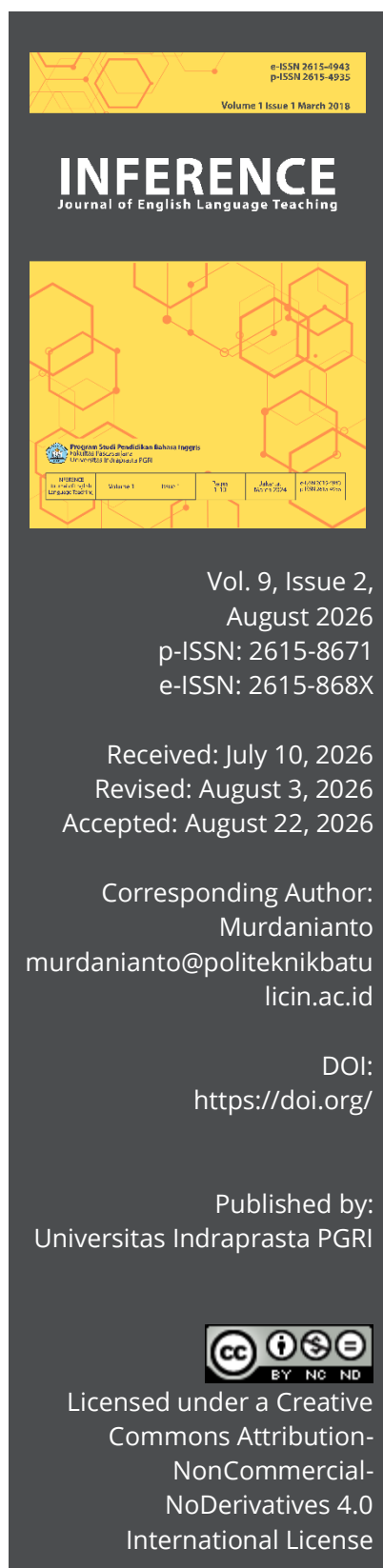




RESEARCH ARTICLE

PROFILING VOCATIONAL ENGINEERING STUDENTS' AFFECTIVE-MOTIVATIONAL NEEDS FOR ESP CURRICULUM DESIGN

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Abstract: Effective English for Specific Purposes (ESP) provision in vocational polytechnics requires accurate profiles of learners' proficiency, exposure, and affective-motivational dispositions, scarce for Indonesian engineering-track students. This descriptive survey profiled 120 students across five engineering programs on foreign language anxiety, willingness to communicate (WTC), and learning motivation. The sample was predominantly low-proficiency (82.5%) with minimal out-of-class exposure (66.7% never/rarely). All three constructs were significantly above the scale midpoint, with motivation strongest ($M = 3.58$, $d = 1.05$), driven by intrinsic mastery goals. WTC ($M = 3.42$) collapsed on public-performance tasks but remained robust for private clarification; anxiety ($M = 3.29$) centred on comprehension breakdown, not general apprehension. These task-specific patterns show curiosity-driven appeals outperform competitive ones. By quantifying these dispositions for under-researched population, the study extends ESP needs-analysis literature beyond target-situation skills into the affective-motivational domain, offering a baseline for curricula prioritizing comprehensible input, scaffolded speaking, and discovery-framed instruction.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes; needs analysis; willingness to communicate; foreign language anxiety; vocational education.

PEMETAAN KEBUTUHAN AFEKTIF-MOTIVASIONAL MAHASISWA VOKASI TEKNIK UNTUK DESAIN KURIKULUM ESP

Abstrak: Penyelenggaraan English for Specific Purposes (ESP) yang efektif di politeknik vokasi bergantung pada pemetaan yang akurat atas kemampuan, paparan, dan disposisi afektif-motivasional pemelajar, yang masih jarang diteliti pada mahasiswa rumpun teknik di Indonesia. Survei deskriptif ini memetakan 120 mahasiswa dari lima program studi teknik untuk menginformasikan desain kurikulum ESP. Instrumen mengukur variabel latar serta tiga skala—kecemasan berbahasa asing (6 butir), kesediaan berkomunikasi (7 butir), dan motivasi belajar (16 butir)—dengan format skala Likert lima poin; konsistensi internal tinggi ($\alpha = ,89; ,84; ,92$). Skor komposit diuji terhadap titik tengah skala. Sampel didominasi kemampuan rendah (82,5%) dengan paparan luar kelas minimal (66,7% tidak pernah/jarang). Motivasi tinggi secara signifikan ($M = 3,58$; $d = 1,05$), didorong oleh alasan penguasaan; kesediaan berkomunikasi sedang ($M = 3,42$) namun menurun pada tugas tampil di depan umum; kecemasan sedang namun signifikan ($M =$

3,29). Profil ini mengindikasikan perlunya kurikulum yang mengedepankan input yang berfokus pada makna, menata bertahap keterampilan berbicara di depan umum, dan memanfaatkan motivasi intrinsik.

