Persistent English Language Difficulties in Agronomy students in Beni City Higher Education: Implications for Target ESP Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study objective is to examine how a tailor-made English for Specific Purposes (ESP) syllabus can improve the English language proficiency of the first cycle agronomy students in Beni higher education. It responds to persistent concerns regarding students' low communicative competence despite satisfactory academic performance in English examinations.

Methodology: The study used a descriptive-analytical research design grounded in Needs Analysis. Data were collected from agronomy students across three academic years using questionnaires. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed in this exploratory study to capture the complexity of students' linguistic difficulties, academic needs and professional expectations.

Findings: The findings reveal that agronomy students experience difficulties in productive language skills, discipline-specific vocabulary and scientific discourse across all the three years of study. While receptive skills show slight improvement over time, communicative competence remains insufficient due to reliance on General English instruction. The results confirm that a context-specific ESP syllabus integrating agronomic content significantly enhances students' motivation, relevance perception and functional language use.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: The study contributes to ESP theory by empirically validating the role of discipline-specific syllabus design in improving communicative competence. At the policy level, it highlights the inadequacy of generalized English curricula in specialized higher education contexts. Practically, it offers a framework for designing tailor-made syllabuses for agronomic and similar scientific disciplines.

Keywords: *English For Specific Purposes, Needs Analysis, ESP Syllabus Design, Agronomic Higher Education, Communicative Competence, Language Policy*

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INTRODUCTION

Background

English has increasingly established itself as the dominant language of scientific communication, academic publications and professional interaction across disciplines, incuding agronomy and related agricultural sciences. In the contemporary global knowledge economy, English serves a *lingua franca* through which research findings are disseminated, validated and assessed worldwide. Hyland (2022) and Flowerdew (2021) uphold that the majority of high-impact journals, international conferences and scientific databases operate primarily in English, making it essential for students and researchers to develop adequate proficiency in order to fully participate in academic and professional communities. More recent studies, such as the one by Dewi, Utami and Santosa (2024), further emphasize that English is not only a medium of communication but also a tool for knowledge production and innovation, particularly in specialized and technical fields. In agronomy, the importance of English is closely linked to the global and interdisciplinary nature of agricultural research and practice. Contemporary agricultural challenges ; such as climate change, food security and sustainable resource management ; require collaboration across countries and scientific domains. As a result, agronomy students must engage with a wide range of scientific literature, technical reports and digital resources, most of which are produced in English. Furthermore, Galloway and ose (2021) posit thay students are increasingly expected to participate in international academic exchanges, research collaborations and professional networks where English functions as the primary language of interaction. The other recent research by Bekmanov, Eshdavlatov and Yuldashova (2025) confirms that proficiency in English enhances students' access to global knowledge and improves their ability to contribute to international agricultural development initiatives.

However, for students in non-English speaking contexts, acquiring this level of proficiency remains a significant challenge. Many learners experience difficulties in reading specialized texts, mastering technical vocabulary, writing research reports, and presenting scientific findings in English. These challenges can negatively affect their academic performance and limit their participation in global academic discourse. Macaro et al. (2018) maintain that empirical studies have shown that insufficient English proficiency often creates a gap between students' subject knowledge and their ability to communicate that knowledge effectively. More recent evidence by Khoshhaldelijana (2025) also indicates that students' difficulties are not only linguistic but also related to the lack of exposure to discipline-specific language use and authentic academic tasks.

In response to these challenges, higher education institutions have incorporated English language courses into agronomy and agricultural science programs. These courses are intended to equip students with essential language skills for academic study and professional practice. However, in many contexts, the design of these courses continues to rely heavily on General English (GE) syllabuses. Basturkmen (2019) posits that GE courses typically focus on general

grammar, everyday vocabulary and basic communication skills ; which, although important, do not sufficiently address the scientific linguistic demands of agronomy. As a result, students often struggle to transfer general language knowledge to specialized academic and professional contexts.

