

Has English at Tourism and Hospitality Higher Education Met the Future Workplace Requirements?

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ABSTRACT

English mastery is crucial in providing service excellence for hospitality guests. In fact, tourism and hospitality education has to ensure the English language preparation meets the workplace requirements. However, not much research investigates the relevance of English language preparation at school with the industry needs. This research investigates the English language preparation at tourism and hospitality higher education in Indonesia. It also aims to explore teachers', students, and industry perceived view on English language preparation, and assess how the English taught at the institution has met the workplace requirements. The research is descriptive qualitative in nature, and data are collected with questionnaires and interviews. The research participants are teachers, students, and industry practitioners of some tourism and hospitality higher education in Jakarta and its surrounding area. The findings reveal perceived views on English language preparation and needs viewed by students, teachers, and industry practitioners. The English language preparation is portrayed in terms of teaching materials, skills taught, assessments, teachers' perceptions of students' needs, and assessing students' needs. The perceived views of English from the students are classified into the adequacy of English courses, examinations. The results confirm that teachers, students, and industry practitioners have a slightly different view on English needs to prepare for future workplace careers. The results can serve as valuable input for the related stakeholders to improve the curriculum development of English subjects for tourism and hospitality higher education to meet the industry needs.

Keywords: English for specific purposes, English for tourism, needs analysis, tourism education

1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, one of the biggest contributors for national income is tourism business. It attracts millions of foreign and domestic tourists, and provides job opportunities for millions of others. The perceived impacts of tourism in Indonesian context have been highlighted in several studies (Rahayu, 2018; Walpole & Goodwin, 2000; Sugiyarto, Blake, & Sinclair, 2003). In 2019, the minister of tourism targeted to attract 19 million foreign tourists. Based on BPS databased released on February 3, 2020. Total data for 2019 tourists visit is shown in Figure 1.

The data showed that the number of tourists' arrival slightly missed the target with only 16,1 million as per 2019, however the number has slightly increased from the previous year. The fluctuating numbers of tourists' visit depends heavily on political stability of the country, and some other factors.

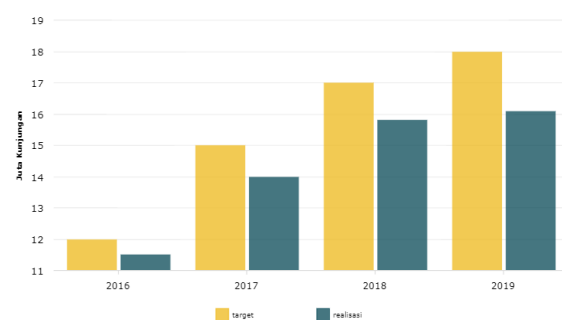


Figure 1 Tourists visit in 2019 (source: Indonesian Statistic Bureau (BPS)).

As with other nations, English is widely used as a lingua franca to communicate among foreign tourists, in other term, it is referred as global language. Therefore, hospitality industry tends to recruit those with good oral and written communication skills, and foreign language competence has been identified as necessary skills in

some surveys (Davies, 2000). In fact, English competency in hospitality industry has been evolved into English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), this is under the coverage of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). One of the main features is that the main function is for hospitality language, which is later claimed as professional skill (Blue & Harun, 2003).

To meet the workplace demands in English language skills for its graduates, the vocational higher education includes English as compulsory subjects. Some institution even provides additional foreign language courses such as Chinese, Japanese, and French. However, English has gained much attention in Indonesian vocational higher education.

Compared with other countries, the status of English in Indonesia is merely a foreign language (Lauder, 2010). This set English as subject taught at school with minimal usage in formal and informal setting. In addition, English teaching in Indonesia is unique regarding the multicultural and multilingual education the country has (Hamied, 2012). In Indonesia, there is Indonesian language, as the national language, but there are also other 742 local languages widely used for daily communication (Etnologue in Alwasilah, 2013).

Up to the present time, research on English in tourism higher education usually focuses on the students' perceptions on the importance of English in the industry (Bury & Oka, 2017; Rahayu, 2019). Some research also focuses to investigate learners' needs analysis on the use of specific English for different occupational purposes such as (Arnó-Macià, Aguilar-Pérez, & Tatzl, 2020; Moattarian & Tahririan, 2014; Nurpahmi, 2017; Ozturk & Bal-Gezegin, 2019; Paniya, 2008; Rahayu, 2017). No prior research has so far attempted to examine the English courses used in these institutions and to analyze their views of the students and/or teachers. This research would fill this research void by studying how English is taught in two tourism higher institutions in Jakarta, Indonesia, at tourism and hospitality higher education establishments. This study seeks to investigate the following questions:

1. How is English taught tourism higher education in Jakarta?
2. Does this English language preparation meet students' future workplace requirements?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. English for Specific Purposes in Tourism Higher Education

English Specific purposes rose along with the demand for specialized English in a specific area as the result of the growing expansion of scientific, technical,

and economic activities on the international scale (Hutchinson & Waters, 1991).