Kata kunci: English for Specific Purposes; analisis kebutuhan; kesediaan berkomunikasi; kecemasan berbahasa asing; pendidikan vokasi.

INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) rests on the premise that instruction should be derived from a systematic analysis of learner needs rather than imposed through a generic syllabus (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Basturkmen, 2010; Brown, 2016). Needs analysis is therefore not a preliminary formality but the empirical foundation of ESP course design, spanning learners' present situation, their target situation, and the affective and motivational dispositions that shape classroom uptake (Brown, 2016). In Indonesian vocational higher education, English is typically delivered as a service subject to students whose primary identity lies in technical fields such as mining, heavy-equipment operation, and mechanical engineering, yet quantified profiles of these learners remain scarce (Puspitaloka, Ambarwati, Nurjanah, & Fauziah, 2024; Martina, Astuti, & Bharati, 2021; Nasution, Sukmawati, & Sesriyani, 2020).

A converging theme across Indonesian vocational needs-analysis studies is that engineering-track learners require speaking, listening, and vocabulary support for workplace communication (Puspitaloka et al., 2024; Rahmawati, Yassi, & Pammu, 2020; Brilianti & Rokhim, 2024; Farah, 2021), a finding echoed in parallel work on technology-supported instruction (Komaida, Sumaryoto, & Wulansari, 2024; Ahmed, Purnama, & Suseno, 2025) and on materials-learner mismatch in vocational textbooks (Faradiba & Saragih, 2025). Despite spanning different sub-fields (mining, civil engineering, informatics engineering), these studies share a common orientation: needs are operationalized as external skill or task inventories. What is consistently absent across this body of work is any systematic account of the affective and motivational conditions under which those skills are actually acquired; needs analysis, in effect, has mapped what learners must do without establishing how ready or willing they are to do it.

A separate strand of research addresses these affective-motivational constructs directly, but largely outside needs-analysis or ESP contexts. Foreign language classroom anxiety is well established as an impediment to participation and achievement (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) and has been documented among Indonesian learners chiefly at general secondary and university levels (Fauzi & Asi, 2023; Astrid, Khodijah, Zuhdiyah, & Yuliyanti, 2024; Mahardika & Widyantoro, 2024). Willingness to communicate (WTC), the proximal behavioral predictor of L2 use (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998), is consistently shown to be situational and task-dependent rather than a stable trait (Cao & Philp, 2006; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Rihardini, Yaniafari, & Mukminatien, 2021; Xiao & Qiu, 2022); a finding with direct implications for how oral tasks should be sequenced, yet rarely connected to actual task selection in needs-analysis work. Motivation research, distinguishing mastery from performance-approach/avoidance orientations (Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Yilmaz Soylu et al., 2017), similarly indicates that intrinsic appeals sustain engagement more reliably than extrinsic ones (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Sinaga & Subekti, 2024), and emerging evidence links these constructs to one another (anxiety and WTC negatively), motivation and communicative engagement positively (Manipuspika, 2018; Liu, Lin, & Zhang, 2023; Xiao & Qiu, 2022). The unresolved issue is one of population and integration: this evidence base derives almost entirely from general or secondary

EFL learners, and the three constructs are typically modeled relationally to one another rather than profiled descriptively for a specific instructional population; so their curriculum implications remain inferential rather than directly actionable.