Recent studies increasingly highlight this mismatch between GE instruction and students' actual needs. For example, Pratiwi, Oktaviani and Mujianto (2025) demonstrate that students in agricultural and technical fields require targeted vocabulary and communication skills directly related to their discipline-specific subjects. Similarly, Escudero and Rico (2025) argue that traditional language teaching approaches fail to prepare learners for real-world professional tasks in agroindustry contexts. This gap suggests that a more specialized approach to language instruction is necessary to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

Consequently, there has been a growing emphasis on English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly in the form of English for Agronomic Purposes (ESAP). ESP is based on the principle that language teaching should be tailored to learners' specific academic and professional needs. In agronomy, this involves focusing on technical terminology, scientific writing conventions, data interpretation, and professional communication skills relevant to agricultural contexts. Anthony (2018), Sultan et al. (2025) posit that research has shown that ESP-oriented instruction significantly improves learners' ability to engage with specialized content and enhances their overall academic performance.

 A crucial component of effective ESP implementation is Needs Analysis, which involves identifying the specific language requirements of learners in relation to their academic and professional tasks. Recent studies emphasize that needs-based curriculum design leads to more relevant and practical learning outcomes. For instance ; Raikhanova, Kassymova and Bakić-Mirić (2025) highlight that ESP programs grounded in Needs Analysis better align with students' expectations and future career demands. In addition ; Dewi, Utami and Santosa (2024) ; Supuran, Sturza and Caciora (2024) support that contemporary approaches to ESP increasingly incorporate digital literacy and interactive learning methods, which further enhance students' engagement and ability to use English in real-life contexts.

In conclusion, the dominance of English in agronomy and agricultural sciences has made it an indispensable tool for academic and professional success. While higher education institutions have made efforts to integrate English language instructions into their programs, the continued reliance on General English syllabuses limits the effectiveness of these initiatives. Recent research strongly supports a shift toward ESP and needs-based approaches, which are better suited to address the specific linguistic and communicative demands of agronomy students. By adopting such approaches, institutions can better prepare students to access global knowledge, participate in international collaboration and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of agricultural science.

Research problem

Despite years of English instruction and high success rates in formal examinations, agronomy students in Beni City higher education institutions continue to demonstrate low communicative proficiency. They fail to speak, write and use discipline-specific language. This mismatch between assessment success and functional language ability raises concerns about the effectiveness of existing English syllabuses.

Research questions

This study was guided by the following main question : What can a tailor-made English syllabus integrate to improve the English language proficiency of agronomy students in Beni City higher education institutions ?

To address the question above, two secondary questions were formulated :

1. What language difficulties do agronomy students face across the three years of study ?
2. To what extend does the current English syllabus meet students' academic and professional language needs ?

Research Hypotheses

Main Hypothesis :

H_{a1} : An effective English syllabus for agronomy students could integrate agronomic content with students' academic and professional motivations to improve communicative proficiency.

H_{01} : An effective English syllabus for agronomy students does not significantly improve communicative proficiency when integrating agronomic content with students' academic and professional motivations.

Secondary Hypotheses :

H_{a2} : Agronomy students faced significant difficulties in productive skills, technical vocabulary and scientific reading across the three years of study.

H_{02} : Agronomy students do not face significant difficulties in productive skills, technical vocabulary and scientific reading across the three years of study.

H_{a3} : The current English syllabus inadequately met students' academic and professional language needs.

H_{03} : The current English syllabus adequately meets students' academic and professional language needs.

Research Objectives

General Ojective

Generally, the study identifies English language difficulties faced by agronomy students across different academic levels.

Specific Objectives

In particular, the study :

1. Evaluates the relevance of current English syllabus to students' disciplinary needs.
2. Proposes principles for designing a tailor-made ESP syllabus for agronomic studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, pp. 6-7), Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, pp. 3-5) said that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) emerged as a response to learners' specialized language needs in academic and professional contexts. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987, pp. 8-10 ; pp. 18-19), ESP is characterized by its learner-centeredness and focus purpose-driven language use. In scientific disciplines such as agronomy, ESP instruction emphasizes technical vocabulary, genre-specific writing and oral communication relevant to professional practice.

