

The Pedagogical Value of Student Conferences: A Study on Descriptive Text Instruction in Culinary Art Education

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Abstract

Teaching English within the culinary arts is challenging for many instructors. The field of culinary arts has its specialized terminology and distinct context, which sets it apart from general English teaching. In light of this, the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program was introduced. ESP is designed to align English instruction with the specific needs of students in culinary studies, ensuring they are prepared academically and for their future roles in the industry. This research examines the effectiveness of student conferences in teaching descriptive texts, an essential aspect of culinary studies. Data collection involved interviews, classroom observations, and document reviews. The results were encouraging: student conferences emerged as a potent tool, leading to significant improvements in students' writing and comprehension abilities. When combined with the ESP approach, there was a notable increase in student motivation and engagement. These findings offer educators enhanced strategies for specialized English teaching in the culinary arts. Moreover, this study serves as a stepping stone for further research, aiming to refine English instruction in specialized domains.

Keywords: ESP teaching, descriptive text teaching, culinary arts, student conference

INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) education is pivotal in various fields, as it empowers students with the requisite language competencies to achieve their academic and professional aspirations. In the realm of culinary arts, ESP is an indispensable component of the curriculum. It acquaints students with specific culinary vocabulary [Ashari \(2022\)](#) and standard practices, seamlessly weaving them into daily communication ([Farros et al., 2022](#); [Kurmanayeva et al., 2021](#); [Mauludin et al., 2021](#); [Rachayon, 2020](#)). This tailored approach readies students for academic and professional settings where nuanced English usage is paramount ([Muliyah & Aminatun, 2020](#); [Simkova et al., 2021](#); [Trujeque-Moreno et al., 2021](#); [Urrego & Cecilia, 2019](#)). The ESP curriculum covers a spectrum, from listening, speaking, reading, and writing to the intricacies of culinary terminologies, ensuring students are adept in tasks like report writing and research papers. The emphasis on teaching descriptive texts

within ESP nurtures students' understanding of culinary concepts, techniques, and materials ([Bhavnagri & Kamash, 2019](#); [Mulyatingsih & Sugiyono, 2020](#); [Mutiarra & Emilia, 2022](#); [Rohani & Suyono, 2021](#)). Such texts not only refine students' comprehension, vocabulary, and analytical prowess but also bolster their creative expression in elucidating culinary details ([Alazemi et al., 2020](#); [Fadlia et al., 2020](#); [Papadima-Sophocleous et al., 2019](#); [Rachayon, 2020](#); [Yang & Wyatt, 2021](#)).

In addition, student conferencing fosters a direct, focused interaction between teachers and learners. Within this setting, students can clarify doubts, receive immediate feedback, and engage in constructive dialogue. Such a format personalizes learning, addressing individual needs and ensuring concepts are deeply ingrained. This method becomes especially crucial in areas like ESP, where nuanced understandings of terminologies and practices are required. Besides bolstering comprehension, conferences instill confidence and hone communication skills, making it a sought-after pedagogical approach. While ESP presents myriad advantages, particularly in culinary arts, it is not without challenges. Students often grapple with mastering culinary-specific terms and concepts, more so for novices ([Elkasović & Čolakovac, 2023](#); [Rao, 2019](#); [Tavella & Fernández, 2022](#)). From the feedback of teachers at SMKN 1 Dlanggu Mojokerto, students frequently require additional support in understanding and writing descriptive texts in English, with grammar nuances proving particularly tricky.

Moreover, limitations like time constraints and the dearth of resources further complicate ESP instruction. The depth and breadth required for teaching culinary-specific terms necessitate extensive time, something not always afforded by a congested curriculum. Moreover, not all instructors possess the culinary expertise to deliver an effective ESP course. Aligning ESP instruction with student needs while emphasizing the role of English in culinary professions poses a unique challenge. Furthermore, several studies from [Mulyatiningsih and Sugiyono \(2020\)](#) and [Ayutami et al. \(2018\)](#) have honed in on specialized English instruction for culinary students, yet there remains a gap, especially concerning student conferencing's efficacy. This study seeks to bridge this gap, examining how student conferencing can amplify the teaching of descriptive texts in culinary arts education. Leveraging insights from research such as that by [Isnawati et al. \(2019\)](#), which underscores conferencing benefits, this study delves deep into its applicability within ESP. It is poised to offer educators nuanced strategies to further enhance the ESP learning journey in culinary arts.