The vocational engineering learner sits at the unexamined intersection of these two literatures: needs-analysis research has profiled what such learners must be able to do, while affective-motivational research has profiled how anxiety, WTC, and motivation behave in other populations, but no study has combined both lenses for a cohort that is simultaneously low-proficiency, technically oriented, and minimally exposed to English outside class. This omission carries direct curricular risk: materials designed from target-situation needs alone may be pitched at the wrong proficiency band, built around tasks learners are affectively unwilling to attempt, or motivated through appeals; competition, grades, peer comparison, that the evidence above suggests will not resonate with this population. This study addresses that gap and departs from prior needs-analysis work in two respects: first, by supplementing background and target-situation variables with three validated affective-motivational scales rather than skill inventories alone; second, by benchmarking composite and item-level scores statistically against a neutral reference point, so that the resulting profile is quantified and diagnostic rather than descriptive or inferential. The study is deliberately diagnostic rather than explanatory: it does not test relationships among constructs but establishes a baseline profile from which curriculum decisions, and later relational or interventionist research, can proceed. Three questions guide the study: (1) What is the learners' background profile with respect to prior study, self-rated proficiency, and out-of-class use? (2) What is their affective-motivational profile relative to a neutral reference point? (3) Which item-level patterns carry the most actionable implications for ESP curriculum design?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a cross-sectional, descriptive survey design. Because the aim was diagnostic profiling for curriculum design rather than testing relationships among constructs, analysis was restricted to descriptive statistics and single-sample comparisons against the scale midpoint (Brown, 2016).

Participants were 120 students affiliated with engineering programs at a vocational polytechnic in South Kalimantan, Indonesia. Convenience sampling was employed, and all students who were reachable through the questionnaire participated in the study. The distribution across programs was Mining ($n = 55$; 45.8%), Heavy Equipment ($n = 40$; 33.3%), Mechanical Engineering ($n = 17$; 14.2%), Manufacturing ($n = 7$; 5.8%), and Shipbuilding ($n = 1$; 0.8%). Respondents were predominantly male (78; 65.0%) versus female (42; 35.0%). Reported academic standing was Semester 2 (50; 41.7%), Semester 4 (47; 39.2%), and Semester 6 (23; 19.2%). After data screening, age was available for 116 respondents ($M = 20.03$ years, $SD = 3.23$, range 16–42).

The questionnaire was administered in Indonesian in two parts. Part 1 recorded gender, age, program, academic standing, years of prior English study, self-rated proficiency, and frequency of English use outside class. Part 2 comprised three Likert scales scored 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree): foreign language anxiety (6 items adapted from the classroom-anxiety tradition; Horwitz et al., 1986), willingness to communicate (7 items describing specific communicative acts; MacIntyre et al., 1998), and learning motivation (16 items reflecting mastery [items 1–6], performance-approach [7–11], and performance-avoidance [12–16] orientations; Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Yilmaz Soylu et al., 2017).

Raw responses were screened prior to analysis. Four age entries were invalid (one non-numeric; three biologically implausible) and set to missing, yielding 116 valid ages. A free-text institution field was incomplete (48% missing) and excluded. Likert responses had no missing data; all 120 cases were retained. Composite scores were computed as the unweighted item mean. Internal consistency (Cronbach's α) was .892 (anxiety), .835 (WTC), and .921 (motivation), all exceeding the .70 threshold and none reaching the redundancy range, supporting aggregation into composites.

Analyses were descriptive. Background variables were summarized as frequencies and percentages. For the affective-motivational profile, composite means were compared against the

midpoint (3.0) using one-sample t-tests, with Cohen's d reported as the standardized departure from neutral (Cohen, 1988). This test was selected as the primary analytical approach because the study's diagnostic aim required establishing whether each construct departed meaningfully from a neutral disposition, rather than modelling how the constructs relate to one another or to external variables; the one-sample framework directly operationalizes Research Question 2 by yielding a statistically defensible answer to whether learners' affective–motivational profile sits above, at, or below neutral, which in turn anchors the curriculum implications drawn in the Discussion. Item means were rank-ordered within each construct to surface the highest- and lowest-endorsed statements, addressing Research Question 3. Computations were performed in Python (pandas, SciPy). Ethical procedures followed institutional norms; participation was voluntary and responses were anonymized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background Profile of the Learners

The cohort clustered at the lower end of the proficiency spectrum. Self-rated proficiency was beginner for 58 respondents (48.3%), elementary for 41 (34.2%), intermediate for 20 (16.7%), and upper-intermediate for 1 (0.8%); collapsing the two lowest bands, 82.5% self-identified as beginner or elementary. Prior study was limited: 67.5% reported fewer than five years of English. Out-of-class exposure was minimal—rarely (41.7%), sometimes (28.3%), never (25.0%), and often (5.0%)—so 66.7% never or rarely used English outside class. The joint distribution was consistent: of 58 beginners, 27 never and 20 rarely used English outside class, indicating that the least proficient learners also received the least incidental input. Table 1 summarizes the profile.