ESP is further defined as an approach to language learning, and it is based on learners' needs. It means that ESP does not need a particular kind of language, teaching material, or methodology. In this case, ESP firmly based on the learners, the required language, and the learning contexts (Hutchinson & Waters, 1991). Widowson (in Hutchinson & Waters, 1991) further declared that ESP shifted the language teaching as previously to be focused on teaching grammar to discover the way in which the language used in real situations.

The features of ESP are as follows (Dudley-Evans, John, and Streven in Rahman, 2015).

1. ESP is arranged to meet the specific needs of the learner;
2. ESP utilizes the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves;
3. ESP focuses on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse, and genres appropriate to those activities.

While the variable characteristics of ESP are as follows:

1. ESP is designed for specific disciplines;
2. In specific teaching situations, ESP can use a different method from that of 'General English';
3. ESP is mostly designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level establishment or in an expert work circumstance. It could, in any case, be utilized for students at the optional school level;
4. ESP is commonly intended for moderate or progressed understudies. Most ESP courses accept fundamental information on the language framework; however, it very well may be utilized with learners. Their division of ESP into supreme and variable attributes, specifically, is useful in settling contentions about what is and isn't ESP.

The teaching of ESP in tertiary institutions also faces some challenges and problems. The first and most prominent challenges faced by any ESP program designer intending on implementing a faculty or university-wide ESP program is to design materials for freshman and sophomore students. These needs to take learners from a high-school English level, with its focus on complex grammar and rarely used vocabulary items (Brown, 1995 as cited in Bhatia et al., 2011) to a junior and senior university level that requires tertiary-level skills, such as technical reading, writing, and presentation. In this case, it is necessary to understand that ESP materials do not need to be narrowly defined and completely distinct from general English material.

Freshman/sophomore materials, for example, should focus on more general skills that target learners require regardless of their field (but usually unique to their 'super-domain'). This type of ESP could be considered as 'general ESP'. The material design is further described in a continuum where the content starts from general into specific, and the age starts from high school into the profession, the knowledge starts from beginner into advanced, and the teaching methodology starts from teacher-centered in the beginner level into learners centered class in more advanced ones (Bhatia et al., 2011).

In most tourism tertiary institutions, the teaching of ESP is specified in some subjects, such as English for restaurant, English for hotel, Business English. Some other tertiary institutions also teach English correspondence for the students. In addition, there are also special subjects called professional English, which specialize in the teachings of the Test of English as International Communication (TOEIC). It is quite common in Indonesia that students need to pass a certain score of TOEIC or TOEFL as one of the requirements of graduation (Rahayu, 2019).

2.2. Needs Analysis in ESP

Needs analysis in language programs is the identifications of the language forms that the students will likely need to use in the target language when they are required to actually understand and produce the language. The analytical focus is on the learners, and their needs are viewed in linguistic terms. In this view, the focus is to make the learners the focus of any sound needs analysis. Learners are clients, and their needs should be served. But at the same time, teachers, administrators, employers, institutions, societies, and even whole nations have needs that may also have a bearing on language teaching and learning situations (Brown, 1995).

The language focus of many needs analysis applies the principles that students have needs and concerns other than linguistic ones. In relation to this, a wider view of needs should be given. Thus, needs analysis is referred to as a systematic collection, and analysis of all relevant information essential to satisfy the language learning requirements of the students within the context of the particular institutions in the learning situation (Brown, 1995).

Stevens (in Richards, 2001), further declared that the restrictions of ESP covers could be in several ways: (1) it is only for the basic skills such as understanding speech, speaking, reading, and writing, (2) item selections of vocabulary patterns of grammar functions of language are based on the learners' purposes, (3) themes and topics, situations of discourse included are required by learners' purposes, (4) communicative

needs are included which are required for the learners' purposes.

In ESP, learner's needs are often transcribed in terms of performance, which is in terms of what the learners will be able to perform with the language at the end of the course of study. Whereas in a general English course, the goal is usually an overall mastery of language that can be assessed with a global language test. The goal of an ESP course is to prepare the learners to carry out a specific task or a set of tasks. Robinson in (Richards, 2001).