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, pp. 121-125) said that Needs Analysis is widely recognized as the foundation of ESP syllabus. Scholars namely Hutchinson and Waters, Nunan, Dudley-Evans and St John and other related ESP researchers argue that without systematic identification of learners' target situations and learning needs, English instruction risks becoming irrelevant. Effective ESP instruction requires a clear understanding of learners' academic and professional needs. Many studies in agricultural and scientific ESP contexts have documented that students frequently face difficulties with productive skills, particularly writing research reports and delivering oral presentations. For instance, in the research in environmental science students highlighted that they often struggle to convey experimental findings clearly, both in written reports and oral presentations, limiting their ability to participate effectively in academic discourse (Rasd International Journal, 2020). Similarly, Perera (2019) found that biotechnology students in Sri Lanka faced challenges in drafting research proposals, interpreting laboratory results and presenting findings underscoring gaps in ESP instruction that fails to address discipline-specific communicative demands. In agricultural ESP contexts, Kariyawasam (2018) reported that students lacked both confidence and practical experience in producing academic content in English, resulting in limited opportunities to publish or communicate their research effectively. These findings collectively demonstrate that productive skills are consistently challenging for learners in scientific and agricultural fields. Importantly, they underscore the necessity of systematic Needs Analysis in ESP course design. Effective ESP instruction requires a clear understanding of learners' academic and professional needs.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, pp. 54-58), Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, pp. 36-40) believe that by identifying learners' target situations such as the requirement to write research reports or present findings and their learning needs, educators can tailor instruction to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Needs Analysis provides a structured approach to determine what learners must achieve in real-world contexts and how they learn best, ensuring that ESP courses are both learner-centered and discipline-specific. Without such analysis, ESP programs risk focusing on generic language skills that do not prepare students for the specific communicative tasks they will encounter in their academic and professional environments. Therefore, addressing gaps in productive skills through needs-based ESP instruction is crucial for enabling students to perform successfully in their perspective fields.

Despite the insights above, few studies have specifically examined the detailed nature of students' struggles with writing research reports and delivering oral presentations within the context of agricultural ESP programs in Sri Lanka. Moreover, existing research has largely focused on identifying problems rather than exploring how these challenges could inform targeted course design and pedagogical strategies. This gap highlights the need for empirical studies that link learners' productive skill deficiencies directly to the development of ESP curricula tailored to agricultural disciplines. Addressing this gap is essential to ensure that ESP courses not only identify learners' needs but also provide practical, discipline-specific support to enhance academic communication skills.

Research also indicates that reliance on General English instruction syllabuses in higher education fails to prepare students for disciplinary communication. Studies in engineering, medecine and agriculture consistently show that Content-Integrated Instruction (CII) improves motivation, comprehension and language transferability. This is the case of Bernegas (2012, pp. 111-136) and Shykun (2023, pp. 42-52) who maintain that CII increases learner motivation and engagement when Lo and Jeong (2025) and Dalton-Puffer (2011, pp. 182-204) claim that it improves content and language comprehension and El-Maghraby (2024, pp. 1-24) and Tavassoli et al. (2023, pp. 67-92) uphold that it supports language transferability to disciplinary contexts such as engineering and medicine. Then, this study aligns with ESP Scholars by situating agronomic English instruction within students' academic realities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Research design

The study employed a descriptive and analytical research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Johnson, Omwuegbuzie and Turner (2007, pp. 112-118) believe that when descriptive and analytical research designs combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, they enable both comprehensive description and in-depth analysis of the research problem. Such design

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produces robust and interpretable findings. Therefore, this design was chosen to capture both measurable language difficulties and contextual students' experiences.

Sampling

The target population consisted of agronomy students from the first to third academic years in higher education institutions in Beni City. It is exhaustive. Nworgu (1991, p. 71) specifies that the sampling frame must be an exhaustive list of all elements in the population to ensure that every member has an equal opportunity for selection. The elements making up the population of this study are those that are actually investigated. They stood at 412 respondents among which 409 received, successfully completed and handed in back the questionnaire under the control of the Chiefs of sections and Deans of faculties.

