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Bridging Ulos Products to Global Markets: English Needs Analysis of MSME Practitioners in Samosir

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ABSTRACT

English proficiency is important for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) rooted in local wisdom to expand market access and communicate cultural heritage. However, English language needs among ulos-based MSMEs remain underexplored. Therefore, this study aims at identify English language needs, analyzing competency gaps, and proposing English language priorities, drawing on Hutchinson and Waters' necessities, lacks, and wants framework. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design (QUAN + qual) design was employed at Kampung Ulos Hutaraja, North Sumatra, involving 31 questionnaire respondents, followed by interviews with 23 participants. The results showed that participants reported very high English language needs and strong learning desires despite low self-reported competence. In particular, the main weaknesses involved specialized ulos vocabulary and written communication, whereas the highest needs concerned product communication, including introducing businesses and explaining products. Furthermore, interviews revealed difficulties in spontaneous customer interactions and communicating ulos-related cultural knowledge. Despite these challenges, participants favored contextual, practical, and gradual learning activities. Overall, the findings highlight the need for an ESP program integrating speaking, listening, vocabulary, pronunciation, and writing through authentic workplace tasks that address both business communication and ulos cultural heritage.

Keywords: *English for Specific Purposes (ESP); English Needs Analysis; Ulos-based MSMEs; Local cultural heritage*

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Abstract & Indexing

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INTRODUCTION

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) rooted in local wisdom contribute to regional economic growth while preserving cultural heritage. Their traditional knowledge, production skills, and cultural values reflect community identity and provide competitive advantages in the creative economy (Harsanto & Permana, 2020; Lubis et al., 2023). However, realizing this potential requires adequate business capacity and human resource development to compete in increasingly open markets.

Digital trade and international business networks offer MSMEs opportunities to reach broader markets through online marketplaces, social media, exhibitions, and cross-border partnerships. Nevertheless, international market participation remains constrained by limited resources, restricted market information, insufficient international experience, and cross-linguistic communication barriers (Child et al., 2022; Paul, 2020; Rodliyah & Suryana, 2024; Tajeddin et al., 2023). International business requires effective product communication, customer interaction, relationship building, and negotiation. Language-related barriers have also been highlighted in international trade discussions as mentioned by (WTO Director-General, 2016) (WTO Director-General, 2016). Therefore, international business communication is essential for connecting local products with global market opportunities.

English facilitates cross-border coordination, decision-making, and international business networking in accordance with Tenzer et al. (2017) and Tibrewal et al. (2024). In international business, English often serves as a shared language among speakers from different linguistic backgrounds, commonly known as Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF). Effective BELF communication emphasizes pragmatic competence, clarity, business-specific vocabulary, and shared understanding than on general English skills, linguistic conformity (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010), and grammatical correctness (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-salminen, 2013). These competencies are relevant to MSMEs' activities, including product presentation, customer interaction, transactions, and relationship management. Moreover, language choices in international small firms are influenced by available resources, stakeholder preferences, and business relationships (Talukder & Barner-rasmussen, 2024; Tibrewal et al., 2024).

For local-wisdom-based MSMEs, communication also involves conveying cultural meanings. In North Sumatra, ulos weaving holds economic and cultural significance through its aesthetic, social, and symbolic values in Batak community life (Firmando, 2021; Hariani & Kusumastuti, 2023). Therefore, artisans and business owners need English to explain weaving motifs, production processes, product characteristics, and cultural meanings to international customers. This requires linguacultural competence, which connects language use with cultural understanding (Peltonen & Hu, 2025a, 2025b), as well as heritage interpretation that communicates the historical, social, and symbolic significance of cultural objects (Ruan et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). These dimensions are reflected in studies of ulos motifs and symbolism (Adriani & Fitriani, 2023; Desiani, 2022; Hariani & Kusumastuti, 2023). Research on ikat weavers (Febrianti et al., 2026) and batik (Rustananda et al., 2024) sellers also highlights the importance of English for product explanation and interaction with foreign customers. Thus, English competencies involve both transactional communication and cultural heritage representation.