Determining the learners' needs can be developed by several approaches. Each approach requires learners, teachers, and employers to be involved in determining learners' needs. Information should be collected about the resources of the teaching institution, objectives, the methods of assessment used, and needs analysis should be an ongoing process throughout the course. Information gathered and needed for the needs analysis cover (1) the different kinds of activities that learners would be using the language, for example, telephoning, interviewing (2) the language function, for example explaining, requesting, complaining situation, for example, face to face or in our groups which of the four language skills would be needed, for example speaking, listening, writing, and reading, and (3) Procedure for conducting need analysis included questionnaires, surveys, and interviews.

Munby (in Richards, 2001), describes two dimensions of needs analysis, (1) the procedures used to specify the target level communicative competence of the student. Munby further describes the learners' communicative needs into several aspects: personal, purpose, setting, interactional variables, medium, mode and channel, dialects, target level, anticipated communicative events, and key, and (2) the procedures for turning the achieved information into an ESP syllabus.

3. METHODS

In order to answer the two research questions, the present study analyzed data on English language preparation at two different tourism higher educations. English preparation at two tourism higher institutions in Jakarta was analyzed. The data were taken from semi-structured interviews with teachers, students, and industry practitioners. The total interviewee from two institutions is four teachers, and two industry practitioners. As many as forty students were given self-constructed questionnaires.

Both male and female teachers and students were interviewed. Of the four teachers interviewed, two were males and three were females. Two sets of self-constructed questions were developed for the teacher and industry practitioners. Teachers' questions focused

on how they teach English to students, their views of the English courses taught to students, and assessment procedures. The students' questions asked about their views on English language courses taught to them and the examinations they sit for, the extent to which these courses meet their future workplace needs, and the effect of the courses on improving their language proficiency. All the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed in light of the two research questions of the study.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research finding is discussed in two parts. The first part described the English Language preparation viewed from the teaching material, skills taught, teachers' perceptions and students' needs, assessing students' needs, and examination used. The second part discussed about students' views on their English language preparation and their satisfaction with it. This study takes two different samples of tourism higher educations in Jakarta, Indonesia. Both institutions offer hotel management and travel department and has been established since 1960s. For further analysis, each is later stated as "Institution A" and "Institution B". Both institutions are accessible since the author has been teaching in those places.

4.1. English Language Preparation

4.1.1. Teaching Material

The teaching materials are adjusted based on the subject cited in the curriculum. In Institution A, English preparation class starts early upon the students' enrollments. Students take English test for admission to measure students' English proficiency, then all students take English Competency tests which is similar to TOEIC prediction tests, students with low proficiency go to Remedial Classes for two semesters: the first semester for Basic English, and the second semester for TOEIC Preparation Class. The preparation classes were conducted by the Language Center, and they are not included in the curriculum. After finishing the remedial classes, students get English for Hotel industry in the third semester, followed by English for restaurant in the fourth semester, and English for Business and Correspondence in the fifth semester. Each subject is given 2 credits. Before taking thesis examinations, students have to take TOEIC tests as requirements for registering the exams. Therefore, during their study, students learn English for three semesters, each with 2 credits. Special treatment for low achievers is provided by the institution Language Center.

Regarding the subjects presented, the teaching materials are according the title of the subjects, in the form of teaching module which consists of compilations

from several resources which have undergone some adjustments.

As for institution B, after getting accepted, students directly learn English in the first semester with General English, followed by English for Hotel Industry in the second semester, English for Specific Purposes in the third semester, and at the fourth semester, they get Professional English. In the last subject, the material is emphasized on TOEIC preparation class. The institution does not set official schedule for TOEIC test, upon needed, students can take the tests with their own expense.

The teaching material is in the form of compilation modules with some additional worksheet from teachers.

The use of ELT material in teaching is crucial in that it has several functions. First, textbooks are claimed to be silent partners in that they can form interaction between students, a teacher, and instructional tools Orton (in Widodo, 2018). In addition, this educational product is often referred to as a standardized and enacted curriculum that directs the educational practices and tasks of both students and teachers (Widodo, 2018).