Methods

Multiple research methods wered used to ensure data validity. The survey questionnaire included items related to syllabus design, i.e. learning resources such as videos, agronomic texts ; effective participation in lessons and feedback…Hutchinson and Waters (1987, pp. 53-55), Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, pp. 121-124) and Basturkmen (2010, pp. 17-20) supported that a questionnaire about Needs Analysis includes such items because Needs Analysis in ESP encompasses not only linguistic deficits but also learners' learning needs and perceptions. These factors directly influence syllabus relevance, pedagogical effectiveness, learner engagement, and ultimately communicative competence. Including such items ensured a comprehensive, learner-centered basis for the proposed ESP syllabus.

Denzin and Lincoln (2018, pp. 26-29) posit that the study, grounded in a relativist ontological perspective, acknowledges that learners' realities are multiple, context-dependent and socially constructed, while Cresswell (2014, pp. 7-8) argues that a post-positivist stance allows for the identification of observable patterns and tendencies across participants. Next, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010, pp. 8-12) ; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, pp. 20-21) maintain that qualitative methods were used to explore learners' meanings and experiences, whereas quantitative data provided descriptive trends. This is a form of methodological complementarity widely advocated mixed-methods research. In ESP research, this pluralistic approach is justified by Needs Analysis Theory ; which, according to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, pp. 121-125), allows integrating multiple data sources to capture both learners' perceptions and contextual demands.

Techniques of Data Collection

Questionnaires gathered data on students' perceived difficulties, motivation and syllabus relevance. Diagnostic tasks assessed proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The items of the questionnaire used as data collection tool were subject to reliability statistics. After running reliability analysis the result indicates a Cronbach's alpha value of .701. Hair et al. (2010, p. 125) provide the widely used 'rule of thumb' for interpreting Cronbach's alpha. They explain

that while .701 is the generally accepted lower limit for most research, a value as low as .60 is considered accepted for exploratory studies.

Techniques of Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while content analysis applied to qualitative information to identify recurring patterns related to language needs and instructional gaps. Pretorius (2024, p. 2709) explains how content analysis is used to systematically categorize qualitative information into themes based on the research paradigm. This process allows researchers to reduce large volumes of textual data into meaningful units, making it easier to identify recurring ideas, relationships and underlying meanings relevant to the research questions.

DATA PRESENTATION

This section evaluates agronomy students' English language difficulties from an ESP perspective, focusing on skills required for academic study and professional practice in agriculture. Measured on a five-point Liket-scale, the results reveal persistent challenges particulary in productive skills and indicate a mismatch between current English instruction and sudents' discipline-specific language needs. Findings are summarized in Table 1 and Bar chart 1.

In general ; the first, second and third year agronomy students perceive a moderate to high level of difficulty in all English language skills (all means > 3 = sometimes). In particular, productive skills are perceived as more challenging than reproductive skills and knowledge-based areas.

Speaking (MS = 3.70, SD = 1.139), writing (MS = 3.65, SD = 1.149) and spelling (MS = 3.69, SD = 1.192) show high difficulty ratings than listening (MS = 3.47, SD = 1.087), reading (MS = 3.54, SD = 1.196), vocabulary (MS = 3.49, SD = 1.153) and grammar (MS = 3.48, SD = 1.129). The overall score is 3.55. This score is between 'sometimes' (3) and 'often' (4). It leans closer to 'often'. This means that respondents regularly demonstrate the skills involved in learning English. The score suggests moderate to high proficiency or engagemnet in using various English learning skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It aligns with common language learning patterns where producing language actively is harder than understanding it. The data above is clear in the table 1 below.

Table 1 : Frequencies of the first to third year agronomy students' experienced difficulties in practising different English language skills.

Skills involved in learning	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Reading	3.54	1.196	Sometimes
Writing	3.65	1.149	Sometimes
Speaking	3.70	1.139	Sometimes
Listening	3.47	1.087	Sometimes
Spelling	3.66	1.192	Sometimes
Learning Vocabulary	3.49	1.153	Sometimes
Learning Grammar	3.48	1.229	Sometimes
Overall learning skills difficulties	3.55	.812	Sometimes

