

English Learning Needs of Sport Students: Toward a Project-Based Approach with 4C Skills

Mike Nurmalia Sari

Universitas Negeri Padang

mikenurmalia@student.unp.ac.id

M. Zaim

Universitas Negeri Padang

mzaim@fbs.unp.ac.id

Havid Ardi

Universitas Negeri Padang

havid_a@fbs.unp.ac.id

Corresponding email: mikenurmalia@student.unp.ac.id

Abstract

Studies on English language learning practices in Sport have received considerable interest from scholars in recent years due to the significance of English skills for graduates in the job market and professional settings. However, there is limited research that has focused on investigating the needs of Sport students in learning English through effective pedagogical approaches that integrate Project-based Learning (PjBL) with 4C skills: Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity. This study aims to 1) investigate the specific English learning needs of Sport students in higher education, and 2) examine preferred learning approaches that integrate PjBL with 4C skills. This exploratory sequential mixed-methods design combined quantitative data from structured questionnaires with qualitative insights from interviews, involving 52 sport students (30 males and 22 females) at a higher education institution in Sungai Penuh, Jambi, Indonesia. The findings reveal that sports students require proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar, with a particular emphasis on sports-specific terminology and contexts. Furthermore, the qualitative results indicate that students strongly favor learning approaches that are collaborative, authentic, and project-based. They perceive Project-Based Learning (PBL) as highly effective, particularly when it promotes 4C skills. Students expressed those tasks such as video creation, podcast production, simulations, and team discussions enhance their engagement, confidence, and practical language use. These findings suggest that integrating PjBL with 4C skills into English instruction is essential for meeting the specific language needs of sports students and enhancing their readiness for global professional environments.

Keywords: English for Sport; Need analysis; PjBL; Sport students; 4C skills

Introduction

Within the era of sports globalization, English has emerged as the principal medium of communication across diverse professional spheres (Bobyreva, 2023), encompassing coaching methodologies, officiating, sports administration, and

international competitive arenas (Cheng & Luo, 2024a, 2024b). Studies reveal that more than 75% of international sports discourse transpires in English, whether about coaching tactics, officiating directives, or inter-player negotiations (Griffiths, 2021). Consequently, competence in English is a foundational skill for athletes, coaches, and sports professionals to assimilate global information, cultivate international partnerships, and augment career trajectories (Rozaq et al., 2021). In Indonesia, the imperative for English proficiency within sports academic disciplines continues to escalate commensurate with increasing participation in international competitions.

However, the acquisition of English by sports students in Indonesia continues to encounter a range of difficulties. Rahman et al. (2024) observed that existing instructional materials are predominantly general in nature and not tailored to specific athletic contexts. Optimally, English language curricula for sports should incorporate high-frequency, sport-specific vocabulary (Kongcharoen, 2018). As a result, students face considerable challenges in comprehending technical terminology, dissecting game strategies, or engaging effectively in post-match interviews. Moreover, a significant proportion of educators may not possess a background in sports or specialized pedagogical training in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), while Supunya (2023) emphasizes that ESP instructors play a crucial role in bridging the gap between students' academic and professional needs and the course content, ensuring that instruction aligns with real-world professional expectations. This phenomenon may create a disparity between the taught content and the practical demands faced by students in their discipline.

Several prior studies have investigated English language learning for sports students. Nevertheless, existing research has predominantly concentrated on areas such as learning models (Đorić, 2020), speaking barriers (Nugroho et al., 2022), motivation (Suraya et al., 2021), teaching styles (Franco et al., 2023), and the development of sports and language integration skills (Poyyamozi & Prasanna Balaji, 2023). The research conducted by Pranoto and Suprayogi (2020) was restricted to learning topics, thereby not comprehensively identifying the specific material requirements of sports students. Moreover, English language pedagogy within the field of sports studies has not adequately integrated 21st-century skills, specifically the 4C skills: Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, and Collaboration. These competencies are highly pertinent in the realm of sports, which

necessitates teamwork, problem-solving abilities, and effective cross-cultural communication (Somphol, 2022). Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is recognized as an approach capable of effectively fostering these 4C skills. Regrettably, the application of this pedagogical approach in English language instruction for Indonesian sports students remains largely unexplored and underdeveloped.

