

# Determining of Basic English Language Needs of Students in ESP Context

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**ABSTRACT:** *The main objective of this study was to determine the English language needs of students of Hotel and Tourism Management of Hawassa University with the view of giving an input for preparing an appropriate English course. To address this objective, questionnaires were designed and distributed to students of Hotel and Tourism Management. The result of the study indicated that in academic setting, students need to listen to course lectures, listen to class discussion, listen to instructors questions, read lecture notes, read reference books, read summaries, charts & tables, writing down notes from lectures, write notes from books, write dictation, write course assignment, ask and answer questions, participate in class discussion, participate in dialogue and present oral report. Therefore, all the language skills are needed with relatively more emphasis on speaking, listening and reading. The study has also identified that the students' attitudes regarding the course material that they are learning in the classroom situation. Relatively, the graduates are better in receptive skills than productive skill. The finding of the study has indicated there is a substantial gap between the Hotel and Tourism Management students English language needs and the current English course offered in the university. Thus, it has been recommended that syllabus designers and material developers need to design an appropriate English syllabus and course materials for Hotel and Tourism Management students considering the students' English language needs for academic and occupation purpose, and English language difficulties.*

**Key Words:** *EOP, course design, attitude, syllabus*

## 1. Introduction

Language teaching has been widely influenced by the technological and social changes of the 20th century. An important body of literature suggests that the focus of language teaching has shifted from the nature of language to the learner, and increasingly the learner is seen at the center of the learning and teaching process (Brown, 1995 and Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), development in areas such as technology, commerce, science and the use of English for communication have created a new generation of English learners who know specifically why they are learning English. If we acknowledge that language learners have different purposes for learning the language, the importance of identifying the needs of language learners can be understood. The needs of language learners can be identified by needs assessment. Brown (1995) defines needs assessment as a process of gathering information through various activities and from different groups of informants to determine the learning needs of a particular group of students. After analyzing these needs, an appropriate syllabus can be developed.

In recent decades, people have generally attempted to learn English for either professional or educational purposes as opposed to learning English for pleasure or prestige. Specifications of learners' purposes for learning English have necessitated the development of new approaches and techniques in ELT. English for specific purposes (ESP) is one of these approaches and uses needs analysis as the basis of curriculum development. Munby (1978) defines ESP as "A course where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of communication needs of the learners."

Dudely Evans and St. John (1998) point out that needs analysis can be considered as the corner stone of ESP. A needs analysis is generally used to define the objectives and goals of a course, which is the first step of developing a curriculum. This step is followed by material selection, syllabus design and assessment. A needs assessment offers useful sources of data when designing a course syllabus and is therefore beneficial to learners. Various definitions of language needs have been suggested by researchers. Some of them have focused on the language needs of the learners in terms of the target situation, in which the learner will need the language to function effectively (e.g. target needs, Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; communicative needs, Richards, 1990). Others have focused on needs that the learners require

while they are in the process of learning the language (e.g. learning needs, Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Situation needs, Richards, 1990). Some others have focused on the various perceptions of the learners needs from the perspectives of teachers and graduates of the discipline or institution (Perceived needs, Berwick, 1987).

[[Researchers should make certain fundamental decisions about who will be involved in the needs assessment, and what types of information should be gathered, before conducting a needs assessment (Brown, 1995). According to Brown (1995), there are various groups which may be involved in a needs assessment process, namely the target groups, the audience, and the resource groups. The present study attempted to include a wide variety of perceptions from all of Brown's suggested group. In this case the target group included Hotel and Tourism Management students at Hawassa University, employees of Hotel and Tourism Management students (former students), and the employers of former students. As the audience of the study, English language instructors and subject area teachers were included.

## 2. Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to determine the English language needs of Hotel and Tourism management students of Hawassa University.

The study was intended to:

- ❖ Determine the target and learning needs of Hotel and Tourism students
- ❖ Identify the students' attitude toward the current English course

## 3. Research Question

In order to achieve the above objectives, the researcher formulated the following basic research questions:

- a) What are the target and learning needs of Hotel and Tourism students?
- b) What is the attitude of the students toward learning of the current course material?

