

## AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON NEEDS ANALYSIS OF BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSE

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**Abstract:** *This study investigated the English language needs for business English course for the student of the Islamic banking department. It is important to conduct the research to decide the appropriate materials that suitable for the students' future career that is a bank employee. The informants included the managerial and staff-level employees in banking sectors, the vice dean for Academic of Islamic Economic and Business Faculty of IAIN Ponorogo, the head of Islamic banking department of IAIN Ponorogo, Business English lecturer, and some students of business English course. This research employs a qualitative approach. Through interviews and questionnaires, the finding of the research revealed that all of the informants suggested that the material should be beneficial for students' future careers as bank employees. To make the teaching and learning process more effective, lecturers must pay attention not only to the selection of the right material, but also related to students' learning preference.*

**Keywords:** *Needs Analysis, ESP, Business English.*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the integral parts in the development of the language curriculum is needs analysis. It gives the basis for planning the lesson, designing the syllabus, developing the materials, designing the instructional, and developing the assessment. English for Specific Purpose (ESP) planners acknowledge needs analysis as a starting point for knowing what English learners need to learn. Need

analysis tries to examine what students need and want to learn English (Widodo, 2017). The role of needs analysis in any ESP course is undeniable (Songhori, 2008). Furthermore, needs analysis is a learner-centred approach, which is believed to encourage learners' interest in learning, and it shows respect to the active role of learners in the processes of learning. Thus, ESP courses that are based on the findings

of needs analysis will definitely meet the needs of language learners (Wu, 2012).

Basturkmen (2010) further stated that the Needs Analysis involves several aspects, including (1) Target Situation Analysis which includes all processes regarding the identification of activities and skills of students who will use English, identify what English will be used for, and what students should know and do; (2) Discourse Analysis which includes a description of the language used to achieve the Target situation; (3) Present Situation Analysis which includes identification of what the learners know and do not know and can or cannot do concerning the needs of the target situation; (4) Learners Factor Analysis which includes identification of factors related to students such as motivation, way of learning, and their insight about needs; (5) Teaching Context Analysis which includes factors related to what ESP courses and teachers can offer.

Ellish and Johnson (1994) state that Business English must be perceived in the whole context of ESP because it provides the essential components of needs analysis,

syllabus design, course design, and material selection and development. What makes Business English teachers different from General English teachers is partly related to language and partly to communication. In the Business English classroom, the language to be introduced and practised reflects the professional background of the learners. The communication channels to be developed and practised represent the professional world of presentations, meetings and telephoning rather than general communication in discussion (Brieger, 1997). Brieger also states that Business English courses should give professional content. This content gives a range of settings or themes that deal with professional purposes, such as marketing, or business sectors, such as banking or pharmaceuticals (Brieger, 1997).

Business English is taught to students of the Islamic banking department at the Islamic economic and business faculty of IAIN Ponorogo in the third semester, and it takes two credits. There is the syllabus, in the form of Semester Learning Plan (*Rencana Pembelajaran Semester*), lecturers use that, but the

current syllabus is in doubt accommodating the students' needs and has not fully considered students' demand for specific requirements of ESP. This happens because the Islamic banking department is a new department at IAIN Ponorogo, and the lecturers have never conducted a needs analysis. In suitability with the student needs, Sysoyev, as cited by Moelier (2018), states that many problems in foreign language classes occur because the teachers ignore learners' interests and disregard students as a source of essential information. One of the typical of Business English as one of the ESP branch is needs analysis to find out what the students need for their ESP. For those reasons, it is essential to conduct needs analysis so that expected goals will be achieved.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Empirical Study**

Bouchrika (2021) defines an empirical study as a study that derives exclusively from concrete and obtainable evidence. Likewise, an empirical study always uses real evidence in its research, and its results are descriptive. This research allows

the researcher to conclude to support the theory being examined. Due to realities such as time and resources, the sample size of qualitative research is usually small. Therefore, it is designed to offer in-depth information or more insight into the matter.

Powner (2015) states that under qualitative research design, empirical studies have evolved to test conventional concepts of evidence and truth while still paying attention to the basic principles for recognizing the subject being studied as empirical.

