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# ENGLISH AT HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL: A NEED ANALYSIS

*by* Tantri Ajeng

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## ENGLISH AT HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL: A NEED ANALYSIS

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## Abstract:

*This study aimed to reveal students' skills on each English language skill and find out what students need and want on English language learning at higher education level. To meet the aim of the study, a mixed-method approach was employed. The participants of this study were students who have enrolled in a General English course at the target University. Quantitative data was gained from an online questionnaire and Qualitative data was obtained from the interviews. The result of this study showed that students are more confident with their reading and writing skills than their speaking and listening skills. The finding also showed that they need to learn more about speaking skill. For the students' need, English for supporting their job gained the highest percentage among the other choices. However, students also wanted to learn more on grammar. Therefore, an adjustment for English teaching material at higher education level at the target university needs to conduct.*

**Key Words:** English at higher education level, language skills, language need, need analysis

## INTRODUCTION

The urge of Need Analysis (NA) in ELT is inevitable since the need of students who study English is, surely, different. A Need Analysis (NA) is used to gain more insight into what and how language skill should be taught. It is also a way to reveal potential problem occur in the present learning process. In English Language Teaching, NA has been mostly conducted in higher education level since students need to be explored to English that supports their competency according to their field of study. Moreover, the English competency of student graduated from higher education such as university is still considered as not satisfying to compete in the global world and needs to be adjusted to

give a more meaningful way of English teaching in higher education level. (Kusni, 2013; Rokhyati, 2013; Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017) The specific field of study needs a specific kind of English. Additionally, a need analysis is "the gate" to English for Specific Purpose (ESP) which also gain high attention among ELT practitioners. Even more, Jinzhu (2018) pointed out that the result of NA is extremely important to adjust the English language education system. Therefore, enormous attentions to NA study for higher education was conducted in many different countries as in Turkey (Akyel & Ozek, 2010; Ulum, 2015), China (Jinzhu, 2018), and Indonesia (Mubaraq, 2016; Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017; Mahbub, 2018).

A Need Analysis in ELT has been focused on many different aspects of ELT. Aykel and Ozek (2010) focused on the improvement of the ELT curriculum in the preparatory-school of an English medium university in Istanbul. Turmudi and Baihaqi (2019) reported on their need analysis regarding English Essay Materials for University Students. The purpose is to gain the initial data and bring the result of need analysis into research and development process (Turmudi & Baihaqi, 2019).

Using a triangulation study method, the finding highlighted the need of different strategies and skills used during the learning process, improvement in teaching and learning to speak, and a process-oriented related to the teaching methods and materials. Similarly, but not focusing on the curriculum, Ulum (2015) focused on the development of speaking skill in the preparatory-school of English in a university. The study found that there should be more aiding materials for speaking courses and more authentic and interesting activities should be put into practice. However, both studies concerned on the existed curriculum and the materials or the lesson itself but not on what students actually need.

On the other hand, other studies were conducted in responding to students and teachers needs. Exploring on student need, Mubaraq (2016) investigated the need for Medical English in two Medical Schools/Institutes. His need analysis concerned with the identification of students' competence in four language skills as well as faculty staff perspective on the importance of Medical English. This study concluded that there should be a modification and a deep investigation in the development of English for Medical Purpose curriculum by considering the Need of Medical Students. Similarly, Sulistio



(2016) concerned on the needs of English for Physics students in a private university. Categorizing the needs to three categories which are general needs, academic needs, and job needs, the study found that the competence expected are listening to the radio, doing the presentation in front of the class, and writing a CV. Focusing on teacher need, Asri, Ulfa, and Suryadi (2019), conducted a need analysis on the improvement of English for Informatics department. The study concluded that there should be improvement on the course syllabus, classroom activities and materials, as well as the evaluation process. Both focusing on student and teacher side, the studies concern on challenges faced by students and teachers from a specific major, Medical, Physics and Informatics. Thus, the studies were aimed to answer the need of student and teacher for English for Specific Purpose (ESP).