## 4. Methodology and Procedures

This part of the study deals with the description of the sampling procedures and data collection instruments. It also deals with data collection procedures, methods of data organization and analysis

### 4.1 Sampling Procedures

Because of both the need for more reliable information and the nature of the study, information was collected from different sources. These are: Students of Hotel and Tourism Management, e and text (material) analysis. The respondents were hotel and Tourism Management students. Here, the Hotel and Tourism Management students were selected using simple random sampling technique. Thus, of the total 118 students 50 from second year (100%) and 30 from third year (50%) totally 80 students were taken to fill the questionnaire.

### 4.2 Data Collection Instruments

#### Questionnaire

In this study, close-ended questionnaire was used. However, the respondents were given chances to include whatever they thought were needed in the study. According to Robinson (1991), with questionnaire, one may need information on a large number of points. Questionnaires are generally wide ranging because they are used for quantitative information and can be sent easily to a large number of people.

#### Students Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire consisted of 10 items with sub sections. The questionnaire was made up of different close-ended items (multiple questions and rating). However, students were given opportunity to include whatever they thought were needed in the study. The items in the questionnaire were aimed at eliciting information on students' background information, information about students' language abilities (proficiency), the difficult language areas, attitude toward the current English course, information about the language needs of their academic and future career and the type of English students need for academic purpose. 80 copies of questionnaire were distributed to Hotel and Tourism Management students. Of these, 75 copies were filled and properly and returned.

#### Instructors' Questionnaire

The instructors' questionnaire consisted of three questions for English instructors that have sub-questions and seven questions for subject area course instructors. The English instructors' questionnaire consists of questions about students' English language abilities, the degree of satisfaction they have about the course material they have been teaching in addition to the questions included in the subject area instructors and

the students. The instructors’ questionnaires were similar in content with students’ questionnaire. All the selected instructors were filled the questionnaire and returned the copies of the questionnaire.

**4.3 Data Collection Procedures**

To gather data for this study, first the objectives of the study were explained to all subjects and asked their willingness to participate in filling the questionnaire. The questionnaire filling took about 60 minutes for graduates and was conducted in class under the supervision of the researcher.

**4.4 Methods of Data Organization and Analysis**

Data gathered through questionnaire were tallied and then calculated using percentage and analyzed quantitatively. The response of the graduates and employers were compared and contrasted to arrive at sound conclusion.

**5. Results**

**Investigations of activities Students Need to Carryout in English for Academic Purpose**

The researcher has sorted some activities that are expected to be carried out in English by hotel and tourism management students in relation to the subject area of study. The students were asked to rate the importance level of the activities by using the rating scale stated as ‘very frequently’, ‘frequently’, ‘some times’, ‘seldom’ and ‘never’ needed. The level of importance was determined by percentage computed from the frequency of responses. The students’ rating of the importance level was cross-checked against the response of the instructors’ from their questionnaire. The activities were categorized under four macro skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking). Moreover, the students were invited to add any other activities they think important for their academic study. Note that the sum of very frequently needed and frequently needed and the sum of Seldom needed and never needed are used for the analysis. The response ‘sometimes’ is also considered as necessary.

**Listening Activities**

**Table 1: Analysis of listening activities the Students need for their academic study**

No	Activities		Very frequently needed		Frequently needed		Sometimes needed		Seldom needed		Never needed	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
A	Listening to course lectures e.g. on hotel reservation, customers order	S	26	34.7	29	38.7	15	20	5	6.6		
		I	2	33.3	3	50	1	16.7				
B	Listening to foreigners	S	17	22.7	20	26.7	26	34.6	8	10.6	4	5.3
		I	1	16.7	3	50	1	16.7	1	16.7		
C	Listening to recordings	S	10	13.3	12	16	20	26.7	20	26.7	13	17.3
		I	1	16.7	2	33.3	2	33.3	1	16.7		
D	Listening to video /film	S	11	14.7	13	17.3	22	29.3	18	24	11	14.7
		I	1	16.7	1	16.7	3	50	1	16.7		
E	Listening to instructor’s questions	S	23	30.6	22	29.3	18	24	12	16		
		I	2	33.3	2	33.3	2	33.3				
F	Listening to class discussion	S	21	28	25	33.3	14	18.7	13	17.3	2	2.7
		I	2	33.3	1	16.7	2	33.3	1	16.7		