Bouchrika (2021) states that there are six steps to conducting an empirical study: (1) setting research objectives; (2) reviewing relevant literature and supporting theories; (3) framing measurements; (4) determining the research design, methodology, and data collection techniques; (5) analyzing the data; (6) drawing conclusions.

### **The Nature of Needs Analysis**

Needs Analysis is the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners demands a language and composing the needs based on prime concerns. Both subjective and objective information are used in needs analysis (e.g. data

from questionnaires, interviews, observation) and seeks to gain information on the situations in which a language will be used (including *who* it will be used *with*), the objectives and purposes for which the language is needed, the types of communication that will be used (e.g. written, spoken, formal, informal), and the level of proficiency that will be required (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

According to Basturkmen (2010), “the identification of language and skills is used to determine and refine the ESP course's content. It can also be used to assess learners and learning at the end of the course. This process is termed as needs analysis”. Furthermore, Mohammed (2016) states that needs analysis is the cornerstone in designing English for specific purposes (ESP) courses.

### **Business English**

As a variation of English, Business English used by people in commerce to provide information exchange has been around for centuries (Guiyu & Yang, 2016). As part of ESP, Business English generally has the same categories as ESP. Wello and Nur, as cited by Moelier, state that business English must be seen in the overall of ESP, as it shares essential

elements of ESP, such as needs analysis, syllabus design, course design, and material selection and development. They add that these elements are common to all fields of work in ESP. However, Business English is not like other varieties of ESP. It is often a mix of specific content (depending on job area or industry) and general contact (relating to the communication ability in a business transaction) (Moelier, 2010).

The teaching of Business English brings together three areas: (1) teaching – the pedagogic skills involved in running training programs; (2) English – knowledge of the language and, latterly, an understanding of the role of communication in professional situations; (3) Business- Familiarity with the key issues facing specific learners or learner groups (Brieger, 1997).

### **METHODOLOGY OF STUDY**

Relevant to the research purposes, this study employed a qualitative study. To obtain the data, the researcher chose 130 English for business students of Islamic Banking department IAIN Ponorogo, the vice dean of academic of FEBI IAIN

Ponorogo, the lecturer who has ever taught Business English course at Islamic Banking Department of IAIN Ponorogo, the Head of Islamic Banking Department of IAIN Ponorogo, dan three Bank employees.

In order to obtain information from the students about the English language needs, the researcher developed the questionnaire adapted from Basturkmen's theory. The questionnaires involve target situation analysis, discourse analysis, present situation analysis, learner factor analysis, and teaching context analysis were given to the students.

To obtain the information about the target situation Needs for Business English students majoring in Islamic Banking, in the first phase, the researcher interviewed with the vice dean of Academic of Islamic Economics and Business Faculty IAIN Ponorogo, the Head of Islamic Banking Department, the Business English lecturers, and three Bank employees.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Target Situation Analysis**

To obtain the information about the target situation Needs for Business English students majoring in

Islamic Banking, in the first phase, the researcher interviewed with the vice dean of Academic of Islamic Economics and Business Faculty IAIN Ponorogo, the Head of Islamic Banking Department, the Business English lecturers, and three Bank employees. According to them, the students need to improve their vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, and writing to communicate effectively at the workplace.

For the speaking skills, in the interview, the Head of the Islamic Banking Department, the Business English lecturers, and three Bank employees emphasized the importance of speaking skills in the Business industry. The academic head of the Islamic Banking department stated that:

*“The material in Business English courses should be adapted to the needs of students later in their future jobs. In our department, there are three English courses: Bahasa Inggris 1, Bahasa Inggris 2, and the last is Business English. It would be better if this Business English course was directed at materials that would later be used in future jobs. Conversations in banking such as opening an account, handling customer complaints, asking for fees and so on*

*should be taught. Although in reality, in Indonesia, English conversation in banking will rarely be used unless a student graduates then they work abroad and work in a foreign bank. However, by teaching various kinds of conversations students will know a variety of terms in banking.”(Translated version)*

From the interview, the researcher concluded that the academic head stressed that the material to be taught in Business English course, especially in speaking, must be in accordance with their major, Islamic banking, and the material must be useful for their work in the future. Those statements are in line with Madkur’s idea. He stated that Islamic banking students should get English material that contains language skills and authentic material that will be used to support their work in the future (Madkur, 2018). Furthermore, Adewumi and Owoyemi (2012) also stated that there must be a need specification of the bankers for English to be able to focus on certain types of languages that need to be learned.

