

Needs Analysis in ESP Context: A Project in English for Specific Purpose: English Writing Course for Diploma Students in Management

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the needs of Management students for English for Specific Purpose (ESP) course as well as to design an ESP course for the Management students. In addition, this research is carried out to answer the research questions; 1. What is the importance of the use of English in management program? 2. What are the most important language skills used in Management program? 3. What is the frequency of the language skills used in management program? 4. What is the level of students' performance based on the academic task? The findings of the study indicated that the use of English is very important as it is used in every task related to management. The students revealed that they have to give presentations in English and have discussions with peer in English. The listening skills are known to be least used in management program. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the students mostly have some difficulty in completing speaking tasks in their program.

Keywords: Management Program, English for Specific Purpose, Language Skills, Presentations, Writing Skills.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Syllabus

According to Graves (2000), a syllabus is an organized and detailed outline of a course that highlights "specific course goals, requirements, readings, assessments, and scheduled assignments" throughout the course (as cited by Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 179). For instance, to teach in a classroom, the teachers may need to have or make an outline of what they want to achieve and to meet the students' needs in acquiring the language. Parkes and Harris (2002) stated that a course syllabus can serve as a highly effective facilitator of student learning. Course syllabus will allow the students to see the content of the course. In this section, a syllabus is made base on the need analysis that has been done previously. From the need analysis, the important skills that has been highlighted by the Diploma in Management students is writing skill. Moreover, the writing tasks deemed to be the most difficult task for the students is report writing. Therefore, a writing course for the Diploma in Management is designed to cater the students' needs in improving their writing skills.

1.2 Content-based and task-based syllabus

The syllabus for teaching of language is the integration or combination of two or more of the types of syllabus. In this study, the combination of the two types of syllabus which are task-based and content-based syllabus are used to design the syllabus. Content-based syllabuses, act as a vehicle for communicating of a specific context because language is not seen as a subject on its own right (Nunan et al., 1988, p.38). The primary task of a content-based syllabus is when language is being taught through content and information. In this syllabus, teacher used the content in management which is report writing to teach writing skills.

According to Ellis (2003), stated that task-based language teaching highlighted the “use tasks at the core of the language teaching” (as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015). Students learn the language through tasks given rather than ‘chalk and talk’ method. The tasks will help the students to engage with real-world tasks in their field. The tasks involved in a language class considered being specific to the subject matter and the target language is used to stimulate learners to think and learn (Brinton & Snow, 1989). The tasks should be relevant and meaningful so that the students can apply what they have learnt in the course to their academic context.

1.3 Need Analysis

English for Specific Purposes or ESP is the teaching and learning of English as a second language or foreign language where the goal is for the learners to be able to use English in their particular academic needs and professional or occupational domain (Plesca, 2016). EGP is taught in the school for the students to be able to use English in their daily life for simple conversation. ESP on the other hand, is focusing on the needs of language that the learners will use in their academic settings and professional working environment. EGP does not emphasize on the learners’ specific context of language learning compared to ESP (Pradhan, 2013).

In Malaysia, English is a crucial language that is taught not only in the schools but also in Universities or institutions. The students had learnt English from their primary school until secondary school which is almost 10 years in total. Even in their tertiary education, English language is still being taught. However, some of them are still unable to use and master the English language. It is essential for the students to master English language in order to help their tertiary education become more conducive and to cope with the challenges. This is because in educational institutions nowadays, English is used as the medium of instruction and mostly the literature is written in English. Moreover, the students are required to use English in most of the academic tasks, for instance, giving presentations, writing report, reading for information and many more. Students with different academic fields will have different learning demands of English. Therefore, this study aims to designed an ESP course for Diploma in Management students.

1.4 Research Questions

The target needs analysis is necessary in order for researchers to understand what they need to know and understand about the target community needs in their ESP course. Needs analysis was conducted to identify the students’ language learning needs and to ascertain the students’ weaknesses in language learning (Cohen et al, 2005, pp. 390). In this study, the data required for the needs analysis is derived from questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was distributed to the students of Management to acquire information of their needs in language learning. Furthermore, the interview was done by the course lecturer and a student of Management to obtain initial information about the program and also the language used in the program.