Source : Primary data 2024

It is noticed that 69.2% of 409 preferred subjects related to general agriculture. The preference rate of 11% is reserved to agribusiness. Topics such as sustainable development, deforestation and waste management are chosen only at 7.1%. Finally, students preferred reading, comprehension and writing at 7.1%, too. They also liked topics related to biodiversity, forestry and environment at 5.6%. The bar chart 1 below gives more details indicating the proportion of students selecting each topic.
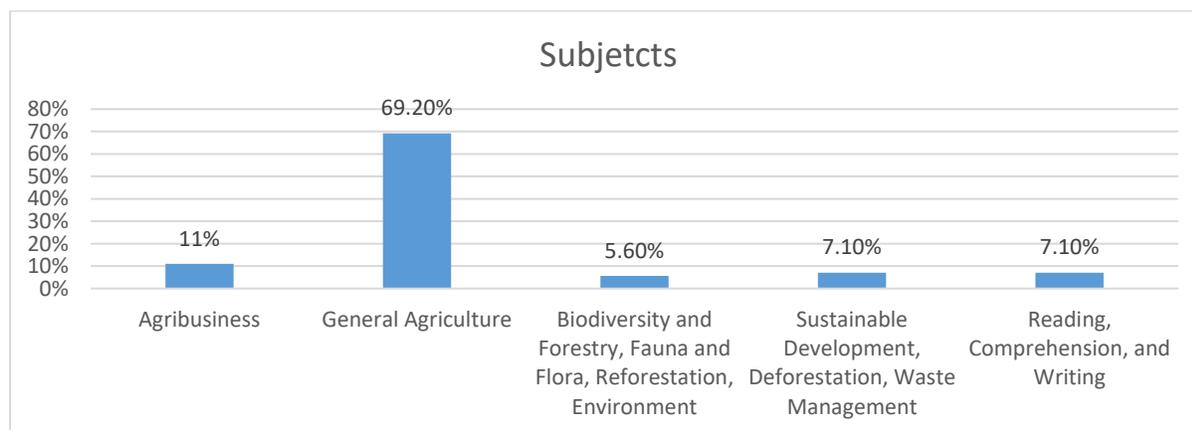
Bar chart 1 : The first to third year agronomy students' agronomic relevant topics to be learnt in English for Specific Agronomic Purposes (ESAP)

Source : Primary data 2024

DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents findings of analyses that reveal moderate to high difficulties across all English skills among agronomy students, with productive skills ; particularly speaking, spelling and writing ; posing the greatest challenges. In constrast, receptive skills and grammar present comparatively fewer difficulties, suggesting an imbalance between language knowledge and active language use. These patterns point to gaps in the current syllabus indicating a need for an ESP-oriented curriculum that prioritizes productive, task-based communication and integrates agronomy-specific and sustainability content more systematically.

The analysis of how often the first to third year agronomy students experience difficulties in practising different English langue skills resuts in students' highest, moderate lowest difficulties and responses' variability. The skills students struggle with the most are speaking (3.70) and spelling (3.66). Writing (3.65) follows very closely. This pattern indicates frequent challenges in productive language skills. Reading (3.54) and learning vocabulary (3.49) are slightly lower, suggesting that learners face some challenges but not as often as with speaking or spelling. Listening (3.47) and learning grammar (3.48) have the lowest mean scores. It means that students report relatively fewer difficulties here, though the difficulty level is still above the midpoint of 3 ('sometimes'). It also indicates that difficulties are present but moderate. Finally, the standard deviations range from 1.087 to 1.229. This fact reveals moderate variability in responses. Speaking, reading and spelling have slightly higher variability, i.e. students' experiences of difficulty in these skills are more inconsistent. The overall SD of 0.812 is lower than individual skills. It reflects that, on average, students have fairly consistent overal perceptions of difficulty.

The analysis of preferred agronomic subjects shows that students overtly preferred topics related to general agriculture, suggesting greater familiarity or comfort with foundational agronomic content. It also reflects either prior exposure or perception that these topics are easier, more relevant or more exam-oriented. Next, some students preferred agribusiness, indicating some awareness of economic and entrepreneurial aspects of agriculture though it is still a relatively small proportion. In contrast, a few students preferred topics such as sustainable development, deforestation and waste management ; pointing to low engagement with environmental or sustainability issues. Finally, students expressed a low interest in literacy or environmental topics such as reading, comprehension and writing activities as well as biodiversity, forestry, environment ; they consider as less engaging, less practical or more challenging.