For the speaking skill to be mastered, the first bank employee said:

*“Although in our daily activities bank employees rarely use English, students in banking must learn English. Learning English is important for prospective bank employees. Bank employees must understand banking terms in English, and at least they must understand how to offer our bank products to prospective customers. There used to be a husband of one of our customers, and he is a foreigner. He came to the office to negotiate instalment payments. So in my opinion, it would be better if students were also taught business English negotiation and also complaint handling. Moreover, the students also need to be taught about the conversation of exchanging money and how to deliver presentations in English.” (Translated version)*

According to the first bank employee, even though English is not the means of oral communication in their daily work setting, bank employees prefer to study English, which helps them develop spoken interaction skills, such as business conversation and presentation skills. He also stated that it is essential for the students of business English to be able to deliver a presentation during meetings and discussions. He said that presentations are essential because they offer products to the customers. In their research, Wu and Chin (2010)

also found that the financial industry employees prefer to take training that helps them improve their spoken interaction skills, such as business conversation and presentation skills.

Moreover, the second bank employee stated:

*“In my opinion, there should be more conversation practice so that the vocabulary related to banking in English can be mastered. The examples of conversations at a bank such as exchanging money, opening a checking account, savings account, asking about bank interest, fees, etc. can enrich students’ banking vocabulary”.*  
(Translated version)

The first and second bank employees agreed that conversation in Business English, especially in Banking is essential to be learnt by the students. The third bank employee also stated the same. He stated said that:

*“Practising conversations at the bank also needs to be carried out. If they work in a big city, it is possible for bank employees to meet foreign customers”.* (Translated version)

All of the informants agreed that speaking skills are essential for students’ future jobs. This finding is in line with the research conducted by Madkur (2018). He stated that communication is the primary human

activity. The most important skill for workers in the new environment is the ability to communicate, and it means listening and expressing your ideas adequately in speaking. To achieve coveted success, the professional needs to respond to the situational communication that occurs regularly.

For the writing skills, Vice Dean for Academic at Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business IAIN Ponorogo said:

*“Students majoring in Islamic banking have to understand the general economic terms and banking terms in English. Students should also be taught about letters and correspondence in Business English. The parts of the letter must be explained in detail so that later in their future career, they are no longer confused about how to make it. It would be better if they were also taught about how to make a job application letter and curriculum vitae.”* (Translated version)

In the interview with the Vice Dean for Academic at Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business IAIN Ponorogo, he stated that the students also have to understand business English letters and correspondence. In addition, they have to know the format of several business documents. This is in line with the statement from two

bank employees. The first bank employee said:

*“In our office, some customers ask to be made an English reference letter to make visas for work, holidays, workshops, and scholarship requirements abroad. In my opinion, students need to be taught how to make a reference letter in English. Our office has also received emails from abroad, so we need to learn the procedures for making appropriate emails.”*  
(Translated version)

And the second bank employee added:

*In the past, someone had asked for a reference letter to make a visa, but there was a minimum balance in the account balance.* (Translated version)

According to the interview result, all of the informants pointed out that it is crucial for business English students to know how to write business documents in English, such as bank reference letters and email. In addition, knowing how to make a cover letter and curriculum vitae is also crucial for the students. Ganeson (2018), in his research, also found that the students need to learn how to make the appropriate business document as they will use those terms in their future workplace.

Dealing with the listening for Business English students, The first bank employee stated that there used to be a husband from one of his customers who is a foreigner. He came to the office to negotiate instalment payments. The first bank employee suggested giving the authentic teaching materials by using authentic aural materials about the conversation in banking, so the students would be familiar with different accents. This is in line with Ghaderpanahi’s statement (2012), she stated that since the purpose of classroom listening is to prepare students for real-life listening, it is prominent to implement authentic aural materials at language instruction.

