# Improving Graduate Competence Through Integration of Business English and Soft Skills

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***Abstract:*** *This article discusses the importance of integrating Business English and soft skills in improving the competence of graduates at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) Universitas Madura. By adopting a qualitative approach, this study revealed the perceptions of students and graduates regarding the relevance of these two skills in the world of work. The results show that graduates who participated in this integrated program are more confident and able to communicate effectively, both in English and interpersonal contexts. However, challenges remain in implementing this program, including limited resources and relevant teaching materials. Therefore, it is recommended that FETT Universitas Madura design a more comprehensive training program for lecturers and periodically update the curriculum in line with industry developments. This research also shows that mastery of English and soft skills not only increases the competitiveness of graduates in the job market but also contributes to the professionalism and effectiveness of teaching in the educational environment. The integration of these two skills is expected to be a model for other educational institutions to prepare competent educators who are ready to face challenges in the global era.*

## INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly competitive era of globalization, graduates of higher education in Indonesia, including graduates of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) Universitas Madura, face various challenges and opportunities in the world of work. Especially in the field of education, the demand for graduate competence is increasing, along with the dynamics of curriculum changes and the needs of the world of work. FETT graduates are required to not only have good pedagogical skills but also adapt to the increasingly complex needs of the world of work. One important aspect that is increasingly highlighted is the mastery of English, especially in a business context, as well as soft skills, such as effective communication, leadership, and teamwork. These competencies are considered key factors in improving graduates' competitiveness in the global labor market (Sharma & Bansal, 2020).

Business English has become one of the key skills for graduates to master, especially because many companies and educational institutions expect good international communication skills. In an educational context, Business English skills enable graduates to access a wider range of academic resources, participate in international conferences, and open opportunities for cross-border collaboration. In addition, Business English also enables FETT graduates to teach English with a more practical approach that is relevant to labor market needs (Zhao & Zhang, 2021). On the other hand, soft skills play an important role in ensuring graduates can adapt to the dynamics of the workplace, especially in the field of education which demands the ability to interact with students, colleagues, and other parties effectively.

FETT Universitas Madura is faced with various problems in improving the competence of its graduates, especially related to mastery of Business English and soft skills. Although the curriculum has been designed to develop students' pedagogical abilities, there are still gaps in their communication skills in English and in the application of soft skills that are relevant in the world of work. This gap is often caused by the limited time allocated for Business English training, as well as the lack of comprehensive integration between English language teaching and soft skills development in the curriculum (Rahman et al., 2019). Therefore, the integration of Business English and soft skills in the learning process at FETT is becoming increasingly important to consider to improve graduates' readiness for the world of work.

The integrated development of Business English and soft skills can also help FETT graduates of Universitas Madura navigate the increasingly complex world of education. In addition, soft skills, such as leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving, are needed in the teaching profession. These soft skills are also important for graduates working outside the educational field, given that many FETT graduates pursue careers in other sectors that require good interpersonal and managerial skills (Ahmad & Chandran, 2018). Thus, the integration of Business English skills and soft skills is expected to give FETT graduates of Madura University a competitive advantage in an increasingly dynamic job market.

The importance of integration between Business English and soft skills is not only seen from the needs of the labor market, but also from an academic perspective. Previous research has shown that simultaneous mastery of English and soft skills can improve graduates' critical thinking, adaptability, and productivity in the world of work (Brown & Adler, 2018). FETT Universitas Madura can play a strategic role in strengthening these two aspects through curriculum updates, intensive training, and collaboration with industry to ensure that their graduates have competencies that match the professional demands in the field.

The purpose of this study is to explore how the integration of Business English and soft skills is implemented at the FETT Universitas Madura. This research focuses on how these two skills are integrated into the curriculum and learning process, as well as their impact on the competence of graduates. It also explores the barriers and challenges encountered in this integration process and seeks solutions to improve the effectiveness of existing educational programs.

Based on this background, this research proposes the following main questions: (1) How does FETT Universitas Madura integrate Business English and soft skills in the learning process? (2) How do FETT University Madura graduates perceive the relevance of these two skills in their careers? These questions will be explored through a qualitative approach involving in-depth interviews with lecturers, students, and graduates of the FETT Universitas Madura.