**Key: S= Students**

**I= Instructors**

Students were asked to answer whether the listening activities indicated in the above table 4.6 are ‘very frequently’, ‘frequently’, ‘sometimes’, ‘seldom’ and ‘never’ needed for their academic study. As the table shows, listening to course lectures e.g. on hotel reservation, customers order (72.4%) is the most frequently needed activities for students’ academic purposes. Listening to class discussion (61.3%) was the second most frequently needed listening activities for the students’ academic success, listening to instructors’ questions (59.9%), listening to foreigners (49.4%) and listening to videos /films (32%) are the third, the fourth and the fifth most frequently needed listening activities for hotel an tourism management students. However, the table reveals that the activity of listening to recordings was not almost needed for the students’ academic study.

The instructors’ response confirm with the response of the students in that almost all instructors reported that the listening skill was very essential for the teaching learning process. In this regard, the instructors said that listening to course lectures followed by listening to instructors’ questions were the most frequently

listening activities for the students' academic study. Listening to class discussion and listening to foreigners were the third and the fourth most frequently needed activities for students' academic success.

The researcher also tried to interview the subject area instructors about the dominant listening activities which are needed for the study of subject area courses. Almost all the instructor said that listening to course lectures, listening to instructors questions, listening to class discussion, listening to foreigners and listening to video /films were the most frequently needed activities for their students to study the subject area courses.

In conclusion, on the bases of the students' and instructors' response, listening to course lecture, listening to class discussion, listening to instructors' questions, listening to foreigners, listening to video /films and listening to recordings are the most important activities in this order of priority.

**Reading Activities**

**Table 2: Analysis of reading activities students need in their study**

No	Activities		Very frequently needed		Frequently needed		Sometimes needed		Seldom needed		Never needed	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
A	Reading articles, news paper, journals on hotel and tourism	S	9	12	17	22.7	31	41.3	12	16	6	8
		I			2	33.3	3	50	1	16.7		
B	Reading summaries, charts, diagrams	S	15	20	28	37.3	17	22.7	9	12	4	5.3
		I	1	16.7	2	33.3	3	50				
C	Reading reference books	S	17	22.7	30	40	19	25.3	9	12		
		I	1	16.7	3	50	2	33.3				
D	Reading English websites related to hotel and tourism	S	10	13.3	23	30.7	26	34.7	12	16	4	5.3
		I	1	16.7	2	33.3	3	50				
E	Reading lecture notes	S	19	25.3	33	44	18	42	5	6.6		
		I	3	50	3	50						

**Key: S= Students**

**I= Instructors**

As the above table shows that the majority of the students reported that reading lecture notes was the most frequently needed reading activity. 69.3% of them reported that reading lecture note was the most dominantly used reading activity for students' academic purpose. Similarly, we can see from the table, reading reference books (62.7%), reading summaries, charts and tables (57.3%), reading English websites related to hotel and tourism were the most frequently needed reading activities for hotel and tourism students. However, 34.7% of the students reported that the activity of reading articles, newspaper, journals on hotel and tourism were seldom needed for the students' academic purposes.

As regards the instructors' response all of the instructors (100%) said that reading lecture notes was very frequently and frequently needed reading activity for the students' academic issues. 66.7% of the instructors said that reading reference books was also the most frequently needed reading activity that followed by reading summaries, charts, tables, reading English websites related to hotel and tourism and reading articles, newspaper, journals were the most frequently needed activities in order of priority.

To sum up, according to the above discussion, reading activities which are important for the students' academic studies are: reading lecture notes, reading reference books, reading summaries, charts, tables, diagrams, reading English websites related to hotel and tourism and reading articles, journals, news papers in this rank order.