To be able to read and understand business document such as reports, business letters are crucial for business English students. For the students majoring in Islamic banking, understanding various terms in Islamic banking is also essential. The third bank employee stated:

*The teaching material should also include terms of Islamic banking such as types of financing such as Murabaha, Musyarakah, Mudarabah, and students should know the difference between conventional and Islamic banking.* (Translated version)



Related to the interview result, Yanti (2012), in her research, also stated that the students need actual material relating to their major.

Dealing with the vocabulary, from the interview with the Vice Dean for Academic at Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business IAIN Ponorogo, the first and the second bank employee, they stated that the students of the Islamic banking department have to understand the general economic terms and banking terms in English. Furthermore, they emphasized that enriching vocabulary in the field of economics, business, and banking is essential.

These findings are in line with the results of research conducted by Madkur (2018). His research found that most students thought that among the various skills in English, Vocabulary was the most wanted to be mastered.

For the second phase, the questionnaires were administered to obtain information about the target situation from the 131 students of Business English. After giving the questionnaires, the researcher found that most of the students (66%) wanted to learn practical business

skills, 18% wanted to learn language proficiency (speaking, reading, writing, etc.), and 16 % wanted to learn business knowledge (Economics, international finance, etc.). In addition, most of them (66 %) wanted to learn conversation in business settings, business letters, and business correspondence, especially in banking. Guiyu and Yang (2016) stated that the Business English teaching objective should stress practical business skills students need for their working environment.

This research result was in line with Yanti's research that found that the students' needs in learning English are to be able to speak and read dealing with banking, and the material must be based on the learners' target needs that are used in their future job as a bank employee (Yanti, 2012).

### **Discourse Analysis**

The vice dean for academics stated that various kinds of skills must be mastered in business English courses. It would be better if the materials taught were taken from books providing authentic material, not a translation from Indonesian and then translated into English. It must be ensured that the materials are in

accordance with the needs of students majoring in Islamic banking.

The questionnaires also found that the Business English textbook concerning learners' needs was chosen by most students (62 %), 21% of the students chose Indonesian business textbooks, and 17% chose overseas business textbooks.

The results of interviews and questionnaires indicate that the material being taught must be authentic material that suits the needs of students. Wang and Meng (2011) stated that selecting the right textbook can undoubtedly contribute significantly to improving quality in EFL learning.

### **Present Situation Analysis**

To obtain the information about the present situation analysis, the researcher gave the questionnaires to the students about the rates of their English skills. The questionnaires showed that 57 % of students rated their listening as poor, 26 % fair, and 17 % bad. 44 % of students rated their speaking as poor, 33% fair, 13 % average, and 10 % good. For the reading skill, 61 % of students believed they have average reading skills, 16 % fair, 12 % good, and 11 %

poor. There was something that attracted the researcher was about the students' writing skills. 61 % of students stated that they were poor in writing, 20 % fair, 10 % average, and 9 % good.

This finding was surprising because, in the previous two semesters, they have taken courses in English 1 and English 2. After the results of this study, lecturers must pay attention not only to the selection of the right material but also related to other matters such as learning methods, assignments, and so on. By knowing students' present situation, it is expected to be able to increase students' learning motivation. With the increasing of motivation to learn, it is hoped that their English language skills will also increase.

### **Learners Factor Analysis**

Learner factors analysis describes learners' factors such as their motivation, how they learn, and their perception of their needs. The researcher gave the questionnaires to the students to obtain the information.

Dealing with the question, "why do you need to study business English?" 63 % of the students stated that they need to study Business

English because it is essential for their future occupation, 26 % stated that English was one of the subjects in their higher education major, and 11 % stated that they wanted to speak to foreigners.

The result of the questionnaire shows that majority of the students (63 %) positively apprehend that studying English is important for their success future occupation. This finding is in accordance with Arslan and Akbarov's (2012) research which found that being able to use English would be beneficial for students in their future work.

In conducting the teaching and learning activities in the Business English course, 41 % of the students preferred a small group of 3-5 students, 28 % individually, 21 % in pairs, and 10 % more than five students in a group.

Laal and Ghodsi (2012) stated that collaborative learning, compared with competitive and individualistic efforts, has many benefits and usually results in higher achievement and greater productivity, more caring, supportive, and committed relationships.

