AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS’ NEEDS IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT HIGHER EDUCATION OF INFORMATICS

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Abstract
The need for proficiency in the English language in college students is very important for improving the competence in the teaching and learning process as well as a provision in the face of the world of work upon graduation. To achieve effectiveness and alignment between the needs of the student’s ability hence the need for research on the needs of the students in learning English in higher education, especially college students informatics.

Keywords: Student Needs, English Learning

A. Background of Study
In Indonesia most students of non English department are required to follow a one or two semester English course (even more, depend on the institution) and it has been compulsory subject to be attended by students of any fields. However, the main goal of English course are various, besides they are required to read English textbooks, they also have to search the current sources from the internet, which are mostly written in English, in order to help their academic studies and a broader knowledge of their major subjects. That is why, English is very important to be learned and to teach as it is able to explore through multinational and reveal multitude of English textbook.

Due to its importance, the minister of education has issued and applied regulation that English should
be taught beginning from the primary schools to university. The 1989 Education law No.2 and the 1999 Government Regulation on Higher Education No.60 have accommodated the guarantee that foreign languages, especially English, are tools functioning not only as effective and efficient means of interaction but also as the medium of instruction. Moreover, English is also included to develop and disseminate the technology and arts that would uplift the quality of life enhanced by the national cultures.

In connection with its importance, English is compulsory subjects for university undergraduate students in Indonesia. Moreover, Ermawan (1997) observes, the students in Indonesia have already been studying English for at least six years at the secondary level. As the first foreign language, it is not used as the medium of instruction in non-English departments. In most universities the emphasis of English teaching and learning is on reading ability, in order to equip students with the ability to read English textbooks for educational purposes. However, according to Alwasilah (in Nurrohmi, 2006:2) in Indonesia universities or colleges, English is included in the curriculum as a mandatory subject and given to the students at all departments. He states that College English that is popularly called mata kuliah umum Bahasa Inggris (General English course) is commonly offered to freshmen in the first two semesters with two credit hours.

In most universities, including Higher Education of Computer Science (HECS) in Bandung where this current study was conducted, English is taught in two semesters (the first and the second semester). As HECS is a non-English department college, thus, the English materials should be treated as ESP where students’ needs are: able to comprehending English textbook, computer’s instructions, and the like. In this context, lecturers hold the responsibility to design the syllabus and materials.

B. Analysis

The findings from the data that had been collected through the interview. The analysis of data from interviews will cover four aspects: the importance of four language sub skills, learners’ need on grammar to be learned, learners’ need on reading to be learned, and learners’ need on speaking to be learned.

1. The Students’ needs in Learning English at HECS

The discussion of the students’ needs will be based on the four main the needs of students: the importance four language skills, learners’ needs on grammar, learners’ need on reading, and learners’ need on speaking.

The Importance of Four Language Skills to be Learnt

Table 1. Ranked 1st in importance by students for English Skill in General

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Skills</th>
<th>RESPONDENTS AND THEIR SELF RATING</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R1</td>
<td>R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Reading</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Speaking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Writing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Listening</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that their self rating of the needs in the four language skills was multitude. As indicated table 3 consecutively that reading is the first priority (four respondents), speaking is four respondent, listening is and writing are reading 4 respondents (36.92%), listening 23.85 per cent, and writing (9.23%). These results indicated that reading skills should be set for the first priority in teaching English which is closely followed by speaking, while
listening and writing were less important because they referred to the future profession. For further discussion of analyzing interview will be described below:

In terms of the importance of four language skills to be learned, the data from table 2 indicated that the six respondents were not unanimous to rank the first importance of four language skills to be learned. The only four respondents (R3, R4, R5, R6) stated reading was strongly important to be learnt, as it could help their academic studies. Four respondents seemed to believe that reading could help them to comprehend English textbook, computer instructions, and the like. R5 mentioned:

Reading is the first priority should be learnt at the present time because it can help our academic studies. For example, there are many English textbook used by the lecturer as a main resource to teach (IR5)

This argument may suggest the importance of reading comprehension to be learned as it can help his academic studies. It also reveals R5 awareness of the necessity of reading skill in supporting his study due to most English textbooks for science and technology are written not in simple English. It is related to the Kartasasmita (1997) stated that the purpose of teaching English in ITB was the 1998 ‘Curriculum Catalogue’ or Prospectus indicated that, in general, the objective of teaching English to our students was ‘to develop ability to read textbooks in English teaching.’ It was also supported by a decrees’ from the Directorate General of Higher Education in the Minister of Education, as follow:

“…. to expand students’ concern and understanding of social problems in preparation for decision making later in life; to develop an appreciation for the social sciences, law, economics, religion, ethics, and national security.