METHOD

This investigation aimed to determine the impact of student conferencing in the delivery of descriptive texts within the scope of culinary arts education. Anchoring the research design to a qualitative paradigm, the intention was to delve deep into the subjective experiences and understandings of the participants, facilitating a richer exploration of the central phenomenon ([Creswell, 2008](#)). To ensure a comprehensive and multidimensional perspective, a triangulation approach was adopted for data collection. This consisted of interviews, observations in the culinary arts classroom environment, and a meticulous documentation review. This combination aimed to provide a robust account of how descriptive texts are integrated into ESP instruction within the culinary arts domain.

Moreover, the participant pool was drawn from X SMKN 1 Dlanggu Mojokerto, including 6 culinary arts instructors and a selection of 30 students, to represent a range of experiences and perspectives inherent within the culinary educational setting. The semi-structured interview format with the instructors stood as a cornerstone in this data collection architecture. The objective was to unearth nuanced details about their encounters, perceived advantages, challenges faced, and prospective refinements in leveraging descriptive texts for ESP instruction. Interviews were conducted post-acquisition of participant consent, recorded, and subsequently transcribed to maintain fidelity in analysis. The question framework was meticulously curated to illuminate educators' journeys, both challenges and triumphs, with the integration of descriptive texts.

In parallel, direct observations in the classroom provided real-time insights into pedagogical techniques and student-teacher interactions, especially regarding the application of descriptive texts in ESP contexts. Field notes were meticulously recorded, capturing pivotal moments, patterns, and learner outcomes in these sessions. The analytical procedure was systematically organized. Beginning with data collation, it proceeded with assessing the data's robustness and finally a comprehensive analysis ([Fajarisman et al., 2023](#)). Guided by the robust framework of Miles & Huberman's interactive model, the analysis journeyed through stages: data collation, data distillation, and display of data patterns, culminating in the synthesis of conclusions and their validation ([Prananosa et al., 2021](#)).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Integration Outcomes of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Learning Descriptive Texts through Student Conferences

In an increasingly globalized world, mastering the English language has become imperative. Tailored teaching approaches like English for Specific Purposes (ESP) are now favored to align instruction with students' unique needs and backgrounds. SMKN 1 Dlanggu, a vocational high school specializing in culinary arts, has recognized the value of this approach and has combined it with student conferences to teach descriptive texts, making learning more relevant to the culinary industry.

"In teaching, I actively incorporate topics that resonate with the students' field of study. For culinary students, this means exploring descriptive texts about food, particularly from the rich tapestry of Indonesian cuisine." (T-P5).

In this ESP-centric pedagogy, the curriculum revolves around Indonesian cuisine. Both government textbooks and specialized online resources are used to ensure a thorough grasp of the subject. A teacher explained:

"While government textbooks provide a broad perspective, the unique requirements of vocational students necessitate the integration of online resources, allowing for a richer, more specialized exploration of descriptive texts." (T-P2).

Technological integration, especially in a world driven by digital advancements, plays a pivotal role in enhancing the ESP approach's effectiveness. It facilitates not just flexibility in teaching but also boosts student involvement. An educator shared their experience:

"Embracing technology has made teaching more dynamic. For instance: students can access online worksheets via WhatsApp or submit assignments as audio/video recordings, enriching the learning experience." (T-P1).

The teaching methodology amalgamates traditional instruction with student-centric learning. Students are encouraged to draft descriptive texts about Indonesian cuisine. A significant highlight of this approach is the inclusion of student conferences. These sessions are designed to simulate real-world presentations and discussions, ensuring students are not just passive learners but active participants. A teacher elaborated:

"While I strive for a student-centric approach, practicalities demand a balanced blend. However, student conferences bring out the best of this approach. Modeled after professional seminars, these conferences allow students to present, debate, and refine their descriptive texts. They can engage in dialogues, answer queries, and even showcase the actual dishes they've described. Such experiential learning ensures they're well-prepared for real-world culinary scenarios." (T-P3).