**Writing Activities**

**Table 3: Assessment of writing activities students need in their study**

No	Activities		Very frequently needed		Frequently needed		Sometimes needed		Seldom needed		Never needed	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
A	Writing report on field trips	S	14	18.7	24	32	30	40	7	9.3		
		I	1	16.7	1	16.7	3	5	1	16.7		
B	Writing down notes	S	23	30.6	25	33.3	24	32	3	4		

	from lectures	I	2	33.3	2	33.3	1	16.7	1	16.7		
C	Writing course assignments /term paper on hotel and tourism	S	16	21.3	21	28	32	42.7	6	8		
		I	1	16.7	3	50	1	16.7	1	16.7		
D	Writing dictations	S	19	25.3	24	32	25	33.3	7	9.3		
		I	1	16.7	2	33.3	2	33.3	1	16.7		
E	Writing notes from books /reference	S	21	28	25	33.3	22	29.3	7	9.3		
		I	3	50	2	33.3	1	16.7				

Key: S= Students

I= Instructors

The above table shows that the greater number of the students (more than 64%) reported that the activity of writing down notes from the lecture was the most frequently needed writing activity followed by writing notes from books (61.3%), writing dictations (57.3%) and writing course assignments, term papers on hotel and tourism (50.7%) were the most frequently needed activities for the students' academic study. However, 49.3% of the students reported that writing report on field trip was the least frequently needed activity.

When we see the responses of Instructors, almost all teachers (83.3%) reported that writing notes from books or reference was the most frequently needed activity which is followed by writing notes from lectures (66.6%), writing course assignments /term papers (66.6%), writing dictations (50%) and writing report on field trips (33.3%).

Generally, with regard to the students' response and the findings from subject area instructors' questionnaire, the following can be summarized. Writing down notes from lectures, writing notes from books or reference, writing dictations, writing course assignment, term papers on hotel and tourism and writing report on field trip were all the writing activities needed for the students' academic study as listed from the most important to the least important in a ranking order.

**Speaking Activities**

**Table 4: Analysis of speaking activities students need in their study**

No	Activities		Very frequently needed		Frequently needed		Sometimes needed		Seldom needed		Never needed	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
A	Present oral report	S	14	18.7	25	33.3	28	37.3	5	6.7	3	4
		I	1	16.7	2	33.3	2	33.3	1	16.7		
B	Respond to an interviewer	S	10	13.3	20	26.7	30	40	11	14.7	4	5.3
		I	1	16.7	1	16.7	3	50	1	16.7		
C	Talking to foreigners	S	9	12	18	24	33	44	12	16	3	4
		I	1	16.7	2	33.3	3	50				
D	Asking and answering questions (in classroom, field practice)	S	20	26.7	31	41.3	15	20	9	12		
		I	2	33.3	2	33.3	1	16.7	1	16.7		
E	Participating in dialogues	S	15	20	27	36	26	34.7	7	9.3		
		I	2	33.3	1	16.7	2	33.3	1	16.7		
F	Participating in class discussions	S	16	21.3	28	37.3	24	32	7	9.3		
		I	2	33.3	2	33.3	1	16.7	1	16.7	1	16.7

As table 4 shows, the students rated to what extent speaking activities listed in the table are important for their academic studies. Based on this, 68% of the respondents said that asking and answering questions (in classroom or field practice) was the most frequently needed speaking activity. Similarly, 59% of the students reported that participating in class discussion was frequently needed activity followed by participating in dialogue (56%) for the students' academic performance. In addition to this, 52% of the students indicated that the activity of presenting oral report was frequently needed speaking activities.

However, the above table shows that talking to a foreigner (50%) and responding to an interviewer (40%) were almost not needed for the students' academic study.

When we come to the analysis of the instructors' questionnaire and interview, the two instruments disclosed that participating in class discussion (66.6%) and asking and answering questions (66.6%) were very frequently needed speaking activities. As regards responding to an interviewer and talking to foreigners, however the result of the teachers' questionnaire and interview support the idea of the students who said that the activities of talking to foreigners and responding to an interviewer were Seldom needed.