Another respondent, R4 supports the argument on the importance of reading skill in his study, he said: Reading is very important as by reading, at least, we can understand the content of English textbook. (IR4)

The statement apparently indicates that reading is the focal point to have a comprehensive understanding of their subject, as Safnil (1997) mentions that University students in Indonesia should be able to read, at an appropriate level, books or other printed materials published in English in their fields of study. In almost similar way Wilardjo (in Safnil 1997) suggested:

Reading ability in EST (English for Science and Technology) is of crucial importance for developing nations, to enable them to make use of the vast amount of technical know-how which required for nation building.

Parallel to the above argument Birian and Tahririan (1994) argue, the success of university students at undergraduate level greatly depends on how well they are able to read their textbooks in English. It means how important to read English textbook is. Thus, if university students cannot comprehend English textbook well, their references will be limited to the small number of books published in Indonesia where as for good Universities in Indonesia, most of available English textbook for science in English. As Coleman (1988) found that in the
central library of Hasanuddin University, for example, more than 80% of the library’s stock consists of English language books and only about 5% are in Indonesia.

Unlike R3, R4, R5, and R6 who seemed to emphasize on the importance of reading, another participant, R1 and R2 appeared to be aware of the need of speaking as the first priority that could help to communicate each other and getting a job easily. R1 said:

The most important one of four language skills to be learned is speaking because when we can speak English well, we can easily get a job, especially when we are being interviewed. (IR1).

The statement above may indicate that speaking should be prepared for the future profession. It means that during English learning at HECS, the main focus should be at speaking skill. R1 seemed to be aware that communication took place in two discourses, spoken and written where most the time spoken was dominantly used in interaction especially in any working area. This is related to Alfansi’s suggestion (in Safnil 2007) that English is also important when the students have graduated from undergraduate course and are looking for job.

2. Learners’ need on Grammar to be learned

Table 2: Students’ Need on Grammar to be Learned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>GRAMMAR</th>
<th>R1</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>R3</th>
<th>R4</th>
<th>R5</th>
<th>R6</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tenses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Modals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Passive voice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Infinitive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Object clauses</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Continuative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conditional</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tenses</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Dependent clause</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Whose</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows great deal with the students’ need on grammar to be learnt, certainly each student has different needs and reasons for learning certain grammar as indicated in table 2 and data from interviews.

Table 2 indicated participants’ need of grammar to be learnt. They were almost likely not to be in favor that all topics of grammar were important to be learnt. However, teaching of grammar should be set of priorities, particularly topics of grammar which was able to comprehend English textbooks. For further discussion of the table and data from respondents are follow:

As far as tenses (present tense, future tense, past tense) was concerned, data from table 2 indicated that all participants (6 respondents) were unanimous that tenses was very important to be learnt as it could be the basis of making sentences, foundation of writing, and also find the current of events (now, past, and future). Regarding this, R6 mentioned:

Well, in my opinion, tenses is very important to learnt because it can be the basis of comprehending English textbook, speaking, and writing. In brief, the teacher should select what kinds of tenses is often used, particularly in comprehending English textbook, computers’ instruction, or computer text on the screen (IR6)
Interestingly, through his comment R6 seemed to understand that tenses was significant important to be involved in syllabus although he believed that for HECS students that grammar material should be focused on tenses that is often used to comprehend English text which to some extent this argument is relevant to syllabus made by the lecturer at HECS.

In terms of active and passive voice, all participants believed that this topic of grammar was useful to learn because most of English textbook were convinced to use passive. As a result, it would be misunderstanding if the students couldn’t understand active and passive voice, as it was reflected in R6 argument. He said: Active and passive voice are very important because they are often used and found at any English text, either English textbook or text on screen, thus, we will find difficulties to comprehend English text if we are not good at active and passive voice (IR6).

The above comments seem to indicate his understanding of the importance of active and passive voice. His awareness was based on the fact that language of instruction in computer was mostly arranged in passive construction. Thus, it must be emphasized in teaching grammar, besides tenses as indicated in the previous section of this chapter.

Particularly interesting is four respondents’ statements (see table 3) which suggest that the topic of grammar, Tag Question didn’t reflect students’ language ability specifically in comprehending English textbook. R3, R4, R5, and R6 said: Tag question is not important because it is seldom used in comprehending english textbook (IR3).