Although previous research has explored language learning in sports education, few studies have adopted a mixed-methods approach to triangulate students' perceived needs with their preferred pedagogical models. At the same time, while Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and 21st-century skills such as the 4Cs have gained significant attention in general education (Bell, 2010; Trilling & Fadel, 2009), their theoretical and practical integration into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) remains limited (Beckett & Slater, 2005). Foundational ESP frameworks (Hutchinson & Water, 1987), for instance, focus primarily on linguistic and needs-based elements, suggesting a gap in incorporating broader educational competencies.

In response to these gaps, the present study aims to identify the authentic English language learning needs of sports students and explore their expectations regarding pedagogical approaches that incorporate PjBL and promote 4C skills. The outcomes are expected to contribute to the development of contextualized English curricula and provide insights for designing teacher training programs and instructional materials tailored to the realities of sports education. Ultimately, this research seeks to support the advancement of English language competence and global readiness among Indonesian sports students. Based on these objectives, the study is guided by following research questions:

1. What are the current English language learning needs of sports students?
2. What learning approaches do students anticipate will effectively address these needs, particularly in the context of project-based learning and 4C skills?

Research Methodology

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, beginning with quantitative data collection followed by qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Clark, 2018). This design was selected to allow the researchers to first identify general patterns and trends in sports students' English learning needs through structured questionnaires. These initial quantitative findings then informed the

subsequent qualitative phase, where in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the underlying reasons and contextual factors behind the patterns. This sequential integration enabled a deeper and more contextualized understanding of the students' learning challenges and preferences. The design is particularly suitable for needs analysis in ESP (English for Specific Purposes), as it combines breadth and generalizability from the survey phase with depth and nuance from qualitative insights, ultimately enhancing the validity of the conclusions drawn

This study employed a stratified random sampling technique to capture the diversity among sports students, as suggested by Ary et al. (2010). A total of 52 students (30 males and 22 females) aged between 19 and 23 years were involved in the study, representing various sports disciplines. The rationale behind this sampling strategy was to ensure that students with different levels of English proficiency and learning experiences were adequately represented. Understanding the unique needs of these students is important in designing an effective English language curriculum that aligns with their academic and professional aspirations.

The data of this study were gathered using a structured questionnaire used to gather quantitative data regarding students' perceptions of the needs of learning English materials. The questionnaire was developed based on the principle of need analysis proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). The content of the questionnaire was validated by three experts in English Language Teaching (ELT) to ensure its relevance, clarity, and alignment with the research objectives. The results of the content validation showed an Aiken's V value of 0.89, indicating that the questionnaire items had a high level of content validity (Aiken, 1985). Then, a pilot study was conducted involving 35 participants who shared similar characteristics with the actual sample of this study to assess the construct validity of the instrument. The results of the construct validity test using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation revealed that all item correlation coefficients exceeded the critical value of *r-table* at a significance level of 0.05 ($r = 0.45-0.79$), indicating that the questionnaire items were constructively valid (Sudijono, 2018). Furthermore, the reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The result showed a reliability coefficient of 0.87, which indicates that the instrument had a high level of internal consistency (Sudijono, 2018) and is therefore reliable for use in the main data collection. After the instrument was confirmed to be both valid and reliable, the

questionnaire was digitized using Google Forms and distributed to the student participants through a shareable link. Respondents were given two weeks to complete and submit their responses.

To gather the qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 purposively selected students, representing various levels of English proficiency: gender background, and active participation in sports academic programs. This purposive sampling ensured diverse perspectives and allowed deeper exploration of varied student experiences within the study context. The interviews aimed to explore their personal experiences, perceived challenges, and preferred learning strategies in acquiring English, particularly within the context of PBL and 4C skills. The interview questions were developed based on the findings from the quantitative phase, specifically focusing on aspects where students indicated high levels of learning needs. Additionally, the questions were informed by the theoretical framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and 21st-century skills, ensuring alignment with the overall research objectives.

