for most of each session. What the comfort appears to track, instead, is the availability of Indonesian as a fallback, used by the practitioner to build rapport, clarify a point, or ease a student into an attempt, which P4's comment about self-assessed English ability suggests mattered most to students who found English itself intimidating. This distinction between comfort from the absence of English and comfort from a flexible option to use Indonesian when needed is taken up directly in the Discussion.

5. Discussion

Taken together, the three themes suggest that what students valued in the practitioner-led sessions was not primarily the practitioner's industry status, but the specific pedagogical structure his sessions created: a tight, repeated cycle of practice and feedback, delivered by someone whose authority came from lived professional experience, in a classroom climate and language that lowered the perceived cost of making mistakes. Viewed through the conceptual framework proposed in Section 2.5, the practitioner's role in this study most closely resembles that of a master in a cognitive apprenticeship relationship (Collins et al., 1989). Rather than simply describing good public speaking, he modelled it through his own workplace anecdotes, then gradually withdrew scaffolding by moving students quickly from explanation to unsupervised practice and only then supplying corrective feedback, mirroring the coaching-and-fading sequence described by cognitive apprenticeship theory.

This same structure also illustrates situated and authentic learning in a fairly literal sense. Rather than practicing public speaking as a decontextualized classroom skill, students practiced it under the direction of someone who used the skill professionally under pressure, as in the Mecca reporting example recalled by several participants. The vividness with which students recalled this and similar anecdotes, rather than the general content of the practitioner's advice, suggests that authenticity in this setting functioned less as background context and more as a memorable anchor that made the accompanying instruction stick, consistent with authentic learning's claim that realistic context strengthens, rather than merely accompanies, learning (Herrington et al., 2014).

The complementary-roles theme extends this picture rather than standing apart from it. Students did not describe the lecturer as redundant once the practitioner arrived; instead, they described a fairly stable division in which the lecturer's 12 sessions provided the conceptual and linguistic groundwork that made the practitioner's 4 sessions usable. This fits work-integrated learning's premise that industry involvement adds most value when it is integrated with, rather than substituted for, academic instruction (Jackson, 2015; Smith et al., 2014). Practically, this suggests that vocational institutions do not need to choose between lecturer-led and practitioner-led instruction, but can instead design the two roles deliberately around each other, for example, by having the lecturer explicitly frame each practitioner block in terms of the concepts it is meant to put into practice, rather than treating the practitioner's sessions as a self-contained unit.

The language-comfort theme needs to be read carefully, since what it does and does not show for ESP pedagogy specifically is easy to overstate. Because the practitioner's sessions remained majority English, roughly 70% of instructional talk, the study does not show that students preferred

practitioner-led teaching simply because it let them avoid English; for most of each session, they were still practicing public speaking in English, with the practitioner. What the data show instead is that a deliberate, minority use of Indonesian, woven into an otherwise English-medium session, was associated with markedly lower reported pressure than the lecturer's fully English-medium sessions. This is a meaningfully different and more encouraging finding for ESP than a simple English-avoidance story: it suggests that strategic translanguaging, rather than full first-language instruction, can preserve the English-medium core of an ESP course while still lowering the affective barrier that keeps some students from attempting to speak at all. This reading is consistent with, and extends, the translanguaging literature already noted in Section 2.4 (Kuncoroningtyas et al., 2025; Miftakh et al., 2025), and it directly addresses the concern that comfort-driven preferences might come at the expense of English development, since the practice-feedback cycle described in Section 4.1, which students valued most, was substantially an English-medium cycle rather than an Indonesian one.

This has a direct bearing on how the lecturer-practitioner dichotomy in Section 4.3 should be understood. The lecturer's sessions were strictly English-medium, with no built-in flexibility to shift to another language when a student struggled; the practitioner's sessions were majority English but included Indonesian as an available, situational tool. Students' comments suggest they were responding less to a language switch and more to the presence or absence of that flexibility, that is, whether English was the only permitted channel for participation or one channel among a small, deliberately managed set. Framed this way, the dichotomy is not really English versus Indonesian, but rigid English-only instruction versus managed, majority-English translanguaging, and it is the second, more flexible model that students experienced as lowering pressure without removing English from the practice they were doing. For ESP pedagogy, this reframes the practical question away from whether to use English or Indonesian and toward how much interactional flexibility a largely English-medium classroom can build in without losing its English-medium character, which is precisely the kind of design decision the recommendations in Section 6 return to.

A related point follows from the near-complete absence of critical feedback in the data, noted in Section 4. Because the first author was the students' own lecturer, this pattern is more plausibly explained by the dual researcher-instructor role described in Section 3 or by the retrospective, non-anonymous nature of a small-class questionnaire than by the assumption that the sessions were uniformly successful. This is a limitation of the data rather than a finding, and it means the uniformly positive picture presented across the three themes should be read as students' willingness to voice positive perceptions under these conditions, not as evidence that no difficulties occurred.

Overall, the findings suggest that practitioner-led teaching, in this specific, sustained, four-session format, can support authentic and situated ESP learning by combining professional credibility with a tight practice-feedback cycle, while also surfacing a genuine tension between affective comfort and the English-medium goals of the course. Because this study examined one course, one practitioner, and eleven students at a single institution, these patterns should be read as plausible mechanisms worth testing further, not as generalizable conclusions.

6. Conclusion

This study examined students' perceptions of practitioner-led teaching in an ESP Public Speaking course at an Indonesian vocational higher education institution, focusing on four sessions taught independently by an invited industry practitioner. Students perceived this teaching through three interconnected features: a repeated cycle of practice and immediate feedback that built confidence through exposure rather than encouragement alone, authentic industry insight delivered in a way that complemented rather than replaced the course lecturer's role, and a marked comfort

with the practitioner's managed, majority-English translanguaging, which eased participation without removing students from English-medium practice, though how far these gains extend to unsupported workplace communication remains open. These findings indicate that professional experience, when deliberately built into a course, can supply authentic communicative practice and workplace perspective without displacing the lecturer's theoretical and pedagogical role, though they describe students' perceptions of one course rather than a demonstrated improvement in their communication competence.

Based specifically on these findings, institutions considering similar arrangements might take two concrete steps. First, because students valued the tight practice-feedback cycle described in Section 4.1 more than the practitioner's credentials in the abstract, institutions could give invited practitioners a brief pedagogical orientation focused on structuring short practice-feedback loops, rather than assuming subject-matter expertise alone will translate into effective teaching. Second, the comfort theme in Section 4.3 suggests that the practitioner's own approach, managed, majority-English translanguaging rather than strict English-only instruction, is itself a workable model worth formalizing rather than leaving to individual practitioners' instincts. Institutions could build explicit translanguaging guidelines into practitioner-led and lecturer-led blocks alike, for example, specifying that Indonesian may be used for rapport-building, clarification, or easing a student into a speaking attempt, while the substantive practice and feedback remain in English, rather than defaulting to either strict English-only instruction or unrestricted first-language use.

Future research should move beyond larger samples in the abstract toward specific longitudinal questions raised directly by these findings. In particular, tracking these same eleven students into their internships or early employment could show whether the confidence and comfort they reported here actually translate into stronger workplace public speaking performance, and specifically whether the affective relief associated with the practitioner's managed translanguaging persists as a benefit or instead leaves gaps once these students must perform in fully English-medium professional settings without that flexibility. Incorporating the perspectives of lecturers and practitioners themselves, alongside classroom observation or performance-based measures, would also help clarify whether the mechanisms proposed in Section 5, particularly the cognitive apprenticeship reading of the practitioner's role, hold up under closer scrutiny.

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