Despite this potential, English proficiency among Indonesian MSME practitioners remains limited (Agustiani et al., 2023; Chalisyah et al., 2025; Meitridwiastiti et al., 2020). English instruction also tends to emphasize general skills rather than actual business communication needs (Khaerati, 2021; Ninsisana & Nawa, 2019; Surani & Kusuma, 2020). A collaborative study by the Medan City Regional Research and Innovation Agency and Universitas Sumatera Utara similarly reported low English proficiency among

MSME employees, particularly in non-exporting enterprises (Badan Riset dan Inovasi Daerah Kota Medan, 2023). These findings highlight the need for English language development aligned with workplace communication demands.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) identifies language requirements according to communicative purposes, workplace contexts, and learner characteristics (Ekayati et al., 2020; Hidayati & Meisani, 2023; Nur, 2018). In entrepreneurial settings, ESP aligns language development with authentic business tasks (Andysyah et al., 2025; Kafabih et al., 2026; Rodliyah & Suryana, 2024), complementing BELF's emphasis on effective international business communication (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-salminen, 2013; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). To identify the competencies required in these contexts, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) propose the necessities, lacks, and wants (NLW) framework. Necessities refer to required competencies, lacks indicate gaps between existing and required abilities, and wants represent learners' perceived needs and preferences. Although useful, NLW requires contextual consideration because necessities vary across business roles, self-reported lacks may not reflect actual performance, and wants may differ from workplace priorities. These dimensions may also change with communication demands and learner experiences. Accordingly, recent ESP research emphasizes task-based investigation and multiple data sources for identifying context-specific requirements (Smith et al., 2022). This study adopts NLW as its principal analytical framework, complemented by ESP and BELF perspectives to examine the commercial and international communication needs of ulos-based MSMEs.

Previous ESP needs analysis studies have demonstrated the importance of aligning English competencies with specific academic and occupational contexts. Vocational education research has identified language requirements for workplace tasks and professional preparation (Fuadul Matin, 2022; Ninsisana & Nawa, 2019; Nurhana, 2021; Tri Nurhasanah & Eri Kurniawan, 2023), while higher education studies have highlighted academic and professional communication needs (Arias-contreras & Moore, 2022; Nguyen & Ho, 2024; Pang et al., 2025; Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2020; Simaremare et al., 2023). In MSMEs, research has identified English requirements for marketing and international business communication (Herman et al., 2025; Rodliyah & Suryana, 2024), while Septianingsih et al. (2025) applied NLW to English learning needs. Although these studies establish the importance of context-specific language requirements, the integration of international business communication and cultural interpretation in locally rooted craft enterprises remains insufficiently explored. The present study addresses this gap by applying NLW to ulos-based MSMEs in North Sumatra, focusing on international business communication, perceived competency gaps, and the communication of ulos-related cultural values.

Accordingly, this study addresses three research questions: (1) What English language competencies do ulos-based MSME practitioners in North Sumatra need for global-market business communication? (2) What gaps exist between required competencies and current abilities, and what English language development priorities emerge from the NLW framework? (3) What English language development recommendations can address business communication requirements and the cultural characteristics of ulos products? The study aims to extend ESP research to culturally grounded craft enterprises and provide an empirical basis for developing English learning materials and programs that support market expansion while preserving local cultural values.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (QUAN + qual) within an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) framework, guided by Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) necessities, lacks, and wants (NLW) framework. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected during approximately the same period, analyzed separately, and subsequently integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2022). Quantitative findings identified patterns in participants perceived English language needs, current competencies, and learning priorities, while qualitative findings explored their workplace communication experiences, language difficulties, and learning expectations across the NLW dimensions. Creswell (Creswell, 2022) further highlights that integrating both datasets offers complementary perspectives and a more complete understanding than either dataset alone, with qualitative findings enriching and contextualizing quantitative results. Figure 1 illustrates the flowchart of the research process.

The research was conducted in Kampung Ulos Hutaraja, Lumban Suhi-Suhi Toruan Village, Pangururan District, Samosir Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The location was selected because of its established role in ulos weaving and cultural tourism within the Lake Toba region, a Super Priority Tourism Destination (Kementerian Pariwisata, 2026; Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf RI, 2021; Kementerian Pekerjaan Umum dan Perumahan Rakyat (PUPR), 2022). The study involved the entire eligible population of ulos-based micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) practitioners (N = 31), comprising 25 weavers and six gallery management personnel. All 31 participants completed the questionnaire using a total population sampling approach. Inclusion criteria required active involvement in ulos production or business management, roles relevant to English communication, and an age limit of 55 years. This age criterion served as an operational inclusion requirement rather than an assumption about language-learning capacity (Pfenninger & Singleton, 2019). Of these participants, 23 were selected through convenience sampling for semi-structured interviews based on their availability and willingness to participate (Andrade, 2021).