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version 22, applying descriptive statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution to identify trends and patterns. Moreover, the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process began with data familiarization through repeated reading of transcripts, followed by generating initial codes that captured meaningful features across the dataset. These codes were then reviewed and collated into broader themes related to the students' perceptions of effective learning approaches, specifically in the context of Project-Based Learning and 4C skills. Each theme was defined and refined with supporting quotations to ensure clarity and representativeness. This flexible and recursive method enabled the researchers to interpret underlying patterns in the participants' experiences, ultimately providing in-depth insights into their English learning needs and preferences.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

This section provides the results of the research on the current needs of sport students in learning English and learning approaches do students anticipate will effectively address these needs, particularly in the context of project-based learning and 4C skills.

The current needs of sports students in learning English

Language Skill Need

The research findings show that the language skills needed for sports students consist of listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 1: Topics of Listening Skills Needed by Sports Students

Language Skill Indicator	Students' Responses					Total Score	Average	Criteria
	5	4	3	2	1			
Understanding instructions and strategies conveyed through audio in sports	48	51	1	0	0	447	89.40%	Very Needed
Understanding match recordings or athlete interviews in English	50	42	8	0	0	442	88.40%	Very Needed
Understanding sports terminology from audio sources in English	57	41	2	0	0	455	91.00%	Very Needed
Listening to sports match broadcasts	51	37	12	0	0	439	87.80%	Very Needed
Listening to athlete/coach interviews to understand strategies and performance	34	45	21	0	0	413	82.60%	Very Needed
Listening to instructions or directions in training or sports matches	61	31	6	2	0	451	90.20%	Very Needed

Note: 5=Very Needed, 4=Needed, 3=Quite Needed, 2=Less Needed, 1= Not Needed

Table 1 shows that the topic of listening skills needed for sports students indicates that understanding instructions, match recordings, sports terminology, and athlete/coach interviews is highly essential. Next, the speaking topics needed for sports students are presented in the following table.

Table 2: Topics of Speaking Skills Needed by Sports Students

Language Skill Indicator	Students' Responses					Total Score	Average	Criteria
	5	4	3	2	1			
Giving instructions in sports discussions in English	30	61	6	3	0	418	83.60%	Very Needed
Interacting in conversations about sports techniques and strategies in English	30	42	26	2	0	400	80.00%	Very Needed
Explaining ideas related to sports activities in both formal and informal situations	45	46	6	3	0	433	86.60%	Very Needed
Understanding announcements related to match schedules, results, or other sports-related activities	40	32	28	0	0	412	82.40%	Very Needed
Giving presentations on strategies, techniques, or specific sports topics	56	32	12	0	0	444	88.80%	Very Needed
Discussing and debating sports topics	56	34	10	0	0	446	89.20%	Very Needed
Performing simulations as a coach, athlete, or sports journalist in various situations	49	34	17	0	0	432	86.40%	Very Needed
Group discussions on tactics or strategies in sports matches	46	32	22	0	0	424	84.80%	Very Needed

Note: 5=Very Needed, 4=Needed, 3=Quite Needed, 2=Less Needed, 1= Not Needed

The topic of speaking skills needed for sports students reveals that essential skills include giving instructions, engaging in conversations about sports techniques, explaining ideas related to sports activities, understanding sports announcements, delivering presentations, discussing, debating sports topics, and performing simulations as coaches or athletes. Next, the reading topics needed for sports students are presented in the following table.

Table 3: Topics of Reading Skills Needed by Sports Students

Language Skill Indicator	Students' Responses					Total Score	Average	Criteria
	5	4	3	2	1			
Understanding written texts on sports theory and practice in English	54	43	3	0	0	451	4.51	Very Needed
Identifying key information in sports articles, such as match results, strategies, or statistics	40	56	4	0	0	436	4.36	Very Needed
Reading and understanding written instructions or reports related to sports in English	51	41	7	1	0	442	4.42	Very Needed
Reading articles from newspapers, magazines, or journals focusing on sports topics	56	32	12	0	0	444	4.44	Very Needed
Reading rules of games from various sports branches	67	21	12	0	0	455	4.55	Very Needed
Reading academic studies related to sports physiology, psychology, or techniques	29	67	4	0	0	425	4.25	Very Needed
Reading match or tournament reports from various sources	56	32	10	2	0	442	4.42	Very Needed

Note: 5=Very Needed, 4=Needed, 3=Quite Needed, 2=Less Needed, 1= Not Needed

The topic of reading skills needed for sports students indicates that crucial skills include understanding written texts on sports theory and practice, identifying key information in articles, comprehending written instructions or reports, reading various sports-related articles, understanding game rules, and analyzing academic studies. Next, the writing topics needed for sports students are presented in the following table.