Tag question is not necessary taught because there is no significant importance to help to comprehend English textbook or conversation (IR4).

The above arguments were likely to indicate their awareness that tag question was not used very often in reading text and language instructions on computer; instead it is mostly used in spoken.

Unlike, R3, R4, R5, and R6 who didn’t agree that tag question should be learned, table 3 shows that two participants, R1 and R2, were in favor if tag question was taught because it was used in conversation. As R1 mentioned:

Tag question is important because it can be used in speaking English and comprehending English textbook (IR1)

To turn to one of the topic of grammar, indirect speech, data from interviews and table 3 indicated there were four respondents didn’t agree if it was included as material in grammar. R5 and R6 mentioned: Indirect speech is not important if the main goal of English lesson is to comprehend English textbook, however, if the purpose of English subject is to speak English, it is important (IR6)

Indirect speech is seldom used in English textbook (IR5).

The statement apparently point out their expectation that indirect speech seemed not to be relevant with their needs because it is hardly used in English textbook. Thus, referring the available syllabus at HECS, it was not quiet matched as expected by students. However, these comments were contrary to R2 that she argued that
indirect speech was important to learn because it could help in speaking as reflected by one of them. As R2 mentioned:

Indirect speech is necessary to learn as it can help student in conversation (IR2).

To look into a material of grammar further, conditional sentence, Table 3 shows that five respondents also indicated that it was less was important because it was rare found in connection with making program. However, one respondent claimed that conditional sentence was important. R3 stated: Conditional Sentences is important as it is found when we were making program, for example, if … then ……else………… (R3).

The above comment seems to indicate R3 was misunderstanding of content of Conditional Sentences commonly learnt. He assumed that the word ‘if’ refer to condition of making program. He may suggest that conditional sentences should be related to make a program. This also goes with R2’s statement:

Conditional Sentences is important to learn because it is often used in making program (QR2).

Dealing with degrees of comparison, three respondents claim that it was important due to its function was enable to comprehend English textbook or understand computer instructions. R4 stated: Degrees of comparison is important because it is often found at English textbook (IR4).

Moreover, the other respondent were in favor, but they didn’t give the reason why they were with conditional sentence.

With respect to the students’ needs as far as their suggestion of grammar were concerned to be learnt, all respondents suggested that function of have, has, and had much be taught because they are always used and found in the English textbook. In brief, lecturer should teach grammar which often used to comprehend English textbook. R5 stated: To be able to comprehend English textbook, the lecturer should teach grammar as far as comprehending English textbook is concerned because without knowing the certain grammar, it is hard to comprehend English textbook (IR5).

R5 seemed to be reasonable to put forward his expectation that teacher should analyze or select the most suitable discussion of grammar which is going to taught in order to be strongly matched with the students’ need. In addition, if there was grammar which might mismatch with the students’ need, it should not necessary to be taught. This goes with Hutchinson and Water (1987:14):

Need analysis is a complex process that both target situation. Most of all, we have tried to stress that both target situation and learning needs must be taken into account. Analysis of target situation needs is concern with language use. But language use is only. We also need to know about language learning. Analysis of the target situation can tell us what people do with language. What we also need to know how people learn to do what they do with language (63).

3 Learners’ Need on Materials of Reading to be Learned

Table 3: Themes of Reading Expected by Students
Regarding the learners’ need on materials of reading, Table 3 shows that all participants (6 respondents) agreed that the materials of reading provided should be related to ESP context. As R1 certainly, themes of reading should be related to my department (IR3). Themes of reading must be matched to my department. For example, Internet, Programming, and Computer (IR5).

They were likely to be aware of the importance of theme of reading which was related to their academic studies. Moreover, R1, R2, R3, and R4 more specifically stated:

The themes of reading “What is microcomputer? and Unit of Memory” are necessary to learnt as they are a basic knowledge to learn computer’s science (IR1).

The themes of reading “What is microcomputer? and Unit of Memory” are important as they are related to the subject of Pengantar Ilmu Komputer (IR2)

Themes of reading “What is microcomputer? and Unit of Memory” are relevant to my department (IR3)

Themes of reading “What is microcomputer? and Unit of Memory” are matched to learnt because they can help to comprehend English textbook which used by the lecturer (IR4)

Their statements were likely to indicate the need of reading as aforementioned was quiet important and they were relevant to their study background’s. They believed that the material would be able to intergraded their content knowledge and their language skills. These seem to be relevant to an argument proposed by John (1980). He mentions “ESP teachers find themselves in a situation where they are expected to produce a course that exactly matches the needs of a group of learner, but are expected to do so with no, very limited, preparation time.”