Accordingly, Poedjiastutie and Oliver (2017) also focused on the challenges faced by ESP practitioners. Using ethnography methodology, the study serves a useful model on how English at University level, including its faculty and classroom, can be improved to solve the problem and challenges. Moreover, as an ethnography study, the model of NA on this study can be served as a model to do another NA at other institution in Indonesia. Therefore, NA has a great possibility to be explored at any other subject, classroom, and institution in Indonesia.

1. Consequently, most Need Analysis researches were intended for English for Specific (ESP) course. However, a Need Analysis might result differs depending on the particular situation including the students themselves. Therefore, focusing on the student English competency and need, this present study intended to gain more on what students actually need for their English lesson at the target university. In addition, this study answered the doubt of teaching English experienced by the teachers at the target university.
2. English subject at the target university is labeled as *Bahasa Inggris* or English as the general English. Moreover, there is no specific term of what should be taught in general English. *Bahasa Inggris* subject is listed in the curriculum but there is no syllabus and other teaching materials. Teachers teach *Bahasa Inggris* at the target university with different materials and goals. Some teachers concern on teaching *Bahasa Inggris* based on their major (ESP) but some concern on improving students basic grammar (general English). Thus, it needs assurance on

what should be taught. Kaharuddin and Arafah (2017) stated that few teachers teach students based on their needs and most of them teach based on their intuition. This might happen as there is no certain guideline on what and how English as a general English subject should be taught. Adding into challenges, the target university as a private university has students who are different in their English level of competency. Therefore, gaining information from the students through a Need Analysis is considered as the best choice to meet their expectation of learning English at the target university.

To answers the problems explored in the above introduction, this study addressed the following questions:

1. How do students perceive their ability on English skills?
2. What do students need and want to learn from an English course at a higher education level?

## METHOD

### Design

Need analysis is classified as the initial step in conducting a study on Research and Development (R&D). However, since this study focused only on the need analysis, so a mixed method was employed in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed.

### Participant

The participants are students who were from different semester but had taken a General English course at the target university. The total of participants was 135 students that were grouped according to their field of study. There were four groups of participants as identified in the following table:

No.	Participants field of study
1.	Agriculture
2.	Public Administration
3.	Nursing
4.	Mixed group

Table 1. Participants

### ***Data and Source of Data***

There are two data types; quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was collected from the questionnaire. Participants filled up the questionnaire online. For the qualitative data, this study conducted an interview which was addressed to some of the participants.

### ***Data Collecting Technique***

The data in this study were obtained through a survey involving oral and written data collection about individuals. The survey aimed to investigate the behavior, beliefs, and opinions of the participants on their need for English in higher education (Brown & Hale, 2014).

A questionnaire was used as the main instrument in the quantitative method as a form of written data collection. The data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively. To obtain the data, the researchers first distributed the questionnaire to the participants online.

For the qualitative method, the data was collected from the interview. Researchers functioned as the main instruments in the interview data collection. Besides the researchers themselves, the interview guidance note was used as the second instrument. Questionnaire and interview are the common instruments used in a Need Analysis study. (Indrasari, 2016)

### ***Data Analysis Technique***

As the written data was collected from the online questionnaire, data identification process started from downloading the result of an online questionnaire. The result has shown simple statistical data. Since the participants were grouped, simple statistical data shown from each group were also grouped. Additionally, to get a deep knowledge of the result, the researchers interviewed some of the participants as a form of oral data collection.

In short, the data was analyzed by:

1. spreading the questionnaire online

2. downloading the questionnaire online
3. identifying the result of the questionnaire
4. interviewing some of the students to get more understanding of the result.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The result of the study was divided into two parts. First, it was used to indicate the language skills mastered by the students. The result leads to identify the level of confidence for each skill since it was kind of a self-assessment questionnaire. The second one was about the language need and want towards General English taught at the higher education level.