The use of compilation modules instead of locally-made textbooks has several drawbacks. First of all, the compilation modules are mostly taken from international publishers where it adopts a very different context. This curricular text is not simply a curriculum document but a social and cultural artifact (Gray, 2010; Xiong & Qian, 2012), which features particular beliefs, culturally appropriate values, socially accepted norms, and ideologies either overtly or covertly portrayed in such curriculum artifacts, and they function to impose such things on learners (Xiong & Qian, 2012)

A research of the EFL tertiary teachers contends that most of them (67%) in favor of internally-published materials for various reasons, while at the same time they are reluctant to use the locally-written textbook due to poor edition, inconsistency, less complete, and other reasons (Zacharias, 2005)

4.1.2. Skills Taught

Teachers from institution A stated that for each session, they have to be in class for 3 hours, equal with 180 minutes. During that time, they have to integrate all skills for each unit. In this case, they have enough time to use the multimedia such as video and audio for modelling and practices for speaking and listening. After the classical and group practice, teachers provide some feedbacks on students' weaknesses and strengths. Then it is followed with speaking practice which can be individual and in pair work. Teachers give some situations, and students converse accordingly with the model phrases they've learned before. The evaluation is recorded as daily performance score.

Teachers from institution B claimed that for the subject with 2 credits, they only have 90 minutes in class. Time flies and leaves no time for them to arrange more skill practices such as listening and speaking. With such limited time frame, teaching usually focuses on explaining some concept in the module, checking students' understanding by doing some exercise, and the time is over. They sometimes have the students do some exercises at home, but some students did not turn them in. Teaching in such limited time merely lingers on written tasks, and no time for other skills. Some teachers tried to use English as medium of instruction during the class to train students' listening skills, but low proficiency students will get difficulties in understanding what's happening in the class.

Current research on English in tertiary education in Indonesia mostly focuses on several domains such as pluricentric English, EMI and pedagogical issues (Zein et al., 2020). While most studies discuss about English in secondary education, little research is indulged on English prescribed in the first or second semester at university General Subject Courses. In addition, very limited (if any) current research discuss how English for specific purposes are taught in tourism tertiary education.

4.1.3. Teachers' Perception of Students' Needs

One teacher from institution A mentioned that in each class, she always found some students with very low proficiency which cannot keep up with their peers. This sometimes slows down the class progress. She was wondering if the class distribution could be based on the results of English proficiency test in the first semester. Another teacher from institution A also mentioned that the mixed-ability class he had to deal with. In general, both teachers from institution A consider that most students' already have sufficient skills in listening and speaking, yet they lack in written language skills such as writing, vocabulary, and grammar. These inadequacies resulted in problem in writing business letters and emails.

On the other hand, teachers from institution B reveal that the majority of the students have insufficient English skills. Most students still have problem to understand spoken language. This might be from the low-motivated students, and other factors such as lack of speaking practice. These problems should be discussed with the faculty for solutions, since the lack of English will hinder the students to get accepted in five-star hotel for internship.

In this view, teachers expect students to be able to speak English. In this case, English competence at tertiary level needs to be enhanced and to include all cohorts to better prepare university students to compete in the ASEAN economic zone (The Jakarta Post, 2015).

Study on lecturers' perspectives also suggests that English enhances the national identity of Indonesians because it facilitates communication, relation building, knowledge building, and economic development in the international arena. In addition, English mastery is assumed to facilitate in gaining achievements and being competitive (Dewi, 2017).

4.1.4. Assessing students' Needs

Regarding with needs analysis, teachers from institution A and B reported that before the semester begins, the teachers were invited for a meeting and they discuss about the lesson plan, adjustments are made regarding with the prepared syllabus they have to delivered for the whole semesters. No official needs analysis was reported to have been conducted by the teachers and faculty. The prepared syllabus was passed from generations to generation, from year to year without much significant changes. Since the teachers mostly teach in different institutions, they mostly cooperate with teachers from different campus to modify the materials.

Another interesting finding is that the needs analysis is based on the formative assessment in some skill focus. The results of the tests were then used to developed and modify the syllabus, as for instance, the students' lack in one skill, then more practice will be devoted on students' weaknesses for skill improvement.

The needs assessment is crucial regarding the booming of international programs in tertiary education. Since the students' needs to study abroad, then universities need to create a teaching practicum where English is used as a medium of instruction (Zein et al., 2020).

4.1.5. Examinations used

In institution B, each subject, with 2 credits, is conducted for sixteen sessions. The teaching-learning session run from meeting one until meeting seven, then meeting 8 is for the mid-term test. The teachers have to arrange the tests based on the previous materials. Since the class focuses on written skills such as reading, grammar, and vocabulary and expressions, then the test also focuses on those aspects. After the mid-term test, the session starts again from meeting nine to fifteen, and the last session, meeting sixteen is for scheduled final test with the similar test items. No section for listening and other skills. When asked about how to assess students' speaking skill, one teacher stated that he gave speaking assignment for vlogging or video making to check their speaking skill.