Table 4: Topics of Writing Skills Needed by Sports Students

Language Skill Indicator	Students' Responses					Total Score	Average	Criteria
	5	4	3	2	1			
Writing reports or descriptions related to sports in English	38	41	20	1	0	416	4.16	Very Needed
Making notes or reports about training or matches in English	45	41	11	3	0	428	4.28	Very Needed
Composing formal writings on sports-related topics in	37	36	21	6	0	404	4.04	Very Needed

English								
Writing match reports or athlete performance analysis	34	32	32	2	0	398	3.98	Needed
Writing training/event plans for specific sports	45	43	9	3	0	430	4.30	Very Needed
Writing journals or reflections on sports or competition experiences	32	46	21	1	0	409	4.09	Very Needed
Writing essays on current issues in the world of sports	34	32	21	13	0	387	3.87	Needed

Note: 5=Very Needed, 4=Needed, 3=Quite Needed, 2=Less Needed, 1= Not Needed

The topic of writing skills needed for sports students highlights that essential skills include writing reports and descriptions related to sports, making notes or reports about training or matches, composing formal writings on sports topics, and writing training plans. Next, the vocabulary needs for sports students are presented in the following table.

Table 5: Topic Needs of Vocabulary Skills for Sports Students

Language Skill Indicator	Students' Responses					Total Score	Average	Criteria
	5	4	3	2	1			
Level of mastery of general and technical vocabulary related to sports in English	65	32	3	0	0	462	4.62	Very Needed
Using sports-related terminology accurately in conversation and writing	56	41	3	0	0	453	4.53	Very Needed
Understanding specific terminology in various sports branches	56	40	4	0	0	452	4.52	Very Needed
Using sports terminology in different contexts	56	32	8	4	0	440	4.40	Very Needed
Teaching vocabulary related to various sports equipment	58	40	2	0	0	456	4.56	Very Needed
Vocabulary related to actions in sports	56	43	1	0	0	455	4.55	Very Needed

Note: 5=Very Needed, 4=Needed, 3=Quite Needed, 2=Less Needed, 1= Not Needed

The topic of vocabulary skills needed for sports students emphasizes the importance of mastering both general and technical vocabulary related to sports in English. Critical skills include using sports-related terminology accurately in conversation and writing, understanding specific terminology across various sports,

and applying sports terminology in different contexts. All indicators scored highlight the necessity for a strong vocabulary foundation in both practical and educational settings within the sports field. Next, the grammar needs for sports students are presented in the following table.

Table 6: Topics of Grammar Skills Needed by Sports Students

Language Skill Indicator	Skala Likert					Total Score	Average	Criteria
	5	4	3	2	1			
Using correct grammar when composing sports-related texts	40	54	6	0	0	434	4.34	Very Needed
Mastery of sentence structure relevant for explaining sports strategies or results	40	43	12	5	0	418	4.18	Very Needed
Mastery of grammar required to write reports or analyses about sports competitions	38	43	11	8	0	411	4.11	Very Needed
Sports-Related Phrasal Verbs	56	43	0	0	0	452	4.52	Very Needed
Present Simple and Present Continuous for describing ongoing actions or routines in training or matches	67	32	1	0	0	466	4.66	Very Needed
Past Tense for writing match reports or reflections on past events	45	45	10	0	0	435	4.35	Very Needed
Passive Voice to describe processes or outcomes in sports	50	43	7	0	0	443	4.43	Very Needed
Modals to give suggestions related to strategies or actions in sports	51	43	6	0	0	445	4.45	Very Needed

Note: 5=Very Needed, 4=Needed, 3=Quite Needed, 2=Less Needed, 1= Not Needed

The grammar skills needed for sports students emphasize mastering correct grammar for writing sports-related texts, understanding sentence structures, and accurately using various grammatical forms, including correct grammar in texts, sentence structures for strategies, grammar for sports reports, phrasal verbs, present simple and continuous for ongoing actions, past tense for match reports, passive voice for processes, and modals for suggestions.