In brief, the results demonstrate that agronomy students experience the greatest difficulties in productive English skills, particularly speaking, spelling and writing ; indicating a clear need for greater instructional focus on active language use. Receptive skills and grammatical learning pose comparatively fewer challenges, though difficulties remain at moderate level. Variations in responses, especially in speaking and spelling, suggest differing proficiency levels among students, while overall perceptions of difficulty remain relatively consistent.

Regarding content preferences, students strongly favor general agriculture topics, reflecting familiarity and perceived relevance to their field of study. In contrast, limited interest in agribusiness and environmental or literacy-relative topics indicates lower engagement with abstract or linguistically demanding content. These findings underline the importance of ESP instruction that strengthens productive language skills while gradually integrating broader agronomic and sustainability themes.

FINDINGS

The results show moderate to high difficulties across all English language skills among agronomy students (overall M = 3.55), with productive skills posing the greatest challenge, namely speaking (M = 3.70), spelling (M = 3.66) and writing (M = 3.65). Receptive skills and grammar report comparatively lower difficulty levels (Ms = 3.47-3.54), indicting stronger comprehension than production. Content preferences favor general agriculture topics, while limited interest in agribusiness and sustainability-related themes highlights the need for an ESP-oriented syllabus that strengthens productive language skills and gradually integrates discipline-specific and environmental content.

In other words, the findings confirm that :

1. General English instruction does not meet agronomy students' communicative needs.
2. Productive skills remain underdeveloped across all years.
3. Students demonstrate high motivation for discipline-specific English learning.

These results validate the study's hypotheses and align with ESP literature emphasizing relevance and contextualization.

DISCUSSION

The findings about students' experienced difficulties in practising different language skills align with established second language acquisition research, which consistently shows that productive skills demand higher cognitive, linguistic and affective efforts than receptive skills. Speaking and writing require students to actively retrieve vocabulary, apply grammatical knowledge and produce accurate output in real time, often under communicative pressure. In contrast, listening and reading allow students more processing time and contextual support, which may explain their lower difficulty ratings.

Furthermore, the moderate difficulty reported in grammar and vocabulary learning suggests that students possess foundational linguistic knowledge but face challenges in transferring this knowledge into effective language production.

There are factors influencing topics preference. Students prefer topics they are exposed to regurlarly in their field of instruction courses or that they see as directly linked to farming practice. For this, they perceive topics like environmental management, literacy and sutainable development

as more abstract or challenging. The interest in agribusiness (11%) reflect awareness of economic opportunities, whereas the low preference for environmental topics (5.6-7.1%) suggests limited motivation toward environmental sustainability topics. Therefore, teachers may need to integrate sustainability, literacy and environmental topics into general agriculture to increase engagement. They are expected to use practical, hands-on and contextualized activities to make less-preferred topics more appealing. Finally, they are advised to promote awareness of the importance of environmental stewardship, biodiversity and sustainable practices to prepare students for modern agronomy challenges.

Briefly, the findings indicate that agronomy students experience greater difficulty with productive English skills than receptive ones, despite possessing foundational grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Topic preferences are strongly influenced by familiarity and perceived practical relevance, with limited engagement in environmental and sustainability-related areas. This highlights the need for more contextualized ESP instruction that links language development with real-world agronomic practice because communicative competence cannot develop in specialized disciplines without targeted syllabus design. The persistence of language difficulties reflects systematic curricular misalignment rather than student deficiency. Integrating agronomic content into English instruction enhances authenticity and promotes meaningful language use.

Overall Check

The purpose of this study was to investigate the English language needs and difficulties of agronomy students in higher education institutions in Beni City in order to propose elements for the design of a tailor-made English for Specific Purposes (ESP) syllabus. The verification of the research questions, hypotheses and objectives was carried out through the analysis of students' responses concerning their language difficulties and their preference regarding agronomic content.