These student conferences are an integral part of the curriculum, offering students a platform to showcase their grasp of the subject and hone their communication skills, particularly within the professional context of the culinary world. Assessments are two-fold: evaluating the written descriptive texts and analyzing their performance during the conferences. A teacher clarified:

"The written texts allow me to gauge their understanding and articulation, while the conferences provide insights into their oral communication skills and their ability to engage in professional dialogues." (T-P4).

To sum up, the blend of ESP with student conferences for teaching descriptive texts offers a nuanced, tailored approach. It not only strengthens students' grasp of English, particularly in the culinary context but, also prepares them for professional engagements in their future careers.

Student Learning Activity Evaluation

Research results show significant improvement in student learning outcomes after studying descriptive texts in the context of culinary arts education. The data obtained shows that students' knowledge and skills achieve quite high scores in each research competency, namely knowledge and skills.

Table 1. Pre-Conference Student Learning Outcomes in Teaching Descriptive Texts

Respondent Order	Basic Competencies 3.4	
	Knowledge	Skills
R1	75	70
R2	73	73
R3	75	78
R4	85	83
R5	70	75
R6	87	85

R7	85	85
R8	79	75
R9	81	82
R10	78	75
R11	77	79
R12	70	70
R13	74	72
R14	76	75
R15	74	71
R16	80	85
R17	83	79
R18	77	75
R19	72	69
R20	90	90
R21	75	78
R22	84	79
R23	70	65
R24	89	85
R25	77	79
R26	70	75
R27	71	70
R28	86	87
R29	79	79
R30	93	90
Average	79	78

Source: Document review of students leaning outcomes

Based on the obtained data, prior to the implementation of student conferencing in teaching descriptive texts, students' learning outcomes showed an average knowledge score of 79 and a skill score of 78. The pre-conference achievement of learning outcomes in teaching descriptive texts indicated that while some students had achieved satisfactory scores, there was still significant room for improvement. Considering the potential possessed by the students, it is highly important to employ more effective teaching methods, such as student conferencing, to enhance their understanding and skills within the culinary arts education context.

Table 2. Post-Conference Student Learning Outcomes in Teaching Descriptive Texts

Respondent Order	Basic Competencies 3.4	
	Knowledge	Skills
R1	90	89
R2	90	89

R3	91	89
R4	95	96
R5	95	95
R6	90	90
R7	92	90
R8	89	88
R9	93	90
R10	89	89
R11	93	90
R12	90	89
R13	89	89
R14	90	90
R15	91	91
R16	90	91
R17	90	89
R18	88	88
R19	91	90
R20	89	88
R21	90	91
R22	91	90
R23	91	89
R24	91	89
R25	89	89
R26	90	88
R27	91	90
R28	88	87
R29	91	90
R30	90	89
Average	91	90

Source: Document review of students learning outcomes

Research conducted on Grade X students within culinary arts education reveals significant advancements in learning outcomes related to descriptive texts. The conference-based learning strategy stands out as particularly effective, enhancing both comprehension and application of material. Analyzing the documented grades, students achieved an impressive average score of 91 in knowledge assessment, highlighting their exceptional grasp of theoretical aspects of descriptive texts. This mastery encompasses the concepts, principles, and structure pertinent to culinary descriptions, including ingredient details, cooking techniques, and food presentation.

In terms of skill assessment, students demonstrated robust competency with an average score of 90. They not only understand descriptive texts from a theoretical standpoint

but also excel in their practical application, crafting precise and captivating descriptions that delve into culinary intricacies. This synergy of theory and practice resonates with the core objectives of culinary arts education, which aspires to furnish students with a balanced blend of knowledge and hands-on skills. In essence, the conference-centric pedagogical approach is proven to be instrumental in imparting descriptive texts within the culinary arts sphere. The students not only grasp the foundational concepts but also adeptly integrate them into real-world culinary scenarios. This methodology can potentially serve as a benchmark for other instructional areas within culinary arts education, further bolstering pedagogical efficacy.

Moreover, this research successfully demonstrates the application of student conference strategies in the context of culinary arts education. The research results show that the students have shown significant improvement in their understanding and skills in writing descriptive texts in the context of culinary arts education. Based on the collected data, the approach through conferences proved to be very effective in helping students understand the concept and structure of descriptive texts and apply them in culinary contexts. On the theoretical aspect, students have managed to understand the concepts and structures of descriptive texts. The data shows that the average students' scores reflect a high understanding level, indicating the students' success in comprehending the basic principles of descriptive texts. This result aligns with previous research that suggests a sound theoretical understanding is the first key to writing descriptive texts well ([Anwar, 2021](#); [Asrifan et al., 2020](#); [Chen, 2021](#); [Mauludin et al., 2021](#); [Yamin & Setiawan, 2019](#); [Yemelyanova et al., 2022](#)).