This research is expected to provide valuable input for FETT Universitas Madura in improving the curriculum and teaching methods, especially regarding the integration between

Business English and soft skills. The results of this study are expected to be used as evaluation materials for other higher education institutions that want to improve the competence of their graduates through a similar approach.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

### 1. Business English

Business English is a branch of English that focuses on language use in professional and business contexts. In the field of education, especially within the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), Business English has significant relevance, as it enables graduates to be better prepared to face challenges in the world of work. The mastery of Business English not only facilitates access to international academic resources and materials but also enhances graduates' competence in communicating in a global environment. According to research conducted by Tsai (2020), the mastery of Business English by educators can increase teaching effectiveness, especially in teaching students about the context of global economics and communication, so it is relevant to be applied in FETT, which aims to produce prospective educators with global competence.

In addition, mastery of English provides wider career opportunities for FETT graduates, especially since many schools and educational institutions currently prioritize educators who have communication skills in international languages. Mahmud and Nur (2019) found that graduates who mastered English tended to have a greater chance of getting a job, both domestically and abroad. In addition, this ability allows graduates to contribute to international forums, attend global educational conferences, and access a wider range of educational resources. Therefore, the importance of Business English in higher education cannot be ignored, especially when equipping prospective teachers to be ready for the needs of modern education.

### 2. Soft skills

Soft skills refer to a set of non-technical skills, including interpersonal skills, communication, time management, and leadership abilities. In the context of education, soft skills are particularly important for prospective teachers because their role is not only to deliver learning materials but also to manage the classroom, interact with students, and cooperate with colleagues. Soft skills such as interpersonal communication and classroom management help teachers create a conducive learning environment, which in turn improves student achievement. Research by Robles (2019) emphasizes that future educators who have good soft skills tend to be more successful in their careers, as these skills affect the way they relate to students, parents, and colleagues.

In the modern era of education, mastering soft skills is becoming increasingly important to educators. According to research conducted by Goleman et al. (2021), teachers who mastered skills such as empathy, effective communication, and problem solving performed better in creating a supportive learning environment. These skills not only help in interpersonal relationships but also play a role in overcoming the challenges that teachers often face in the classroom, such as conflict management and dealing with students from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, it is important for institutions such as FKIP Universitas Madura to ensure that its graduates are not only equipped with academic knowledge but also with the soft skills necessary to become effective educators.

### 3. Integration of Business English and soft skills

The integration of Business English and soft skills into higher education curricula has been the focus of research in recent years. Various studies show that integrating these two skills can improve graduates' readiness to face the world of work. According to research conducted by Ramli and Wicaksono (2022), the integration of Business English skills and soft skills in the curriculum helps graduates not only communicate effectively in a professional environment but also have the ability to work in teams, solve problems, and demonstrate leadership attitudes. In the context of education, this is particularly important, as teachers are not only required to master the subject matter, but also be able to lead and guide students effectively.

The benefits of the integration of Business English and soft skills are felt in the preparation of prospective teachers who are ready to face the demands of the world of work. Studies by Ling (2020) show that graduates who have received this integrated training have higher self-confidence and are better able to navigate workplace dynamics than those who only focus on technical skills. In addition, the ability to communicate in Business English, coupled with mastery of soft skills such as leadership and time management, provides significant added value to graduates in the eyes of employers. Therefore, FETT Universitas Madura and other educational institutions need to consider strengthening the integration of these two skills in their curriculum in order to produce graduates who are competent and ready to compete in the global labor market.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods to explore in depth the experiences and perceptions of lecturers, students, and graduates of FETT Universitas Madura related to the integration of Business English and soft skills in the learning process. The phenomenological approach was chosen because its main focus is to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of people who experience it directly. This is in accordance with the purpose of this study, which is to explore how the integration of the two skills is perceived and practiced by those involved in educational activities in FETT (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data collection techniques used in this study included three main methods: in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with FETT lecturers at Madura University who teach English courses as well as courses related to soft skills and FETT graduates who have worked in education. These interviews aimed to understand how the integration of the two skills is carried out in the classroom and its impact on graduates' careers. In addition, observations were made to directly observe classroom teaching practices involving the integration of Business English and soft skills. Documentation in the form of curriculum analysis, syllabi, and learning materials were also used to trace the application of this concept in the formal curriculum of FETT (Miles et al., 2014).