### **Teaching Context Analysis**

This analysis covers factors related to what ESP courses and teachers can offer. Most of the students (54 %) preferred to business-English-language-skill-oriented teaching rather than business-English-knowledge-oriented teaching (24 %), and 22% of them prefer mixed of them.

Responding to the question about Business English class conducted in 2 credits, 79 % students state that they are agree, 7 % strongly agree, and 14 % students want English for business to be 3 credits because students feel that there are many things to do be learned in this course.

Related to the activities in the teaching and learning process, most of the students (70%) like to watch and listen to the authentic material, 18 % discussion, 6 % quiz, 3 % project, and 3 % students presentation.

Madkur (2018) stated that English material for Islamic banking should contain both linguistics and authentic materials. Giving the students authentic material will be beneficial for students' future jobs.

The last aspect was about the students' perspective on the role of the lecturer in the classroom. 88% of students wanted a lecturer who can

facilitate and guide the learning, and The remaining 12% prefer lecturers who like to control all class activities. This indicates that students wanted to participate in the teaching and learning process, so they need lecturers who can facilitate and guide them. Wu (2012) in his research, also found that as a facilitator, the lecturers make the students' development more flexible and successful. Alonazi (2017) stated that "A facilitator provides technical support by helping learners plan and carry out their independent learning through needs analysis, objective setting, work planning, and materials selecting".

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusions**

The finding of the target situation revealed that all of the informants agreed that all language skills are essential for students' future job. In speaking skill, even though English is not the means of daily oral communication, bank employees need to study English, which helps them develop spoken interaction skills, such as business conversation, especially in banking, handling complaint, and

presentation skills. The research revealed that it is essential for the students of business English to be able to deliver a presentation during meetings and discussions. The result of the interview showed that presentations are essential because bank employees often offer products to customers.

For writing skills, the students also have to understand business English letter and correspondence. They have to know the format of several business documents. According to the result of the interview, all of the informants pointed out that it is crucial for business English students to know how to write business documents in English, such as bank reference letter and email.

According to the research finding, the listening material that is suitable for a business English course is the authentic teaching materials. It is hoped that the students would be familiar with a different accent. For the reading skill, the teaching material should also include terms of Islamic banking such as types of financing such as *Murabaha*, *Musyarakah*, *Mudarabah*, and students should know the difference

between conventional and Islamic banking.

The informants stated that there are various kinds of skills that must be mastered in business English courses, it would be better if the materials taught are taken from books or authentic material, not a translation from Indonesian and then translated into English. It must be ensured that the materials are by the needs of students majoring in Islamic banking.

The finding of the present situation analysis revealed that most of the English business students describe that they have low competence in English. This finding is surprising because in the previous two semesters they have taken courses in English 1 and English 2. After the results of this study, lecturers must pay attention to students' needs. Lecturers must pay attention not only to the selection of the right material, but also related to other matters such as learning methods, assignments, and so on. By knowing students' needs, it is expected to be able to increase students' learning motivation. With the increasing of motivation to learn, it is hoped that their English language skills will also increase.

The Learner Factor Analysis finding shows that majority of the students positively apprehend that studying English is essential for their success future occupation, and most of the students want business English course should be conducted in a small group.

The Teaching Factor Analysis finding shows that students prefer to business-English-language-skill-oriented teaching rather than business-English-knowledge-oriented teaching. The business English students stated that business English class conducted in 2 credits is enough for their whole major program. And the last finding is about lecturer's role. There are 88% students who want the lecturer who can facilitate and guide the learning. This indicates students want to participate in the teaching and learning process, so they need lecturers who can facilitate and guide them.

### **Suggestion**

There are some recommendations offered to the business English Lecturers, and other researchers. For Business English Lecturers, in the Islamic banking department of the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Ponorogo, the

Business English syllabus has not been designed based on Need Analysis. Material provided to students is often not suitable for the future career needs of students. If this problem is not resolved immediately, Business English materials taught to students may not help their work in the future. The results of this study are expected can be used by the lecturer as a reference for material selection and learning preferences in Business English courses.

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