In institution A, each subject runs for sixteen sessions with meeting 1 to meeting 6 in classroom, in meeting seven, students usually come to attend a

seminar week to get some insight from the industry practitioners. In meeting 8, mid-term test is conducted. Since it is a team-teaching, teachers discuss what the test is like, is it written, or project-based assessment to evaluate students speaking or writing. After the midterm test, the class starts again from meeting 9 until meeting 14. Meeting 15 can be used for seminar week, if any, if not; teachers start the oral exam in this session. The last session, meeting 16 is for the final exam. The final exam consists of written task 50%, listening task 20%, and speaking task 30%.

4.2. Students' view on their English Language Preparation

4.2.1. Adequacy of English Courses

When asked about their view of the English language preparation, students A stated that it is good enough, it meets their expectation. Some students mention that the languages they learn in classrooms are more complicated than the real language they practice in their internship.

The students A who have finished their internship abroad, they state that compared with the trainee from other countries, their English is much better. No wonder that they can provide excellent service to the guests. They suggest that it is also essential to integrate cross cultural communication in the language class to promote multicultural communication to prepare the students to win the global work competition.

The students from institution B did mentioned that their English is still lacking, and they need more chance to speak English in class, however very little time is provided for them. They did understand the importance of English in hospitality industry; however, they are not confident with their English. Therefore, they mostly prefer to have internship in kitchen and FB products rather than to be the front liners and FB services.

All in all, students in tourism and hospitality highly aware the importance of English in tourism sector. This covers all the skills such as speaking, writing, listening and reading (Rahayu, 2019).

4.2.2. Examinations

And as far as examinations were involved, the students from institution A perceived that the examinations in English held at the end of each academic year were too simple to calculate their language levels properly. Interviews showed that the students did not need to study hard to pass these exams. When it was confronted with the teachers, the teachers stated that students sometimes do the tests carelessly with making silly mistakes here and there. In fact, the score composition comes from several aspects with

assignment 20%, midterm test 30%, and final test 50%. Then students who cannot maximize their final exam can still get helped from other component score.

Students from institution B, on the other hand, consider the test items in the mid-term and final term to be challenging. As a result, every semester some students failed the subject, and had to retake the class again. These two opposing opinions should be carefully handled, with low-middle proficiency students; teachers have to motivate the students to boost their English.

4.3. Industry Practitioners View on English Language Preparation

Interview and group discussion with industry practitioners reveal that English is the key to enter the hospitality industry. The first step to come to the industry is the interview which is mostly conducted in English. Students with good English proficiency are confident with themselves, and they have good communicative skills. In this case, speaking is considered the most crucial skill to be mastered. As for other skills, they believe that the longer they stay in the industry, the better their English will be. English teaching in tourism higher institution is expected to make the students speak, and communicate in hospitality language.

From the results in two different tourism institutions, it can be concluded that ESP teaching is varied from one another. It can be stated that ESP in practice tends to be interpreted differently. As a result, the teaching practice of ESP is based on that interpretation, which in most cases does not include in-depth analyses (Aniroh, 2015). In developing ESP materials, teachers have two main objectives: (1) building content knowledge and skills and (2) developing language. In addition, various tasks can be performed for language skills tasks such as vocationally oriented speaking and writing. These speaking and writing tasks help students to be competent in both spoken and written texts (Widodo, 2016).

5. CONCLUSION

The findings discussed in the above section showed that there were several shortcomings in the preparation of the English language in the institution being surveyed. The shortcomings resulted from the lack of evaluation of student needs prior to the start of the course; lack of learning duration per session, and lack of treatment for low- proficient students. It is also important to note that teachers in tourism higher education mostly have no background experience in the industry since they graduated from the teacher schools. This should be overcome with industrial visit to see the real language needs to be produced in the workplace. With this program, there won't be any confusion on

whether teachers have to focus on the language or the content.

To see whether the English language preparation have met with the industry demand, needs analysis is crucial where this involves students, teachers, faculty, and the industry practitioners. The result can be used to develop and modify the ESP syllabus, teaching method, and assessment. Since the industry practitioners reveals the significant role of speaking, then the syllabus shall be designed to cope with that needs to make sure the expected learning outcome. To prepare for future workplace, it is also crucial to integrate international standardized tests for English competency certification such as TOEFL or TOEIC.

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