#### a. Students' language skill

The students' language skills competency was identified from the questionnaire according to each language skill which is listening, speaking, reading and writing. For the listening skill, the questionnaire served the data as follow:

No.	Participants	Listening			
		Very Weak	Weak	Good	Very Good
1.	Agriculture	23.1 %	53.8 %	23.1 %	0 %
2.	Public Administration	15.4 %	30.8 %	30.8 %	23.1 %
3.	Nursing	15 %	15 %	26.7 %	43.3 %
4.	Mixed	22.2 %	50 %	27.8 %	0 %

Table 2. Students' Listening Skill Competency

First, table 2 showed that 53,8 % of agriculture students claimed that their listening skill is 'weak'. Then it followed with 23,1 % students who claimed that their listening skill is 'very weak' and at the same number claimed that their listening skill is 'good'. No student claimed that their listening skill is very good. The percentage is similar to the questionnaire result for mixed students. Half students claimed that their listening skill is weak and no student claimed that their listening skill is very good. Differently, Nursing students claimed that their listening skill is very good and 26,7% is good. For public administration students, 30,8% of students claimed on good and the same number claimed

their listening skill as weak. As much as 23.1% of students claimed that they are very good at listening and the rest is very weak. In average, most students claimed that their listening skill is weak. And the fewest percentage showed that student listening skill is very good. Therefore, it can be assumed that in general students are not confident with their listening skill.

No.	Participants	Speaking			
		Very Weak	Weak	Good	Very Good
1.	Agriculture	23.1 %	53.8 %	23.1 %	0 %
2.	Public Administration	16.7 %	71.4 %	7.1 %	4.8 %
3.	Nursing	15 %	15 %	26.7 %	43.3 %
4.	Mixed	33.3 %	50 %	0 %	16.7 %

Table 3. Students' Speaking Skill Competency

Second, for the speaking skill, the result for agriculture students is not so different from their listening skill. More than half of the students stated that their speaking is weak. Other, same at 23.1 %, stated that their speaking is very weak and some are good. No student stated that their speaking is very good. In line with the listening skill competency, different result collected from nursing students. 43.3% of the students stated that their speaking is very good. Others groups of participants, most of the public administration and mixed students stated that their speaking is weak. Even more, it followed with a very weak score in the second rank as much as 16.7% for public administration students and 33.3% for mixed students. In average, It can be seen that the 'weak' category had the highest percentage which then followed by the very weak. Thus, It can be assumed that compare to the listening skill, students are less confident with their speaking skill.

No.	Participants	Reading			
		Very Weak	Weak	Good	Very Good
1.	Agriculture	0 %	15.4 %	69.2 %	15.4 %
2.	Public Administration	2.3 %	39.5 %	34.9 %	23.3 %
3.	Nursing	6.7 %	18.3 %	51.7 %	23.3 %
4.	Mixed	16.7 %	33.3 %	33.3 %	16.7 %

Table 4. Students' Reading Skill Competency



Third, more than half of Agriculture and nursing students claimed that their reading skill is good. For agriculture students, 15.4% claimed that their reading is very good, and the same percentage stated it as weak. None claimed as very weak. The same orders were given from nursing students. However, there is still 6.7 % of students claimed that their reading is very weak. The other two groups, public administration, and mixed students provided a little bit different percentage but still, most of the students claimed their reading is good. Therefore, in all groups, students mostly stated that their reading is good. And there are a few numbers of students who categorized their reading skill as very weak. Thus, It can be assumed that students are more confident with their reading than listening and speaking.