- What is the importance of the use of English in management program?
- What is the most important language skills used in Management program?
- What is the frequency of the language skills used in management program?
- What is the level of students’ performance based on the academic task?

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The participants were 20 students of the Operational Management course. The students are currently in their third semester of Diploma in Management at a private university. English is used for the medium of instruction for this program. This highlighted importance to identify the students’ needs and deficiencies in language learning.

2.2 Preliminary Survey

An interview was conducted in order to get an overview of the students’ needs of using the English language in the course. More specifically, the interview was done through phone calls and WhatsApp conversation with the lecturer and a few students from this course.

2.3 Data Collection

Two instruments of questionnaire and interview were used in order to get the information needed. The questionnaire has two sections which are: SECTION A: RESPONDENTS' BACKGROUND and SECTION B: THE USE OF ENGLISH IN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM. The questionnaire was distributed and collected by the lecturer of this course. Moreover, interview with the teacher was conducted via phone call to obtain further information of the students' academic tasks.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed and the results are organized to identify (1) the level of importance of English language use in Management program, (2) the most important language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) used, (3) the frequency of the language skill used and (4) the students' performance based on the academic task. The questions emphasized the context of English language used by the Management students.

3. Findings and Discussions

After the data is collected from the questionnaire and interview sessions, the findings of the needs analysis questionnaire and interview are being analyzed and discussed. There is two parts in this section namely SECTION A: FINDINGS OF STUDENTS' DATA and SECTION B: FINDINGS OF LECTURER'S DATA. Moreover, in Section A, the findings of the questionnaire were justified with further confirmation and clarification from the students of Management through an interview. Thus, the findings and discussions were interpreted based on the questionnaire and interview of the students. Furthermore, Section B, the findings from the lecturer's interview were being interpreted.

Question 1: The importance of the use of English in management program

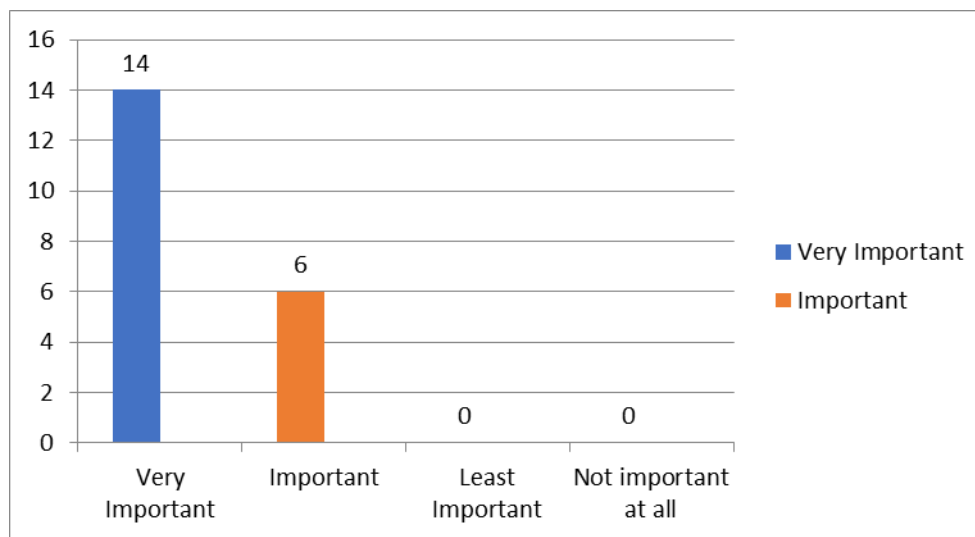


Figure 1: Importance of the use of English in Management program

Figure 1 depicted the students' claims of the importance of English use in their Management program. The students indicated that the English use is "very important" and "important" in the Management program. This is due to the medium of instructions and the academic tasks were given in English. This determined that English is widely used in the program. Thus, this has emphasized the need to design an ESP course for the Management students.