Referring the reading materials given, most themes of reading were relevant to the students’ need. These are related to Hutchinson and Water (1987:107-108) stated:

“Material provide a stimulus to learning”, suggesting that material should contain interesting texts, enjoyable activities which engage the learner’s thinking capacities, opportunity for learners to use their existing knowledge and skills, and content which both learners and teacher can cope with.

Moreover, in terms of students’ expectation in line with reading materials, one of respondents (R6) expected that lecturer should provide reading materials in line with: the subject of Computer Network, Technological Internet, Database, and Operating System because they could help his academic studies. Day (1999) agrees with Carrel (1984), who states that first, reading teacher should provide materials the students are interested in including materials self-selected by the students. Interest is important due to its relation to motivation. If the topic of a passage or text cannot draw students’
interest, their motivation to read will considerably lesson. Without this motivation, it is extremely difficult to meet one of generally accepted aims of a reading program to get the learners to read in English on their own, outside the reading classroom. Meanwhile R5 mentioned:
The material of reading should be in connection with Informatics Engineering in order to help my academic studies (IR5).

4. Learners’ Needs on Speaking to be Learned

Table 4: Themes of Speaking Expected by Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Theme of Speaking</th>
<th>RESPONDENTS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introducing one’s self</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Describing an object</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Expressing one’s emotion</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Explaining an object</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Defining an object</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Inviting someone</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Introducing a subject</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the learners’ needs on speaking, data from interviews indicated that all respondents extended the different needs and reasons, however, some have the same needs and reasons.

In line with theme of speaking, table 5 shows that four respondents were not unanimous in line with the theme of speaking “introduce one’s self” as it was too basic for students of higher education level. As R4 mentioned:

Introducing one’s self is actually too basic to be theme of speaking English for Higher education level. I think it is suitable to learnt for beginners (IR4).

His comment may suggest that the theme of speaking should be related to the future profession, particularly in job interview, not in academic studies.

On the contrary, R1 and R2 seemed to be aware of its importance as it could be used to practice English. R1 said:

Theme of speaking “introduce one’s self is important because we can practice to speak English from the simple one (IR1).

This argument might indicate that introducing one’s self was the first thing to learn in order to be able to express one’s ideas.

To turn to theme of speaking “describing an object” was very important since an object was relevant. It could express students’ ideas or certain an object. Regarding this, R4 stated:

Describing an object is interesting to learn as it can lead us to express our idea, more complicated an object, more difficult to convey to describe an object. I think it is suitable for students of higher education (IR4).

The comment may indicate that describing object is often used in their study. This helps them to organize ideas in more complex structure and expressions.

In line with this, R5 and R6 seemed to indicate that describing an object should be developed, not only to describe an object but also to explain the current of instructions. For example, how to install new software, steps of making a program, and the like. These indicated that the teaching material should be matched with students’ need as suggested by R4, R5, and R6:

Theme of speaking “describing an object” is significant important to practice and it should be developed in connection with the relevant lesson (QR6).
Unlike themes of speaking as aforementioned, themes of speaking “phoning, my house, and my family” were supposed to be less important as they weren’t relevant to students’ academic studies. In addition, these topics might be too basic. These could be proved by all respondents stated that they were not quiet important to learnt. R4, R5, and R6 mentioned:
Theme of speaking “phoning, my house, and my family” are not quiet important to discuss because there are not relationship with Informatics Engineering (IR4).

Theme of speaking “phoning, my house, and my family” are not important to learnt and they are too general (IR5).

Theme of speaking “phoning, my house, and my family” tend to personal (IR6).

Their comments may suggest to select the most suitable themes of speaking as learners’ needs. To design, therefore, syllabus or materials, designer should consider for many aspects and the appropriateness of them. As indicated in chapter 2, Richetric and Chancerel (1980) argue:
“Course planning must be based not only the needs of the individual learner, but must take account of the needs of the social group to which he belongs, the institutions that provide the resources … In fact we must establish as many of the relevant characteristics of all partners to the learning process as we can, while still focusing on the learners, with their varying experience, age intelligence, learning style as well as needs and motivation.”

C. Conclusion

Having conducted an analysis data from interview, the researcher found that most of the students wanted to be able to comprehend English textbook or English text on screen (menu, help, wizard, etc) in order to help their academic studies. Further, they expected to be able to speak English in line with their future. Therefore, the lecturer should select the most suitable grammar which commonly used in English textbook, and addition reading material should be matched with their departments.

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