No.	Participants	Writing			
		Very Weak	Weak	Good	Very Good
1.	Agriculture	15.4 %	30.8 %	30.8 %	23.1 %
2.	Public Administration	4.7 %	30.2 %	58.1 %	7 %
3.	Nursing	5 %	16.7 %	51.7 %	26.7 %
4.	Mixed	27.8 %	38.9 %	16.7 %	16.7 %

Table 5. Students' Writing Skill Competency

For the writing skill, Table 5 exposed that most of the students from all groups classified their writing skill as good. Agriculture students showed the same percentage each at 30.8 % for students who claimed their writing as good and weak. Whilst, public administration, and nursing students showed a different number for the second rank. Public administration showed 30.2 % for students who stated that their Writing as weak following the good one. Nursing students showed 26.7 % for students who claimed their English as very good following the good one. On the other way around, mixed students stated their writing as weak at 38.9% and 27.8% claimed their writing as very weak. The rest of the mixed group students claimed their writing as good and very good each at 16.7%. To sum up, at the first rank for students' assumption to their writing skill is that students considered their writing as good. The second rank is that students considered their writing is weak and the last rank is that students considered their writing as very weak. The data concluded a similar result with the reading skill competency. Thus, it can be assumed that students are quite confident with their writing skill than their speaking and listening.



*b. Students' language need and want*

The students' language need was identified from in what aspect English is important for the students. The questionnaire served data as follow:

No.	Participants	Need			
		Academic	Job	Daily Conversation	Others
1.	Agriculture	15.4 %	30.8 %	30.8 %	23.1 %
2.	Public Administration	10.9 %	37 %	32.6 %	19.6 %
3.	Nursing	5 %	66.7 %	25 %	3.3 %
4.	Mixed	27.8 %	16.7 %	16.7 %	38.9 %

Table 6. Students Need to Learn English

Table 6 presents different percentages from four groups of participants on what aspect of English is important for them. 30,8% of Agriculture students stated that English is important for Daily conversation. At the same number, students also stated that English is important for Job. 15% of Agriculture students voted for academic and the rest, 23,1%, mentioned the other choice. Public administration and nursing students showed a quite similar result which put the highest percentage at Job and followed with Daily conversation. However, the least percentage was addressed to a different category that is 10,9% of public administration students thought English is important for academic purpose while 3,3% of nursing students stated that English is important for other than the choices provided. On the other hand, the mixed group revealed different result that 38,9% of mixed group students agreed that English is important for other than an academic, job, and daily conversation. Moreover, the second-highest percentage, 27,8% of mixed group students said that English is important for academic purpose.

Additionally, based on the open-ended question included in the questionnaire, there are skills that students want to master through the English class at the higher education level. 36,29 % of students from all groups of participants stated that they need to learn speaking more. Next, 31,11% of students stated that they need other skills and 27,4% of students stated that they need to learn reading more. And there is only 1,5% of students who want to learn Listening. (Table, 7)

No.	Skills	Percentage
1.	Speaking	36,29 %
2.	Listening	1,5 %

3.	Reading	27.4 %
4.	Writing	3.7 %
5.	Other	31.11%

Table 7. Students Need towards English lesson

Students who chose other things they want to learn left the provided note in the questionnaire. The other category was recognized as the other aspect of English such as TOEFL and other materials that are specific to their field of study. It means that they want to learn all skills as integrated skills. Thus, they didn't mention the skill specifically.

In line with the questionnaire, the interview result noted three categories of finding related to student expectation towards English at a higher education level. First, most of the students mentioned that they need to master English including the words, the sentences, and grammar. Those needs are classified as basic English. Considering that students are at the higher education level, basic English should have been mastered from the previous education they experienced. But in fact, students stated that they need to know basic English or we can say it as the Basic Grammar. Second, some of the students mentioned that they need English which supports their job such as public speaking and speech. Moreover, some students mentioned that they need to know more about English related to their field of study such as English for Nursing, English for Agriculture and English for Public Administration. However, there are only a few students mentioned that English is needed to support their academic matters. This finding is in line with Kusni (2013) which stated there should be an English course that is more than just general English that equips the graduate with English according to their subject and meet the expectation of the stakeholders that is known as English for Specific Purpose (ESP).