Question 2: The most important language skills used in Management program

Table 1: Ranking of language skills used in Management program.

Skills	No. of Students			
	The most important	Important	Least important	Not important at all
Listening	0	0	7	13
Speaking	6	10	4	0

Reading	1	4	8	7
Writing	13	6	1	0

Table 1 showed the ranking of the importance of language skills in Management program. The students stated that the listening skills were the 'least important' and 'not important at all' in the Management program as the students did not use the skills explicitly. The students are well-aware of the use of listening skills where this skill were not given emphasis as they only have to listen to lectures, discussions and presentations. Furthermore, the 6 and 10 students ranked speaking as 'the most important' and 'important' skills in the Management program respectively. This is due to the fact that the students have to give presentations in English. In the class, the students sometimes use their L1 to make meaning as well as giving and answering questions. Moreover, the students used their L1 when doing discussions with their peers. As for reading, only one student indicated that reading skills were the most important and 4 students indicate it is just an important skill. While, 8 and 7 students stated that reading skills were the least important and not important at all in the Management program respectively. This finding showed that the students did not give focus on reading skills as they rarely read extensively. Lastly, 13 and 6 students ranked writing skills as the most important and important skills used in the Management program. This suggests that the students used writing skills in most of their academic tasks. From the findings of this question, it is clear that writing skills should be given more emphasis to ensure the students' success in the program.

Question 3: The frequency of the language skills used

Table 2: Frequency of language skills used in Management program

Skills	No. of Students			
	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Listening	1	7	8	4
Speaking	0	3	8	9
Reading	0	8	9	3
Writing	0	0	10	10

Table 2 depicted the frequency of language skills used in the Management program. The students' use of listening skills ranged from 'seldom' to 'very often'. They often used listening skills during listening to lecturers and presentations. Moreover, 9 students stated that they used speaking very often in the Management program. The students stated that reading skills has the lowest usage as 8 students claimed that they "sometimes" employed reading skills in the Management program. This is due the students not emphasizing any extensive reading tasks on their own. Furthermore, the students 'often' and 'very often' used writing skills in the Management program. Writing skills were highlighted as the most used language skills in the Management program. From this finding, it is clear that all four language skills are used in the program, but writing was the most frequently used language skills. Thus, it is important that the students should have competency in all the language skills but focus on writing skills should be made to ensure that the students can write competently and effectively in their own context.

Question 4: The students' performance based on the academic task

Table 3: Students' rating of their own performance in listening tasks

Tasks Part A : Listening Skills				
Tasks	Evaluation			
	With a lot of difficulty	With difficulty	With some difficulty	With ease
1. Listening to lecture	1	1	5	13
2. Listening to group discussion	0	1	12	7
3. Listening to oral presentation	2	0	8	10

Table 3 showed that the students use the listening skills at ease when listening to lectures. The lectures in Management program were conducted in English; however, sometimes the lecturer might use L1 to help the students to understand better. When the students are doing group discussion in English, the students have some difficulty in listening to their peers when conversing. This is because, sometimes, the messages or points were not properly

conveyed due to inappropriate vocabulary used and incorrect sentence structure. However, 10 students stated that they could use their listening skills at ease. During oral presentation, the students are required to prepare on their presentation, thus, their peers have no trouble in listening and understanding what is being presented. Generally, the students could easily use their listening skills to perform listening tasks in the classroom although there were slight difficulties.