Data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire to minimize incomplete responses (Connor Desai & Reimers, 2019), which may result from limited literacy or difficulty expressing ideas in writing, as commonly associated with open-ended questionnaires (Berinsky et al., 2014). Interviews complemented the questionnaire to strengthen, validate, and deepen the findings (Nurhana, 2021; Walker & Baxter, 2019), particularly by exploring aspects requiring detailed, context-specific information (Walliman, 2017).

Data analysis followed the NLW framework proposed by Hutchinson & Waters (1987). Questionnaire responses, measured on a four-point rating scale, were converted into percentages and classified into four categories: low, moderate, high, and very high (Dewantara, 2013; Rumsey, 2010). Interview data were transcribed descriptively to provide detailed insights into participants' personal perspectives and experiences (Creswell, 2022) and further manually analyzed using Saldana's (2016) approach to qualitative coding, which involved coding the interview transcripts, categorizing the codes based on recurring patterns, and identifying key themes relevant to the research objectives. Finally, data integration followed Creswell's (2022) approach to combine both datasets and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the findings.

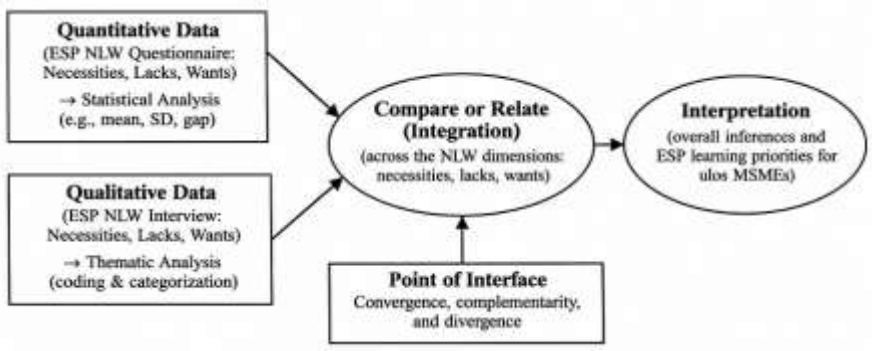

Figure 1. Convergent Parallel Mixed-Methods Design Integrating the ESP NLW Framework
Source: *Adapted from Creswell (2022) and Hutchinson and Waters (1987)*

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Necessities

As we can see in Table 1, the mean score for necessities from the questionnaire was 3.79 (SD = 0.28), indicating that English was highly needed. Of the 31 respondents, 93.5% rated English as highly needed and 6.5% as needed. Product communication received the highest mean (M = 3.85), followed by Cultural Story (M = 3.81), Digital and International Marketing (M = 3.80), Customer Service (M = 3.76), and Business Transaction (M = 3.71). Introducing the ulos business and explaining product characteristics received the highest item scores (M = 3.90), whereas explaining discounts received the lowest (M = 3.61).

Table 1. Questionnaire Results on Necessities (N = 31)

Dimension	Items	Mean	Category
Product communication	N01–N05	3.85	Very high
Cultural storytelling	N06–N10	3.81	Very high
Customer service	N11–N14	3.76	Very high
Business transaction	N15–N18	3.71	Very high
Digital and international marketing	N19–N23	3.80	Very high
Overall Necessities	N01–N23	**3.79**	**Very high**

Source: Primary data, 2026

The interviews further illustrated as shown in Table 2 that the communication tasks underlying these perceived needs. Two main areas emerged: customer-oriented and transactional communication, and product-related and cultural communication. Almost all participants (22 of 23) identified the need to communicate with international customers, particularly when greeting visitors, answering questions, providing product information, and understanding customer needs. All 23 participants emphasized the importance of English in business transactions and order fulfilment, including discussing prices, quantities, product availability, payments, production time, and shipping arrangements. Six participants also mentioned English for marketing and business development, such as promoting products, presenting their businesses, and participating in exhibitions. Beyond these business-related interactions, 20 participants identified the need to describe ulos materials, motifs, uses, weaving processes, and product characteristics.