Table 1
Background Profile of the Sample

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	78	65.0
	Female	42	35.0
Program	Mining	55	45.8
	Heavy Equipment	40	33.3
	Mechanical Eng.	17	14.2
	Manufacturing	7	5.8
	Shipbuilding	1	0.8
Standing	Semester 2	50	41.7
	Semester 4	47	39.2
	Semester 6	23	19.2
Prior study	< 5 years	81	67.5
	5–10 years	28	23.3
	> 10 years	11	9.2
Proficiency	Beginner	58	48.3
	Elementary	41	34.2
	Intermediate	20	16.7
	Upper-interm.	1	0.8
Out-of-class use	Rarely	50	41.7
	Sometimes	34	28.3
	Never	30	25.0
	Often	6	5.0

This profile mirrors wider Indonesian vocational findings that learners enter with limited proficiency and low exposure yet require English for future workplace communication (Puspitaloka et al., 2024; Brilianti & Rokhim, 2024; Martina et al., 2021). The exposure deficit is pedagogically central: without incidental input, the classroom becomes the sole site of contact, magnifying the role of curriculum design (Komaida et al., 2024; Ahmed et al., 2025).

Affective–Motivational Profile



All three composite scores were significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3.0 (Table 2). Motivation showed the largest departure from neutral ($d = 1.05$, large), followed by WTC ($d = 0.74$, medium-to-large) and anxiety ($d = 0.38$, small-to-medium). The profile is thus one of learners who are motivated and moderately willing to communicate, yet who carry a statistically significant burden of classroom anxiety. Figure 1 displays the three composite means against the midpoint.

Table 2

Composite Construct Scores and Comparison to Scale Midpoint

Construct	M	SD	t(119)	p	Cohen's d
Anxiety	3.29	0.76	4.18	< .001	0.38
Willingness to communicate	3.42	0.58	8.07	< .001	0.74
Motivation	3.58	0.55	11.53	< .001	1.05

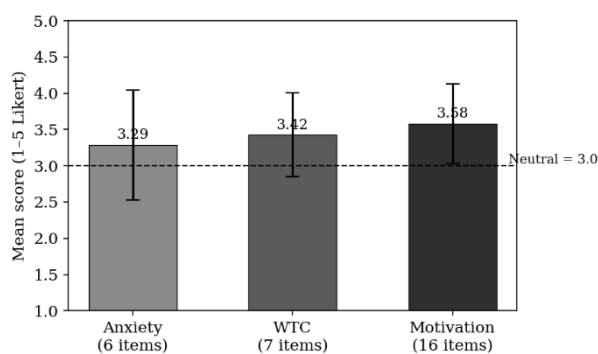


Figure 1

Composite means of the three constructs relative to the neutral midpoint (3.0); error bars denote SD.

Within the motivation scale, the descriptive ordering of orientations placed mastery/intrinsic motivation highest ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.60$), followed by performance-avoidance ($M = 3.53$) and performance-approach ($M = 3.40$). Learners were thus most driven by the desire to know and understand and least driven by competitive standing, consistent with self-determination accounts that intrinsic reasons sustain engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021) and with the three-factor achievement-goal structure validated elsewhere (Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Yilmaz Soylu et al., 2017). This orientation resonates with recent Indonesian evidence that intrinsic and instrumental motives coexist among L2 learners (Sinaga & Subekti, 2024).

Item-Level Patterns for Curriculum Design

Rank-ordering items within each construct revealed task-specific patterns (Table 3; Figure 2). For WTC, the three most-endorsed acts were low-stakes, private, meaning-focused clarifications: asking how to pronounce a word ($M = 3.74$), asking a word's meaning ($M = 3.72$), and asking the teacher to repeat ($M = 3.64$). The three least-endorsed were public or on-demand performances: role-play in front of the class ($M = 3.13$), a short prepared speech ($M = 3.14$), and on-the-spot oral translation ($M = 3.16$). The 0.61-point gap indicates that reticence is not global but concentrated in public-performance and unplanned-production tasks, echoing situated conceptions of WTC (Cao & Philp, 2006; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Rihardini et al., 2021).