Material Need

The following is the material needed according to the perception of students on English learning for sports students.

Table 7: Material Need for Sports Students

Learning Materials	Skala Likert					Total Score	Average	Criteria
	5	4	3	2	1			
Athletics	61	34	5	0	0	456	4.56	Very Needed
Martial Arts	67	31	2	0	0	465	4.65	Very Needed
Water Sports	31	47	22	0	0	409	4.09	Very Needed
Air Sports	31	46	23	0	0	408	4.08	Very Needed
Extreme Sports	43	45	12	0	0	431	4.31	Very Needed
Gymnastics	56	42	2	0	0	454	4.54	Very Needed
Small Ball Games	56	41	3	0	0	453	4.53	Very Needed
Large Ball Games	55	40	5	0	0	450	4.50	Very Needed
Traditional Sports	56	43	1	0	0	455	4.55	Very Needed
Sports and Health	45	34	21	0	0	424	4.24	Very Needed
Sports Injuries and Their Treatments	56	42	2	0	0	454	4.54	Very Needed
Massage	35	34	31	0	0	404	4.04	Very Needed
Nutrition	45	51	4	0	0	441	4.41	Very Needed
Anatomy and Motor Skills	34	24	34	8	0	384	3.84	Very Needed
Sports and Recreation	56	41	3	0	0	453	4.53	Very Needed
Sports Equipment and Supplies	21	25	41	13	0	354	3.54	Very Needed
Sports Management	45	43	10	2	0	431	4.31	Very Needed
Games	41	38	20	1	0	419	4.19	Very Needed

Note: 5=Very Needed, 4=Needed, 3=Quite Needed, 2=Less Needed, 1= Not Needed

The material needs for sports students are crucial across various disciplines—including athletics, martial arts, and water sports—emphasizing a high demand for resources and knowledge in areas like sports health, injuries, nutrition, and sports management, with most categories rated as "very needed."

Learning Approaches in Project-Based Learning and 4C Skills

This section presents the qualitative findings for learning approaches that students anticipate effectively addressing their English learning needs, particularly in the context of project-based learning (PBL) and 4C skills (Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, Creativity). The data were derived from semi-structured interviews with selected sports students, and were analyzed thematically.

Table 8: The Needs of the Project-Based Learning Approach

Theme	Student Quotes (Translated version)	Interpretation
Preference for Collaborative Projects	"... I enjoy working in groups because it is easier to understand the English material during the discussion section..." (Student 3) "When working on a project, I feel more motivated because we have a shared goal." (Student 6)	Students feel more motivated and supported when learning collaboratively on a project. This is aligned with the collaborative nature of PBL, which encourages peer interaction and shared responsibility.
Engagement through Authentic Tasks	"to me, miss... projects like creating a match analysis video are interesting and feel real." (student 9) "I felt like a real coach during the athlete interview simulation." (student 7)	Authentic, context-rich tasks like video projects or role-plays increase engagement and give students a meaningful purpose to use English, thus improving retention and motivation.
Challenges in Initiating Projects	"Sometimes I get confused about where to start and don't know the steps." (student 4) "Without examples or guidance, the project becomes unclear." (student 1)	Students require clear scaffolding and step-by-step guidance from instructors to execute project-based tasks successfully. Instructor support is crucial in the initial stages of PBL to reduce ambiguity.

As shown in Table 8, students express enthusiasm toward PBL because of its collaborative and practical orientation. However, implementation must be accompanied by structured support and examples to ensure student understanding and engagement. Also, the findings of this study show that students needed 4C skills.