Participants in this study included FETT students at Madura University who were taking English and soft skills training courses, lecturers who taught related courses, and FETT graduates who had worked as educators. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which allows researchers to select individuals who have direct experience with the topic under study (Patton, 2015). The involvement of various participants was expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation and impact of integrating the two skills.

Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. This process involved coding the data to identify the main themes

that emerged from the interviews and observations. Subsequently, the relationships between themes were analyzed to find consistent patterns related to the implementation and perceptions of the integration of Business English and soft skills in the FETT curriculum. This analysis will assist in understanding the implications of integrating both skills on graduate competencies (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

## RESULTS

The main findings of this study show that students and graduates of FETT Universitas Madura have a positive perception of the importance of mastering Business English and soft skills in the world. The majority of respondents realized that English language skills, especially in a business context, are an important asset in expanding career opportunities, both in education and other professional sectors. Employed graduates recognize that this competency not only helps them communicate with international colleagues but also helps them understand global education literature and trends, which is very useful in their professional development.

In addition, soft skills such as communication, leadership, time management, and problem-solving are considered essential skills that cannot be ignored in education. Graduate respondents stated that their ability to manage a classroom, interact with students from diverse backgrounds, and work in teams relies heavily on mastery of soft skills. Some graduates even mentioned that good interpersonal skills were one of the determining factors for their success in getting a job in education.

FETT Universitas Madura implemented an integration program of Business English and Soft Skills in the curriculum through several compulsory courses. The program includes English learning focused on business and professional contexts, as well as soft skills development through practical activities such as presentations and group work. The lecturers interviewed explained that the main goal of this integration is to prepare graduates who not only have good academic abilities but also the skills needed in the world of work. Nevertheless, the implementation of this program faces several challenges that need to be considered.

The main challenge faced by FETT Universitas Madura in improving the competence of its graduates in this aspect is the limited resources, both in terms of teaching staff who have competence in Business English and in providing teaching materials that are in accordance with the needs of the current world of work. In addition, some students stated that although they realized the importance of English and soft skills, they still found it difficult to master both skills simultaneously. Another challenge is the limited time required to deliver the material owing to the tight academic schedule.

However, on the other hand, opportunities to improve the competence of FETT graduates remain wide open. Some lecturers argued that with increased collaboration between FETT and international educational institutions or education-focused companies, this program could be more optimal. One of the opportunities identified was organizing additional workshops or training facilitated by the international industry and education practitioners. Thus, graduates can gain wider exposure to the application of English and soft skills globally.

A thematic analysis of the results of this study showed that the integration of Business English and soft skills had a positive impact on students' ability to teach, communicate, and work in teams. The main theme that emerged from the data analysis was the improvement of communication skills, both in English and interpersonal contexts. Students who participated in

this program felt more confident in conveying ideas, both orally and in writing, which is very useful in teaching and learning activities and when interacting with colleagues.

In addition, this integration also improves the teaching skills of FETT students at Madura University. Students who have undergone this integration program report that they are better able to manage the classroom and facilitate the teaching and learning processes more effectively. Soft skills such as time management and problem solving proved to be very helpful in resolving challenges that often arise in the classroom, such as dealing with students with learning difficulties or organizing assignments and exams.

Graduates' experiences in applying Business English and soft skills in the world of work have shown mixed results. Most graduates who have worked as teachers in various educational institutions have stated that their proficiency in English has greatly helped them access international educational resources and collaborate with foreign colleagues. However, they also highlighted the importance of soft skills, particularly communication and leadership, in creating good relationships with students, parents, and fellow teachers.