All 23 participants also highlighted the importance of explaining ulos history, meaning, philosophy, symbolism, and cultural values to international visitors.

Table 2. Interview Results on Necessities (N = 23)

Theme	Category	Key Findings	N
N1. Customer-oriented and transactional business communication	Interaction with and service for foreign customers	greeting customers; welcoming visitors; answering questions; providing information; responding to tourists/customers	22/23
	Communication related to transactions, orders, and order fulfillment	prices; quantities; payments; availability; orders; production time; delivery	23/23
	Marketing and business development	promotion; product presentations; attracting foreign customers; exhibitions	6/23
N2. Ulos product and cultural communication	Product and technical explanations	materials; motifs; uses; weaving process; production; distinctive features	20/23
	Cultural heritage communication	history; meaning; philosophy; symbolism; cultural significance	23/23

Source: Primary data, 2026

Lacks

The mean score for lacks, as presented in Table 3, was 2.30 (SD = 0.79), indicating limited self-reported English ability. Overall, 67.7% of respondents rated themselves as unable or very unable to perform the assessed tasks. Listening received the highest mean (M = 2.43), followed by Speaking (M = 2.32), Vocabulary (M = 2.23), and Writing and Digital Communication (M = 2.22). The lowest-scoring items concerned ulos-related vocabulary (M = 2.10), writing order and shipping information (M = 2.13), and describing ulos products in writing (M = 2.19). The discrepancy between high necessities (M = 3.79) and lower self-reported ability (M = 2.30) illustrates the lacks dimension in Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) framework: the gap between required and existing competencies.

Table 3. Questionnaire Results on Lacks (N = 31)

Dimension	Items	Mean	Category
Speaking	L01–L05	2.32	Low
Vocabulary	L06–L09	2.23	Low
Listening	L10–L13	2.43	Low
Writing and digital communication	L14–L17	2.22	Low
Overall Lacks	L01–L17	**2.30**	**Low**

Source: Primary data, 2026

The interview findings provide additional insight into these reported limitations as indicated in Table 4. Two major themes emerged: difficulties in real-time communication and challenges in expressing ulos-specific knowledge. Twenty-one participants reported difficulties speaking or formulating responses during interactions with international customers. Twelve participants mentioned limitations in vocabulary, word choice, or pronunciation, while eight experienced difficulties understanding spoken English. To manage these challenges, 21 participants described using translation applications, assistance from other people, gestures, product demonstrations, and written information about prices or products. Moreover, 19

participants reported that their opportunities to communicate in English varied according to their business roles and frequency of contact with international visitors. A further difficulty concerned the communication of ulos-related information. Fifteen participants experienced difficulties explaining ulos materials, motifs, production processes, history, meanings, and philosophy in English. These accounts indicate that participants may possess relevant knowledge about their products and cultural heritage but experience difficulty expressing that knowledge in English.

Table 4. Interview Results on Lacks (N = 23)

Theme	Category	Key Findings	N
L1. Limited real-time English communication	Speech production and responses	difficulty speaking; delayed responses; sentence construction; confidence in spontaneous interactions	21/23
	Vocabulary and pronunciation	limited vocabulary; word choice; pronunciation; Ulos-related and business terminology	12/23
	Listening and comprehension	difficulty understanding questions, accents, or spoken English during interactions	8/23
	Compensatory and mediation strategies	translation apps; guides; gestures; writing down prices; demonstrations; assistance from others	21/23
	Exposure and occurrence of difficulties	varying frequency of contact with foreign visitors and communication difficulties	19/23
L2. Difficulty expressing specialized knowledge about Ulos in English	Difficulty explaining products and culture	difficulty explaining motifs, materials, processes, history, meanings, and philosophy in English	15/23

Source: Primary data, 2026

The difference between the necessity and self-reported competence scores also revealed a perceived competency gap. The mean gap was 1.49 (SD = 0.89). Only four respondents (12.9%) had negative gaps, whereas 27 (87.1%) showed positive gaps, indicating that their perceived English needs exceeded their self-reported competence. Table 5 presents the distribution of respondents according to the direction of this gap

Table 5. Statistical Analysis of the Necessity–Lacks Gap (N = 31)

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gap	-,57	3.00	1,4904	,89036

Source: Primary data, 2026

Wants

The overall mean score for Wants was 3.74 (SD = 0.40) as displayed in Table 6, reflecting respondents' strong motivation to improve their English proficiency. Most participants (83.9%) expressed a strong desire to improve, while the remaining 16.1% indicated a desire to do so. Speaking with international customers and expanding ulos-related vocabulary were the highest priorities (M = 3.77), followed by writing product descriptions and developing social media promotional content (M = 3.71).