To conclude, asking and answering questions, participating in class discussion, participating in dialogue, present oral report, talking to foreigners and responding to an interviewer are the important speaking activities for hotel and tourism management students in this rank order.

### Students' Attitude toward the Current English Course

The students were asked to show their attitudes toward the current English language course which is being given in Hawassa University for hotel and tourism management students. The students' responses are presented in the following table.

**Table 5: The students' attitude toward the current English course**

No	Activities	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
A	The course is irrelevant to my studies	42	56	24	32	6	8	3	4		
B	I do not like the course because it doesn't help me	22	29.3	23	30.7	8	10.6	14	18.7	8	10.6
C	The content of the course do not include my 'wants'	23	30.6	28	37.4	18	24	4	5.5	2	2.7
D	The course is important for hotel and management students	7	9.3	10	13.3	12	16	29	38.7	17	22.7
E	I like to content of the course	2	2.7	4	5.3	16	21.4	31	4.3	22	29.3
F	The course is an appropriate for my study	6	8	3	4	15	20	36	48	15	20

As we can see from the above table, the majority of the students (88%) said the course is irrelevant to their subject area of study and future occupation. Moreover, 60% of the students said that they do not like the course because it does not help for them. However, 10.6% of the students do not want to say anything about the course. Concerning the content of the course, 67.4% of the respondents reported that the content of current English course do not include their 'wants'. However, a considerable number of students, 24% could not determine whether the content of the course includes their want or not.

Furthermore; 61.4% of the students said that the current English course which is being given for hotel and tourism students is not important for them as a future career. In addition to this, the majority of the students said that they do not like the content of the course. With regards to appropriateness of the course, 68% of the students said that the course is not an appropriate one for academic and future purpose. However, 20% of them reported that they do not want to say anything about an appropriateness of the course. In this regard, the response of English language instructors to the interview questions confirmed that the present course does not satisfy the 'communicative' needs of the students.

## 6. Discussions and findings

It has been indicated that the main purpose of this study was to examine the English language needs of Hotel and Tourism Management graduates of Hawassa University with the view of giving an input for designing an appropriate English course. To achieve this, questionnaire; interview and analysis of the teaching material were used for gathering the data. By doing so, an attempt has been made to identify and prioritize the English language macro-skills, knowledge area (aspects) and language activities relevant to the students' field of study and future jobs. In addition to this, the graduates' (employees') language difficulties were to be identified. In line with the attempt made to achieve these objectives, the following conclusions have been made.

### English Language Needs for Academic Purposes

All the four language skills are important for following the subject area courses, but with varying degree. Based on this, speaking skill was found to be the most important skill followed by listening, reading and writing. For academic purposes, however, reading was found to be the most important skill followed by listening, speaking and writing.

Moreover, different micro skills /activities for both academic purposes have been identified. The most frequently needed listening activities for academic purposes are listening to course lectures, listening to class discussions, listening to instructors' questions, listening to foreigners, listening to video /film and listening to recordings.

Reading activities that are frequently needed for studying the subject area courses are reading lecture notes, reading reference books, reading summaries, charts and tables, reading English websites related to Hotel and Tourism and reading articles; journals, newspapers.

Writing down notes from lectures, writing notes from books or reference, writing dictations, writing course assignment or term paper on hotel and tourism and writing report on field trip or attachment were all the writing activities needed for students' academic study.

Asking and answering questions, participating in class discussion, participating in dialogue, presenting oral report, talking to foreigners and responding to an interviewer are some of the most important speaking activities for academic context.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations have been forwarded:

- a. The current existing course has to be revised and an appropriate course should be designed for students by taking into account the English language needs of future occupational settings. The contents or topics (themes) should also be related to the subject area of study (content based).
- b. Course designers and material developers should use a variety of activities which have relevance or similar to activities which may be performed in the students' academic study or future jobs.
- c. In designing English course, syllabus and developing course material; students' language difficulties in studying major area courses should be carefully considered and addressed in the material. Moreover, the language skills should be taught in context with the students' field of study.
- d. English language instructors should consider students' language difficulties and plan different mechanism when they teach English course to reduce the current problem.

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