Table 4: Students' rating of their own performance in speaking tasks

Tasks Part B: Speaking Skills				
Tasks	Evaluation			
	With a lot of difficulty	With difficulty	With some difficulty	With ease
1. Oral presentation	0	2	11	7
2. Oral group discussion	0	1	11	8
3. Forum	4	3	10	3

Table 4 depicted the students rating of their own performance in completing speaking tasks. For oral presentation, 2 students rated that they have difficulty and 11 students rated they have some difficulty in completing the task respectively. The challenges that the students faced when speaking in oral presentation were being afraid of making errors, not confident in speaking in English, lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. These challenges have affected the students' performance and motivation when doing oral presentation. Moreover, 11 students indicated that they have some difficulty in speaking for group discussion. The students have 'some' difficulty in completing the task because they are speaking among their peers. They are more comfortable speaking with their friends even though they are making mistakes. However, the problem that students faced is conveying messages in the appropriate language use which resulted in the use of L1. Lastly, 4 students have a lot of difficulty in speaking in a forum. This is due to the format of the forum which is more structure and formal where they have to use the right terms and terminology to present the points. Therefore, the findings revealed that the students mostly have some difficulty in completing speaking tasks in their program.

Table 5: Students' rating of their own performance in reading tasks

Tasks Part C: Reading skills				
Tasks	Evaluation			
	With a lot of difficulty	With difficulty	With some difficulty	With ease
1. Reading of textbook	0	2	6	12
2. Reading of journal articles	1	5	10	4
3. Reading for specific information	1	1	6	12

Table 5 showed the students' rating of their own performance in reading tasks. 12 students stated that they read textbooks in their program with ease. Meanwhile, 6 and 2 students indicated that they have some difficulty and difficulty in reading the textbook as the language used for textbook are formal and difficult terminology is used. Moreover, the students have some difficulty in reading journal articles. Similar to textbook reading, the language used for the journal article made it hard for the students to understand the content. Lastly, the students could easily complete tasks on reading for specific information. This is because sometimes the students are required to browse for extra information in order for them to complete their academic tasks which includes surfing the internet and reading extensive books. Hence, the findings in this section concluded that the students can easily complete the reading task, although they face some difficulty in the formality and difficult terminology of the language in the reading texts that they had to read and use.

Table 6: Students' rating of their own performance in writing tasks

Tasks Part D: Writing Skills				
Tasks	Evaluation			
	With a lot of difficulty	With difficulty	With some difficulty	With ease
1. Report writing	4	2	4	10
2. Summary Writing	2	2	8	8
3. Commentary	1	2	13	4
4. Note-taking	0	2	3	15

Table 6 depicted the students' rating of their performance in completing writing tasks. As mentioned in the previous findings (Question 2 and 3), writing skills is deemed as the most important skills used in the Management program. Thus, the findings in this section will identify the students' deficiency in writing tasks. Based on the four writing tasks, 4 students stated that they have a lot of difficulty in writing a report. This is because report writing requires a lot of attention to the contents, language structures and many other linguistics aspects. Hence, some students are unable to write effectively in their reports which is a concern.

Moreover, only 2 students have a lot of difficulty in completing summary writing as they were unsure of how to simplify the content of the reading materials. Furthermore, 13 students indicated that they have some difficulty in writing for commentary. They are unable to express themselves in words effectively. Lastly, majority of the students could complete note-taking task with ease. As the note-taking task is a more personal task, the students have more confident in writing for their own understanding. Therefore, the findings of this section concluded that the students have a lot of difficulty in report writing due to several challenges of linguistics aspects. This has highlighted the need for a writing course for the Management students and emphasis on the language used in report writing should be taught in the ESP course.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of data, it can be concluded that there is a need to design an ESP course which includes all four of language skills, however, writing skills should be given more emphasis. The foundation of this ESP course is to raise the students' awareness of appropriate language used in different academic context. Language tasks on report writing should be highlighted to improve the students writing skills and correct usage of language. The language tasks in the ESP course should be designed to serves specific language focus. Furthermore, according to Angus and De Oliveira (2012), the teachers can implement a well-researched pedagogy to ensure effective teaching in the classroom. Hence, an integration of more than one syllabus types (content-based and task-based syllabus) would be beneficial in order to design a coherent ESP course for the students in Management.

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