Table 6. Questionnaire Results on Wants (N = 31)

Statement	Item	Mean	Category
Improving speaking ability	W01	3.77	Very high
Improving specific vocabularies related to ulos	W02	3.77	Very high
Improving writing and digital communication	W03-W04	3.71	Very high
Ulos cultural meaning and storytelling	W05	3.74	Very high
Overall Wants	W01-W05	**3.75**	**Very high**

Source: Primary data, 2026

The distribution in Table 7 indicates that the interview findings further clarified these learning priorities. All 23 participants expressed a desire to improve their speaking skills for communicating with international customers. Twelve participants specifically identified vocabulary and pronunciation as areas requiring improvement. Within this group, nine mentioned vocabulary or terminology, while seven identified pronunciations, with some participants mentioning both. In addition, all 23 participants expressed the need to improve their ability to explain ulos products and communicate their cultural significance in English. Moreover, regarding instructional preferences, all 23 participants favored contextual, practical, and gradual learning activities. Suggested activities included role-play, simulated customer interactions, demonstrations using actual ulos products or weaving equipment, and repeated practice based on workplace situations. Some participants also preferred receiving explanations, models, or examples before practicing independently.

Table 7. Interview Results on Wants (N = 23)

Theme	Category	Key Findings	N
W1. Developing functional workplace English skill	Speaking and interacting with customers	conversations; customer service; independent communication; responding to visitors	23/23
	Developing listening skills	understanding foreign customers and spoken questions	7/23
	Developing vocabulary and pronunciation	workplace vocabulary; Ulos-related terms; pronunciation for clearer interactions	12/23
W2. Developing Ulos-specific and business communication	Product explanations and cultural storytelling	explaining products, processes, motifs, history, meanings, philosophy, and cultural values	23/23
	Sales, transaction, and marketing communication	sales; price communication; negotiation; orders; promotion	12/23
Learning preferences	Contextual, hands-on, and step-by-step practice	role-plays; customer simulations; real-life situations; weaving-loom practice; modeling; guided practice; repeated scenarios	23/23

Source: Primary data, 2026

Discussions

Necessities

The findings indicate that English is important for both commercial communication and communicating ulos-related cultural knowledge. The high necessity score (M = 3.79) reflects participants' recognition of English as a resource for interacting with international customers. This finding supports

previous studies highlighting the role of English in customer engagement, product promotion, and international business communication among small enterprises (Malini et al., 2022; Namtapi, 2022; Prachanant, 2012; Rodliyah & Suryana, 2024). More specifically, the prominence of Product Communication and Cultural Storytelling indicates that participants need English not only for routine customer-service expressions but also to describe product characteristics, explain weaving processes, and convey ulos-related meanings. These tasks require linguacultural competence, which integrates language and cultural understanding (Peltonen & Hu, 2025a, 2025b), particularly because ulos carries social, symbolic, and cultural significance in Batak society (Firmando, 2021; Hariani & Kusumastuti, 2023).

Furthermore, the findings align with contemporary research on English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF), which emphasizes using English to achieve business purposes among people with different first languages (Kankaanranta & Räisänen, 2026). Participants' needs to introduce their businesses, answer customer inquiries, explain products, negotiate prices, and arrange transactions reflect this functional role of English. However, communication also involves presenting cultural heritage. As Kaur and Birlik (2021) explain, providing additional explanations and background information can support mutual understanding in BELF interactions, particularly when practitioners discuss unfamiliar motifs, production processes, and cultural meanings. In addition, the emphasis on transactions and order fulfilment, including prices, quantities, availability, payments, production schedules, and shipping, is consistent with previous research on international business communication (Tenzer et al., 2017; Tibrewal et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the higher rating for Product Communication than Business Transactions suggests that participants place greater perceived importance on presenting and explaining their products, possibly reflecting the communication priorities of their respective business roles.