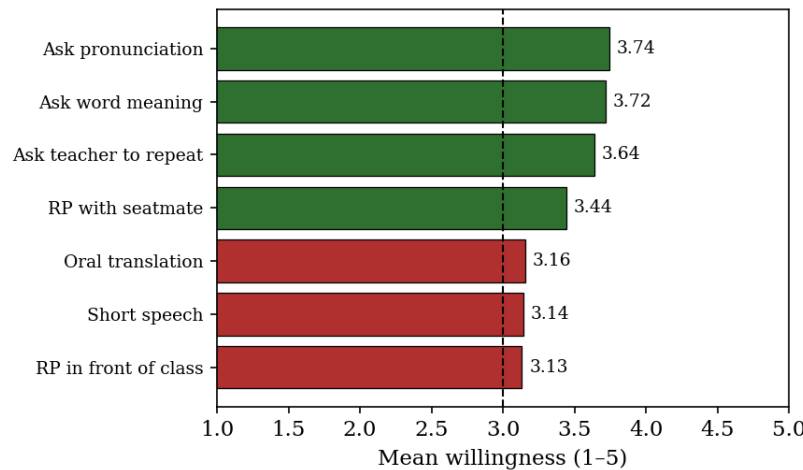


Figure 2

Mean willingness by communicative act (1–5).

Notes:

- darker bars mark low-endorsed public-performance tasks;
- lighter bars mark higher-endorsed clarification acts.

For motivation, the most-endorsed items were epistemic; wanting to know more ($M = 4.15$), to broaden knowledge ($M = 4.10$), and to discover new things ($M = 3.98$), while the least-endorsed were reputation-based: learning English so that others regard one as clever ($M = 2.89$, the only item below neutral) and as a good student ($M = 3.04$). Appeals grounded in curiosity are therefore likely to resonate, whereas appeals to peer image are likely to fall flat (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Sinaga & Subekti, 2024). For anxiety, item means were compressed (3.16–3.38); the highest sources were comprehension-linked (feeling nervous and confused when speaking, $M = 3.38$; not understanding the teacher, $M = 3.36$), consistent with Indonesian evidence that comprehension difficulty and fear of negative evaluation drive speaking anxiety (Fauzi & Asi, 2023; Astrid et al., 2024). This convergence, however, is not a simple replication: Fauzi and Asi (2023) and Astrid et al. (2024) drew on general secondary and university EFL learners, whereas the present cohort is markedly lower in proficiency and more exposure-deprived. That the same comprehension-linked etiology holds under these more constrained conditions suggests that low proficiency does not produce a qualitatively different anxiety profile but rather sharpens an already-established one. The narrow item-mean range (3.16–3.38, a 0.22-point spread) further indicates that anxiety in this population is diffuse across sources rather than concentrated in a single high-stakes trigger such as public speaking specifically—a more fine-grained picture than prior Indonesian anxiety research has offered, and one with direct bearing on where anxiety-buffering scaffolds should be placed across the curriculum rather than reserved for performance tasks alone.

Table 3

Highest- and Lowest-Endorsed Items by Construct

Construct	Highest-endorsed (M)	Lowest-endorsed (M)
WTC	Ask how to pronounce a word (3.74)	Role-play in front of class (3.13)
Motivation	Curiosity / want to know more (4.15)	So others think I am clever (2.89)
Anxiety	Nervous/confused when speaking (3.38)	Shy to volunteer answers (3.16)

Taken together, the results converge on an internally consistent portrait: intrinsically motivated but under-resourced learners whose willingness to communicate is intact for private clarification but fragile for public performance, and whose anxiety is tied to comprehension breakdown. Three design principles follow. First, because exposure is the binding constraint, the curriculum should maximize comprehensible, meaning-focused input embedded in technical content the learners already value,

converting high intrinsic motivation into engagement with authentic ESP material (Komaida et al., 2024; Ahmed et al., 2025; Brilianti & Rokhim, 2024). Second, because reticence is task-specific, oral tasks should be scaffolded along a demand gradient; from the clarification exchanges learners already endorse, through pair and group work, to whole-class performance, with planning and rehearsal time to buffer comprehension-linked anxiety (Cao & Philp, 2006; Mahardika & Widyantoro, 2024). Third, because motivation is intrinsic and non-competitive, framing should emphasize discovery over grades, ranking, or peer image (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). These principles complement, and should precede, the relational modeling of the constructs (Liu et al., 2023).