Table 9: 4C Skills Needed by Sport Students

No	Theme	Student Quotes	Interpretation
1	Creativity through Expressive Tasks	"When I was asked to make a sports podcast, I had to think about how to make it interesting and informative." (Student 8) "The task of creating a training vlog	Creative tasks such as making podcasts or vlogs foster originality, imagination, and inventive thinking, core aspects of the 'Creativity'

		required me to be creative in presenting the information."	component of 4C skills.
2	Confidence in Communication	<p>"I think we need... frequent presentations have made me more confident in speaking English in front of others." (Student 7)</p> <p>"Learning English through group discussions helps me practice speaking without feeling shy." (Student 9)</p>	Students reported greater confidence in speaking English after participating in group discussions and presentations, highlighting the 'Communication' dimension of 4C skills.
3	Critical Thinking from Reflective Practice	<p>"When rewatching the match video and analyzing the strategy, I was able to learn to think more deeply." (Student 2)</p> <p>"We were trained to think about why a strategy succeeded or failed." (Student 3)</p>	Analyzing sports strategies promotes critical thinking by requiring students to reflect, evaluate, and reason through game decisions and outcomes.
4	Collaboration as Essential in Sports Learning	<p>"Teamwork, for example, Miss, helps me learn how to divide tasks and responsibilities with my groupmates, so the assignments or projects can be completed faster.." (Student 8)</p> <p>" In learning English, all tasks can be completed if all members are active. That's why I prefer group members to be diverse so that everyone can contribute actively. (Student 15)</p>	Group-based tasks train students in collaboration, reinforcing the ability to share ideas, solve problems collectively, and work toward a common goal.

Table 9 indicates that sports students not only benefit from but also actively develop their 4C competencies when engaged in English learning through relevant and interactive tasks. These competencies are essential for sports professionals.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that sports students in Indonesia have highly specific and contextual English language needs, encompassing the four macro skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as micro-skills such as vocabulary and grammar mastery. The consistent classification of most skill indicators as "highly needed" underscores the urgency for English instruction that is relevant to the sports domain and supported by appropriate pedagogical approaches. This aligns with Salmani-Nodoushan (2020), who emphasized that ESP must be rooted in learners' current and future professional contexts. In this case, sports students are not merely learning English for general communication, but for domain-specific interaction in the sports field, including understanding match reports, delivering strategic

presentations, and reading academic texts related to sports science. This view is reinforced by Zaghar and Zaghar (2021), who highlighted ESP's strength in tailoring language learning to specific academic and professional goals.

Furthermore, the results reinforce Basturkmen's (2010) and Chaovanapricha and Champakaew's (2024) assertion that ESP courses should focus on authentic language use and real-life communication tasks. The high demand for understanding match broadcasts, athlete interviews, and coach instructions signifies the need for materials that reflect the actual linguistic environment in sports. Students' need to discuss strategies, give presentations, and perform simulations as coaches or sports journalists. These strategies align with task-based and communicative language teaching approaches that prioritize meaningful language use (see Nunan, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). East (2021) also emphasized the importance of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in English learning, as it promotes the development of fluency and accuracy in practical, goal-oriented contexts.

In addition, the data also underscores the importance of reading and writing skills. Sports students must be able to understand rules, analyze scientific articles, and write match reports or training plans. This supports Dudley-Evans and St. John's (1994) argument on the importance of integrating professional literacy into ESP materials, and Hyland's (2021) claim that discipline-based literacy is a vital component of tertiary-level ESP programs. Zohbie and Bhowmik (2024) also stated that genre-based writing activities within students' academic disciplines not only enhance academic achievement, but also foster confidence in participating in professional discourse communities (Jasrial et al., 2025).

The identified needs in vocabulary and grammar, particularly sports-specific terminology, tense usage, and grammatical structures such as modals and passive voice, highlight the importance of linguistic accuracy and contextual appropriateness. This supports Nation's (2006) theory of vocabulary acquisition, which emphasizes that mastery of both general and technical vocabulary is essential for achieving fluency in any specialized field. Yunita (2018) recommends that grammar instruction be functional and contextualized to improve communicative accuracy. Coxhead (2000) also stressed the importance of high-

frequency academic vocabulary across disciplines, including sports science as an academic sub-discipline.