Overall, the findings reveal two interconnected purposes of English use among ulos-based MSMEs: facilitating business activities and communicating cultural heritage. Therefore, ESP instruction should integrate authentic workplace tasks with language practice for describing products and explaining their cultural significance. This recommendation is supported by (Malicka et al., 2019), who emphasize the importance of connecting needs analysis with relevant language-learning tasks.

Lacks

The low self-reported competence score (M = 2.30) indicates a perceived gap between participants' English needs and abilities, particularly in specialized vocabulary, product descriptions, and order-related writing. Interviews also revealed difficulties with spontaneous responses, listening comprehension, and explaining ulos-related knowledge. These challenges involve both linguistic resources and their application in workplace situations, consistent with studies reporting limitations in speaking, vocabulary, and business communication among MSME practitioners (Malini et al., 2022; Namtapi, 2022; Prachanant, 2012). Similar difficulties in describing products and communicating cultural information have been reported in craft-based businesses (Febrianti et al., 2026; Rodliyah & Suryana, 2024).

From a linguacultural perspective, participants may understand their products and cultural heritage but struggle to express this knowledge across linguistic boundaries (Peltonen & Hu, 2025b, 2025a). Their use of translation applications, gestures, demonstrations, and assistance from others helps overcome these limitations. Such strategies support mutual understanding through clarification and additional explanations in BELF interactions (Kaur & Birlik, 2021). However, reliance on external assistance may restrict

independent communication, highlighting the need to develop workplace language skills for explaining cultural information (Tenzer et al., 2017; Tibrewal et al., 2024; WTO Director-General, 2016).

Furthermore, the mean gap of 1.49 indicates that perceived English needs exceed participants' self-reported abilities. This reflects Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) concept of lacks: the difference between existing abilities and competencies required in target situations. In ESP, this gap should be identified through specific workplace tasks rather than general English proficiency alone (Brown, 2016; Malicka et al., 2019; Woodrow, 2017). However, perceived needs and abilities may not fully represent actual workplace demands or stakeholder expectations (Handayani et al., 2024; Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017; Woodrow, 2017). Thus, this study defines the gap as the difference between participants' perceived English language needs (necessities) and their current self-reported abilities (lacks) in ulos-related business communication, rather than an objectively measured proficiency deficit. The main gaps in functional communication, specialized vocabulary, business writing, and explaining cultural knowledge should guide ESP learning priorities for ulos MSME personnel.

Wants

The strong learning desire (M = 3.74) indicates participants' willingness to improve their English, particularly speaking with international customers and using ulos-related vocabulary. Interviews support this finding, with all participants expressing a desire to improve their speaking skills. These priorities align with previous ESP studies identifying speaking, vocabulary, and practical workplace communication as key learning needs (Malini et al., 2022; Namtapi, 2022; Prachanant, 2012). This emphasis on speaking reflects the need to engage directly with customers through greetings, responses to inquiries, product explanations, and transactions. It also relates to Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) concept of wants, or learners' subjective learning preferences, which should be considered alongside necessities and lacks to ensure that instruction addresses both learner expectations and workplace requirements.

In addition, the demand for ulos-related vocabulary suggests that general conversational English alone may not meet participants' professional needs. Learning materials should include expressions for describing materials, motifs, production processes, and cultural meanings. Linguacultural competence highlights the connection between language resources and communicating cultural knowledge (Peltonen & Hu, 2025b, 2025a). Participants also favor practical, contextual, and gradual learning through role-play, simulated customer interactions, and demonstrations using authentic products. Such activities connect needs analysis with task design (Malicka et al., 2019) and can involve introducing businesses, describing products, answering inquiries, discussing prices, and arranging orders. Providing model expressions and guided dialogues before independent practice may further build confidence and reduce reliance on prepared expressions or external assistance.

All in all, participants' learning preferences are closely linked to their practical and cultural responsibilities. Therefore, an ESP program should integrate speaking, listening, vocabulary, pronunciation, and writing through authentic workplace tasks rather than teaching them in isolation. For example, describing an ulos product requires speaking, listening, appropriate vocabulary, and cultural explanations, while handling an order involves understanding requests and communicating prices, quantities, and shipping details in writing. Integrating these skills into meaningful business activities can address participants' learning preferences while responding to the communication needs and competency gaps identified in this study.