These findings extend the existing literature in two specific ways rather than simply confirming it. First, prior Indonesian needs-analysis studies on this population have profiled target-situation skill requirements; vocabulary and workplace communication needs in mining, civil-engineering, and informatics-engineering cohorts (Puspitaloka et al., 2024; Martina et al., 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2020; Nasution et al., 2020), while treating affective and motivational readiness as an implicit background condition rather than a measured variable. By contrast, the present study quantifies that condition directly for a vocational engineering population where it had not previously been established, showing that the assumption of generalized reticence or low motivation, often carried over from general EFL literature, does not hold: this cohort is intrinsically motivated and willing to communicate under low-stakes conditions, and its evident difficulty lies specifically in public performance and comprehension-linked anxiety rather than in global disengagement. Second, whereas studies modeling anxiety, WTC, and motivation relationally (Manipuspika, 2018; Liu et al., 2023; Xiao & Qiu, 2022) establish that these constructs covary in general EFL samples, the present item-level evidence shows that for this specific population the three constructs do not move as a uniform bloc: WTC's weakness is confined to a particular task type rather than diffuse, and motivation's strength is resistant to reputational framing rather than contingent on it. This granularity is a level of description that relational modelling alone does not surface, and it is precisely the level at which curriculum decisions are made. The contribution is therefore diagnostic and population-specific: it supplies an empirical, quantified baseline for Indonesian vocational engineering ESP that did not previously exist, against which both curriculum design and future relational or interventionist research on this population can be anchored.

CONCLUSIONS

Vocational engineering students in this cohort present as motivated, curiosity-driven, low-proficiency learners with minimal English exposure and a willingness to communicate that is intact for private clarification but fragile for public performance. An ESP curriculum responsive to this profile would supply abundant comprehensible input embedded in technical content, scaffold speaking tasks from low- to high-exposure demand, and frame learning around discovery rather than evaluation.

Beyond this immediate profile, the study carries two broader implications for ESP research and vocational English education. For ESP research, it demonstrates that needs analysis restricted to target-situation skill inventories—the dominant approach in prior Indonesian vocational studies (Puspitaloka et al., 2024; Martina et al., 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2020; Nasution et al., 2020)—can misdiagnose a learner population if affective and motivational readiness is left unmeasured: this cohort's central constraint proved to be task-specific reticence and exposure scarcity rather than the generalized low motivation that a skills-only profile might have assumed. This suggests that affective-motivational measurement should be treated as a standard component of ESP needs analysis rather than an optional supplement, particularly for populations, such as vocational learners, whose classroom behavior is otherwise easy to misread as disengagement. For vocational English education specifically, the findings indicate that curricula in similarly low-proficiency, low-exposure settings should not assume communicative reluctance is uniform; provision can safely include ungraded, low-stakes speaking opportunities from the outset, reserving scaffolded support for the specific point (public, unplanned performance) where reticence actually concentrates.

The study contributes a quantified affective–motivational needs profile for an under-described population and a baseline against which instructional interventions can later be measured. Its limitations bound generalization: convenience single-site sampling, a gender-imbalanced cohort, and reliance on cross-sectional self-report.

These limitations point toward recommendations that follow directly from the study's own diagnostic aim rather than a generic research agenda. Because the three scales were validated only through reliability coefficients here, confirmatory factor analysis is a necessary next step before they are adopted elsewhere, particularly given that this study's contribution rests on their measurement validity. Because the design was deliberately descriptive rather than explanatory, relational modelling of anxiety, WTC, and motivation—together with the proficiency and exposure variables profiled here—would extend this baseline into an explanatory account of how these constructs jointly shape communicative behavior (Liu et al., 2023; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Most directly, because the profile was constructed explicitly to inform curriculum design, its practical value remains provisional until tested: future work should implement a needs-aligned curriculum built on the three design principles proposed here and evaluate whether it measurably improves communicative outcomes for this population.

Ultimately, the value of this profile lies less in the specific figures it reports than in what it demonstrates about method: that evidence-based ESP curriculum development for vocational learners depends on measuring not only what learners must be able to do, but how ready, willing, and motivated they are to do it.

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