### Discussion

First, in the case of students' language skills, among the four skills assessed from the questionnaire, reading and writing showed a more positive result. The highest percentage for both skills indicates that students are confident with their writing and reading. And there are only a few numbers of students who stated that their reading and writing are as weak. This is in line with the finding of Sukandi & Syafar (2018) which indicated the tendency of EFL students to prefer reading to other skills that are relatively high. Moreover, Choi, Moon, Paek, & Kang (2018) claimed that there is a positive correlation between students' reading and writing skill. Thus, students who are confident

with their reading result positive outcome in their writing. However, the finding of this study was in contrast to the finding of a previous study conducted by Milaningrum, Damayanti, & Gafur (2018) which concluded that vocational students' writing skill was low. Thus, there should be further research which focus on students' reading and writing at the target university.

For the other two skills, listening and speaking, most of the students considered these skills as weak. There were only a few numbers of student recognized their listening and speaking as very good. Speaking and listening are considered as important in learning English for EFL but still becomes the major issue for EFL learners (Ulum, 2015; Sayuri, 2016). Abu-Snoubur (2017) stated that there is a significant correlation between listening and speaking. Students' grade at listening showed a strong relationship with their speaking grade. Moreover, he stated that the relation between speaking and listening is also affected by the students' gender, although this finding is mostly irrelevant to other previous studies. However, the relation between listening and speaking supports the finding of this study that most students are not confident with their speaking, therefore, they are also not confident with their listening. To overcome this problem, learning strategy used by the lecturers need to meet the need of the students because preferred language learning strategy can be varied depend on the study program. (Mandasari & Oktaviani, 2018)

Second, in case of students need and want, the finding from the interview was quite different from the need identification where the 'Job' category gained the most answers. Thus, it can be assumed that students realized that English is important to support their job but they also consider that they need to master basic English or basic grammar first. The same goes for Chinese medical students, She, et al., (2008) also considered the need to emphasize students' English proficiency to improve career opportunities. A study conducted by Milaningrum and Rahmawaty (2019) also agree that the existing English materials in higher educational level do not accomodate students to use language in the real context of the work field or English for Specific Purposes that is suitable with their major.

Additionally, speaking is the most skill that student wants to learn compared to the other skills. This is in line with the students' language skill finding which indicated that they are not confident with their speaking. Thus, they need to learn speaking more. Indeed,

speaking is the most important skill as a mean of communication but students encounter social, psychological, learning and linguistic domain problems. (Al-Roud, 2016)

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

From the finding above, it can be concluded that:

1. Students are more confident with their reading and writing over their listening and speaking skill. Therefore, students want to learn more in their speaking. Speaking has significance relation with listening skill. Thus, students also need to study listening to improve their speaking.
2. Students recognized the importance of English to support their job. Thus, students want to learn English that is more related to their job. However, students consider that their basic English (grammar) is still weak. Therefore, they also need to learn more about basic grammar.

### Suggestion

Need analysis helps to find out professionals' and students' need including their language skills competency as well as deficiency. The finding of the study highlighted the points that need to be adjusted related to the teaching of English Language at the target University. Also, it gives advantages not only to the lecturer but also for further researchers such follow :

1. For Lecturers, they need to care on students strength and weaknesses in designing teaching materials. As students are confident with their reading and writing means that the level of difficulty should be higher than speaking and listening materials. Second, related to students' need and want, it can be concluded that speaking becomes the most needed skill that students want to learn. Thus, speaking might be presented much more than the other skills. Furthermore, most of the students want to learn English which is related to Job aspects. Thus, the material served should be related to Job things. However, since the participants are from different field of study, it means that students need English which is specified to the job related to their field of study. In other word, students need English for Specific Purpose (ESP). All in all, the results of this study are expected to be any help for

the development of English syllabus and materials for higher education.

2. For the next researchers, this study can be an important step to develop the finding to further step following Research and Development research design to make an applicable syllabus and materials for the target university.

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