Proposed ESP Framework for Ulos-Based MSMEs

Based on the findings across the three NLW dimensions, this study proposes an ESP framework tailored to the business and cultural communication needs of ulos-based MSMEs. As illustrated in Figure 2, the framework integrates speaking, listening, vocabulary, pronunciation, and writing into authentic workplace tasks, including introducing businesses, describing products, explaining cultural meanings, interacting with customers, and handling orders. It aims to support international business communication while promoting the communication of ulos cultural heritage.

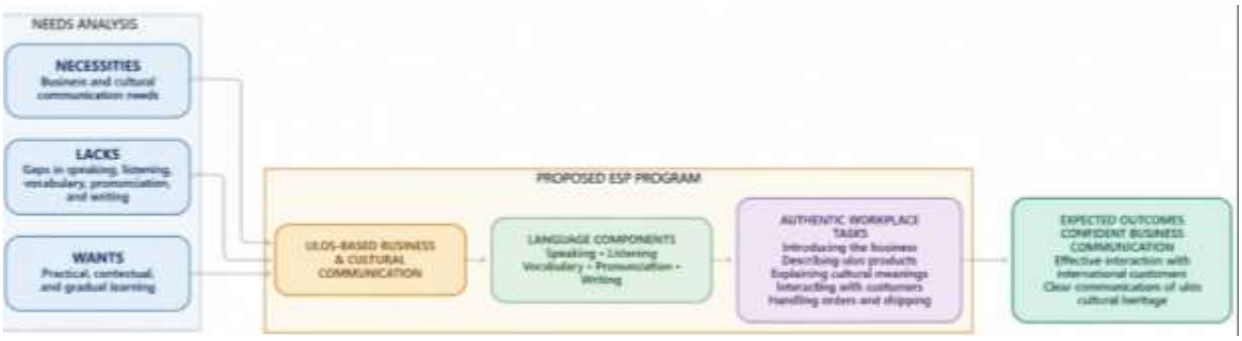

Figure 2. Proposed ESP Framework for Ulos-Based MSMEs
Source: *Developed by the researchers based on the NLW framework and research findings*

CONCLUSION

This study identified the English language needs of ulos-based MSME practitioners, examined gaps between their perceived needs and current competencies, and proposed priorities for English language development. First, English is highly needed for business and cultural communication, particularly for introducing businesses, describing products, interacting with foreign customers, handling transactions, and explaining the cultural meanings of ulos. Next, the findings reveal a substantial gap between participants' perceived needs and self-reported competencies, especially in ulos-related vocabulary, product descriptions, and written order and shipping information. Interviews also highlighted difficulties in spontaneous customer interactions, listening comprehension, and explaining ulos-related cultural knowledge. Therefore, the main learning priorities are practical speaking and listening, specialized vocabulary, pronunciation, and writing for business purposes.

Additionally, this study recommends implementing an ESP program tailored to the actual communication tasks of ulos-based MSMEs. English instructors, MSME practitioners, and relevant community or tourism stakeholders could collaborate to develop practical materials using authentic ulos products, weaving processes, and business situations. Learning activities should include role-play, simulated customer interactions, product descriptions, transaction practice, and writing order and shipping information, progressing from vocabulary and model expressions to guided and workplace-based practice. Learning outcomes could be assessed through practical tasks, such as introducing a business, explaining products, and responding to customer inquiries. However, the study was limited to one ulos-producing community, relied on self-reported competencies, and did not implement or evaluate the proposed program. Future research should include objective performance assessments, involve MSMEs in other locations, and

pilot the ESP program to evaluate its effectiveness in developing business communication and cultural storytelling skills.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors contributed to the research according to their respective roles. The first author led the conceptualization, research planning, coordination, manuscript development, publication process, and interpretation and reporting of findings, while collaborating with academic colleagues on data processing and statistical analysis. The second author contributed to fieldwork and data collection. The third author critically reviewed the manuscript to ensure its accuracy, scholarly rigor, and overall quality prior to submission. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript for publication.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) USE STATEMENT

AI tools were utilized to support various aspects of manuscript preparation, including some literature searching, identification of relevant references, academic writing support, and language refinement. All AI-generated suggestions and identified references were critically reviewed, verified against the original sources, and revised to ensure their accuracy, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives and findings. AI tools were not used to generate, manipulate, process, or analyze the research data. The authors carefully reviewed the AI-assisted content and assume full responsibility for the final manuscript.

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