First, the main question sought to determine what a tailor-made English syllabus could integrate in order to improve the English language proficiency of agronomy students. The results indicate that students experience moderate to high levels of difficulty across all English skills, with the greatest challenges appearing in productive skills, particularly speaking (M = 3.70), spelling (M = 3.66) and writing (M = 3.65). In contrast, receptive skills such as reading (M = 3.54) and listening (M = 3.47), as well as grammar learning (M = 3.48), show comparatively lower levels of difficulty. These findings reveal an imbalance between language knowledge and the ability to actively use the language for communication. Consequently, the results confirm that an effective syllabus should emphasize communicative practice, task-based learning and the integration of agronomic content, thereby addressing the real academic and professional language needs of students.

Second, the first secondary research question examined the language difficulties encountered by agronomy students across the three years of study. The data clearly show that students

experience significant challenges in productive skills and technical language use, especially in speaking and writing activities. The relatively high mean scores for these skills indicate frequent difficulties, while the standard deviations ranging from 1.087 to 1.229 demonstrate moderate variability in students' experiences. This result suggests that although difficulties are generally shared among students, some of them experience more intensively than others. Therefore, these findings confirm the first secondary hypothesis, which stated that agronomy students face considerable difficulties in productive skills, technical vocabulary and scientific reading throughout their studies.

Third, the second secondary researh question assessed the extent to which the current English syllabus meets students' academic and professional needs. The results highlight a mismatch between the existing syllabus and students' real learning needs. The predominance of difficulties in productive skills indicates that the current English course does not sufficiently develop communicative competence or practical language use in agronomic contexts. Furthermore, the analysis of content preferences show that students strongly favor general agriculture topics, which they perceive as more relevant to their field. Conversely, there is limited interest in topics related to agribusiness, environmental issues or literacy-related activities, which may be perceived as more abstract or linguistically demanding. These results reveal that the present syllabus does not adequately integrate disciplinary content in a way that motivates students or supports their professional communication needs. Therefore, the second hypothesis, which assumed that the current English syllabus inadequately meets students' academic and professional language needs, is also validated.

Finally, the findings confirm that the general objective of the study, which is to identify the English language difficulties faced by agronomy students at different academic levels, has been successfully achieved. The study identified the areas of greatest difficulty, particularly productive skills, while also revealing patterns in students' perceptions and learning preferences. In addition, specific objectives were fulfilled. The first specific objective, which aimed at evaluating the relevance of the current English syllabus to students' disciplinary needs, demonstrated that the syllabus only partially address those needs. The second objective, which considered of proposing principles for designing a tailor-made ESP syllabus for agronomic studies, is supported by the results indicating the necessity of a curriculum that prioritizes productive communication, task-based learning and the systematic integration of agronomy-related and sustainability topics.

In conclusion, the analysis of the collected data confirms that the research questions were adequately answered, the hypotheses were verified and the objectives of the study were achieved. The results strongly support the need for the development of a needs-based ESP syllabus capable of improving agronomy students' communicative competence by aligning English instruction with their academic, disciplinary and professional contexts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that agronomy students in Beni City face persistent difficulties in productive English skills, particularly speaking, writing and spelling; despite satisfactory performance in formal examinations. Receptive skills and grammatical knowledge are comparatively stronger, yet the overall communicative competence remains insufficient. Reliance on General English instruction fails to meet the academic and professional demands of agronomy students, highlighting a misalignment between language curricula and disciplinary needs.

Findings indicate that integrating agronomic content into English instruction through a tailor-made ESP syllabus significantly enhances students' motivation, perceived relevance and functional language use. Students show strong preference for general agriculture topics, while engagement with environmental, sustainability and literacy-related content remains limited. This fact underscores the need for contextualized, practical activities.

Recommendations

It is recommended that higher education institutions adopt discipline-specific ESP curricula emphasizing productive skills, content-integrated instruction and real-world academic tasks such as research reporting and presentations. Regular Needs Analyses should guide syllabus refinement, while teacher training in ESP pedagogy as well as collaboration with agronomy specialists can ensure effective implementation. Such strategies will bridge the gap between formal English knowledge and communicative competence, preparing agronomy students for professional and academic success. For this, future research should test the effectiveness of implemented ESP syllabuses through experimental design.
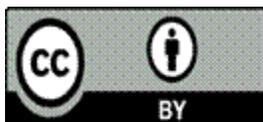
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