Compared to previous studies, such as Pranoto and Suprayogi (2020), which primarily focused on identifying general English topics for physical education students, the findings of this study reveal a more detailed and context-responsive set of needs. While both studies acknowledge the importance of productive skills, particularly speaking, this study uncovers a broader spectrum of language demands that include integrated use of listening, reading, writing, and mastery of technical vocabulary and grammar related to real-world sports communication. This difference may result from the mixed-methods approach employed in this study, which allowed for triangulation between students' perceived needs and qualitative insights from authentic learning contexts.

Moreover, the qualitative findings of this study indicate that sports students prefer collaborative and authentic learning approaches that align with the principles of Project-Based Learning (PBL). Students reported feeling more motivated and confident when engaged in group projects, such as creating match analysis videos or simulating athlete interviews. These ways will provide them with opportunities to use English in realistic and meaningful contexts (Bobyreva, 2023). This supports Beckett and Slater's (2005) view that PBL fosters both language and content integration. However, students also expressed the need for guidance and structured support when beginning projects, suggesting that while PBL is effective, it requires thoughtful scaffolding, particularly for learners who are unfamiliar with autonomous learning strategies.

Concerning 4C skills, students demonstrated notable development through their participation in project tasks. They described how activities like podcast production encouraged creativity, team discussions fostered collaboration, and reflective analysis of match strategies cultivated critical thinking. These findings align with Bell's (2010) and Sari and Prasetyo (2021) claim that PBL promotes essential 21st-century competencies. Moreover, compared to previous studies such as Nugroho et al. (2022), which focused only on speaking challenges, this present study provides a more comprehensive understanding by showing how communicative confidence can be enhanced through structured group interaction. It also builds upon Đorić's

(2020) and Pranoto and Suprayogi's (2020) work by going beyond topic identification to explore the pedagogical formats that students find most effective.

However, despite its pedagogical strengths, the application of PJBL in ESP context, especially in low-resource educational settings, may face practical challenges. These included access to authentic materials (Alzarga, 2021), inadequate teacher preparation in project-based methodologies (Beckett & Slater, 2005), and time constraints within standard curricula (Mulenga & Shilongo, 2024). Such limitations underscore the importance of providing professional development for teachers and ensuring institutional support to maximize the effectiveness of PjBL in ESP instruction.

Overall, this study confirms the theoretical position of ESP scholars like Hutchinson and Waters (1987), who argue that language instruction must be rooted in learners' specific needs and contexts. The strong student preference for project-based, real-world tasks highlights a shift from traditional, decontextualized instruction toward more relevant, skills-integrated approaches. While students benefit significantly from PBL integrated with 4C skills (Saragih et al., 2024), the success of such an approach depends on instructors' readiness to design and facilitate learning experiences that are both linguistically appropriate and professionally meaningful (Hossain, 2024). This calls for teacher training programs focused on ESP and PBL methodologies to ensure sustainable and effective implementation in sports education.

Conclusion and Suggestion

After carrying out the study, it can be concluded that English language instruction for sports students in Indonesia must be specifically aligned with their academic and professional contexts. The consistent demand across all language skills, particularly for domain-specific vocabulary, grammar, and communicative competence, indicates that general English instruction is insufficient. Instead, an ESP approach that integrates real-world tasks and authentic materials is crucial.

Moreover, the incorporation of PBL and the 4C skills framework emerges as a pedagogical strategy that addresses both linguistic proficiency and essential 21st-century competencies. Students' positive perceptions of project-based tasks, such as podcasts, simulations, and collaborative presentations, underscore the

effectiveness of such approaches in enhancing motivation, engagement, and communicative performance. Thus, to meet these demands, it is essential to develop contextualized ESP materials grounded in authentic language use, disciplinary discourse, and pedagogical theories of language learning. Teacher professional development in ESP and task-based instruction should be prioritized to equip instructors with the knowledge and skills to deliver such programs effectively.

These findings of this study contribute to the design of innovative, discipline-sensitive ESP curricula suitable for developing country contexts. Moreover, they align with global educational goals by supporting the internationalization of higher education and preparing sports graduates for competitive roles in transnational and multilingual professional environments.

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