Ultimately, the integration of Business English and soft skills at FKIP Universitas Madura provides much-needed provisions for graduates to meet the demands of the world of work. In addition to improving technical and academic skills, this integration fosters confidence, independence, and adaptability in professional situations. Therefore, it is important for FETT to continue to develop and strengthen this program so that its graduates are able to compete in an increasingly competitive job market.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Implications for Education

The integration of Business English and Soft Skills at FKIP Universitas Madura has a significant positive impact on the quality of graduates. Research shows that graduates who follow this integration program have higher self-confidence and better communication skills, both in English and interpersonal contexts. This is in line with the findings of Goleman et al. (2021), who show that mastery of soft skills can improve teaching effectiveness and interpersonal relationships in the educational environment. Thus, graduates who possess these skills are better prepared to face challenges in the work world, especially in the increasingly demanding education sector.

However, challenges remain in implementing this integration, including limited human resources and relevant teaching materials. FETT Universitas Madura needs to face these challenges by designing a more comprehensive training program for lecturers to be more effective in teaching these two skills. Robles (2019) shows that improving lecturers' competence in teaching soft skills can contribute to students' skill development. In addition, increased cooperation with overseas or educational institutions that are already experienced in integrating these two skills can also be an effective solution.

Furthermore, it is important for FETT Universitas Madura to regularly evaluate and update its curriculum to keep it relevant to the development of the world of work. Mahmud and Nur (2019) suggest that continuous curriculum evaluation and industry stakeholder engagement can help ensure that education programs meet market needs. Thus, graduates will be more competitive in the labor market and can make a greater contribution to the world of education.

### 2. Implications for the Education Industry

In the education sector, there is an urgent need for educators proficient in Business English and soft skills. Schools and other educational institutions are looking for teachers who can not only teach well, but also communicate effectively in a global context. Along with the increasing need for international education, mastery of English has become one of the main requirements of educators in many institutions (Sharma & Bansal, 2020). Therefore, the integration program at FETT Universitas Madura can be a model for other institutions in preparing educators who are ready to face the growing demands of the world of education.

The integration of these two skills can also improve educators' professionalism and performance. Research by Zhao and Zhang (2021) shows that teachers with both English and soft skills tend to be more effective in managing the classroom and establishing positive relationships with students and colleagues. Thus, training and developing these skills at FETT Universitas Madura not only improves the quality of teaching, but also has the potential to improve student learning outcomes.

**3. Comparison with Other Studies**

The results of this study are in line with those of similar studies conducted in other educational institutions both at home and abroad. For example, a study by Ling (2020) at the University of Indonesia showed that the integration of communication skills and English in the teacher education curriculum improved the competitiveness of graduates in the labor market. The study also emphasized the importance of soft skills development in prepare prospective teachers who are able to adapt to the needs and dynamics of the educational environment.

In contrast, studies conducted in several developed countries have shown that integrating soft skills into higher education has become a common practice and is recognized as the key to educational success (Brown & Adler, 2018). In this context, FETT Universitas Madura can learn from the experiences of institutions abroad to strengthen the implementation of this integration program given the increasingly urgent global need for competent and ready-to-use educators.

Taking this comparison into account, it can be concluded that FETT Universitas Madura is on the right track in integrating Business English and soft skills into its curriculum. However, in order to compete effectively at the national and international levels, institutions need to continue to innovate and strengthen existing programs so that graduates can be better prepared to face challenges in the increasingly complex world of education.

## CONCLUSIONS

The integration of Business English and soft skills in education at FETT Universitas Madura has proven to have a significant positive impact on graduate competence. This research shows that graduates who have participated in this integration program feel more prepared to face challenges in the world of work, with better communication skills and interpersonal skills required in the education profession. The success of this programme not only creates graduates who are more competitive in the job market, but also helps them contribute more effectively in educational settings, both at home and abroad. This shows that the integration of these two skills is not only relevant but also essential for preparing future educators who are able to adapt to the demands of the times.

Based on these findings, the recommendation for FETT Universitas Madura is to continue to strengthen this integration program by involving more industry practitioners and lecturers who

are competent in Business English and soft skills. This can be done by organizing workshops, training, and collaborations with other institutions that have similar experiences. In addition, other educational institutions that want to develop the competence of their graduates can take inspiration from this integration model to create a curriculum relevant to the needs of the world of work. However, it is important to note that this study has limitations in terms of coverage area, as it focuses only on the FETT University of Madura, as well as the limited number of participants. Therefore, further research with a wider scope and more participants is required to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of this integration in other institutions.

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