On the practical aspect, this research has also presented strong evidence that students could apply their theoretical understanding in writing descriptive texts. The student's high average skill scores indicate that they could describe the ingredients, cooking techniques, and food presentation in detailed and accurate descriptive texts. This means that the students effectively translated the concepts and principles of descriptive texts into real contexts, namely in creating descriptive texts about culinary. Such a skill is essential in the world of work, especially for students specializing in culinary arts. This agrees with the research conducted by [Maula \(2021\)](#), which states that one of the skills culinary arts students need to possess is the ability to describe and explain their products to attract customers. The application of ESP in teaching descriptive texts in culinary education also offers positive results. ESP has been recognized as an effective approach to teaching English for specific purposes, including culinary arts education ([Alazemi et al., 2020](#); [Asih & Alief, 2022](#); [Kusuma et al., 2023](#); [Munir, 2019](#); [Rizaldi & Adnyayanti, 2021](#); [Tavella & Fernández, 2022](#); [Urrego & Cecilia, 2019](#)).

Through ESP, students can see the relevance of learning English with their future culinary careers, which can motivate them to study more diligently and improve their learning results. However, one of the challenges in implementing this method is the need for more learning resources. Despite government textbooks being the primary learning source, the content needs to be more general and more suitable for the specific context of culinary arts education. Teachers may need to look for other learning resources, such as the internet and specific culinary books, to ensure the learning content's relevance to the student's background and needs ([Asih & Alief, 2022](#); [Mahendra, 2020](#); [Tunaz & Ataç, 2023](#); [Yang & Wyatt, 2021](#); [Yemelyanova et al., 2022](#)).

Therefore, the effectiveness of student conferencing in teaching descriptive texts within culinary arts education has been demonstrated through this research. By implementing the conference method, students acquire a deep theoretical understanding of descriptive texts and the ability to apply them in practical contexts, particularly in culinary arts. Student conferencing allows students to discuss, share, and reflect on their understanding, ultimately enhancing the quality of their learning (Marhaban et al., 2023). Furthermore, this approach enables students to interact with teachers directly, receive immediate feedback, and deepen their comprehension of the material (Sowell, 2020). Thus, student conferencing becomes an effective tool for enhancing students' understanding and skills in writing descriptive texts, especially within culinary arts education.

CONCLUSION

This research underscores the efficacy of the student conference approach in teaching descriptive texts within culinary arts education, especially when integrated with the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach. The significant enhancement in students' comprehension and application of descriptive texts attests to the value of this methodology. Through student conferences, learners grasp descriptive text fundamentals and adeptly apply them in real-world contexts. A notable outcome is the successful marriage of ESP with culinary education, fostering a pertinent and motivating English learning experience for aspiring culinary professionals.

These findings offer invaluable insights for educators, elucidating how to meld theory with practicality within specialized contexts. Moreover, the research highlights the merits of ESP in delivering contextually relevant content, thereby augmenting learning quality and outcomes. It paves the way for educators in similar domains to embrace this strategy, enhancing their pedagogical repertoire. However, the research is not without limitations. The study sample is confined to a single class in a specific institution, narrowing the scope of generalization. The evaluation focuses primarily on writing skills, overlooking other facets of English proficiency, such as speaking, listening, and reading. Additionally, pivotal influencers like motivation, prior education, and learning ambiance were not delved into.

Nevertheless, the study's implications are profound. The student conferencing methodology, as evidenced, holds promise for inclusion in broader curricula across various educational settings that resonate with descriptive text teachings. Moreover, the success of ESP in this context accentuates the need for curated resources that dovetail with learners' real-world applications. Future investigations would benefit from a diversified sample spanning multiple institutions and curricular levels, ensuring a more holistic perspective. A multi-dimensional assessment of English proficiency and an in-depth exploration of external influencing factors can further enrich the understanding of this teaching paradigm in culinary arts education.

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