

# Investigating Language Needs of Port and Shipping Management Students: Lessons Learned From The Internship Program

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**Abstract**—Need analysis is one of the important processes in English language teaching. In vocational education, it is important to ensure that students have competences that match the demands and needs of the industries. This study is aimed to investigate the language needs of Port and Shipping Management students of Politeknik Ilmu Pelayaran Semarang, based on their experience during the internship program. An open-ended questionnaire was used to survey the English-related-tasks that students have to perform, the difficulties that the students face when doing their tasks, and the language competence that the students want to improve based on their experience. 68 students participated in this research. All of them are eighth-semester students and had conducted internship program for twelve months. This study revealed that the four language skills: speaking, writing, listening, and reading are very important. Students have to make reports, engage in discussions, respond to clients or customers' requests, handle documents, and reply letters. Students often find difficulties when doing their tasks due to limited grammar and vocabulary of formal language. They want to improve their communicative competence so that they can communicate fluently and accurately.

**Key words:** English for Specific Purpose (ESP), internship program, need analysis, Port and Shipping Management, vocational education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

As a lingua franca, English has been used widely all over the world. It is used in many fields, including education, economy, politics, science, health, etc. In this globalization era, the role of English has become highly significant. The advancement of technology and the free trade agreement have narrowed the boundaries among nations. People may engage in communication with other people with different nationalities. In this case, English language teaching has grown in importance due to the demand of the industry to hire employees who have good English competence. It becomes the challenge of educational institutions to produce graduates who can meet the industries' needs and

expectations. It is important to bridge the gap between the classroom and the world of work, and prepare students to be professional workers in the future (Bhatia et al., 2011).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has developed significantly due to the growing awareness that students may have different language needs based on their fields of study or work. English language teaching should be designed based on the students' needs in which the social-cultural context of where the students will use English should be taken into consideration (Johns & Machado, 2001). Therefore, the need analysis becomes an integral part of ESP teaching in which it can be used as the basis of syllabus design, materials selection, teaching activities implementation, and assessment (Kopiatina, 2018; Kusumawardani & Faridi, 2019; Su, 2009; Zohrabi, 2011). Need analysis, if conducted properly, can make a course more focused, efficient, motivating, and meaningful (Aliakbari & Boghayeri, 2014; Ghufuron et al., 2016; Jafari Pazoki & Alemi, 2019; Manoochchri & Nemati, 2016; Tabatabaei & Mokhtari, 2014).

Need analysis is a systematic procedure to identify or gather information about learners' needs (Nallaya, 2012). It may include the analysis of learners' language ability to find out what language competences that the learners already obtained, and what competences that they are lacked of (Paci, 2013). This procedure can provide valuable recommendations for education institutions, curriculum developers, or teachers to arrange the teaching and learning process and to improve students' performance (Nallaya, 2012). Hutchinson and Waters (in Zohrabi, 2011) differentiated learners' needs into three parts: necessities, lacks, and wants. Necessities refer to the requirements of the target situation, lacks refer to the learners' present condition, and wants refer to learners' perception on what they think is beneficial for them (Macalister & Nation, 2010).

Due to its importance, many researchers have conducted studies concerning needs analysis. Most of

them agreed that students' future workplace communication is very important to be considered in designing ESP course to help students to achieve their future goals (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2010; Attan et al., 2016; Belyaeva, 2015; Hwang & Lin, 2010; Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017). As the main goal of ESP is to prepare learners to engage in workplace communication effectively, the ESP course must be specifically designed to cater learners' language needs in the workplace contexts (Anderson, 2014; Salazar, 2017). This is in line with the main aim of education, which is to fulfill the demands and the needs of the society (Bharati & Lestari, 2019).

In vocational education institutions like in Politeknik Ilmu Pelayaran Semarang (PIP Semarang) the students of the Port and Shipping Management Department can get opportunities to experience workplace situations during the internship program which is conducted on the fifth and the sixth semester. By joining the program for twelve months, students can gain real work experience and encounter real work communication with their bosses, co-workers, clients, or customers. They can practice to handle documents and to complete tasks related to their field of work. The internship program can be a good chance for students to learn how the professional working situation is.

In vocational education, students' competences should match with the industries' demands and needs as they expect that the students are ready to enter the professional working world right after they graduate. Therefore, the internship program can become a good reflection and source of information to identify to what extent the students have competences as expected by the industries.

However, discussion with several students who have undergone internship program revealed that the English lesson they received from semester 1 until semester 4 cannot fully support them in completing the tasks during their internship program because the materials are not relevant to their needs in the workplace. This condition becomes the main reason why the researchers want to conduct the present study. Realizing the importance of the internship program in giving valuable knowledge, skills, and feedbacks for the students, the researchers want to investigate students' language needs based on their experience during the internship program. This research is aimed to (1) investigate the English-related-tasks that students have to perform during internship program; (2) investigate the difficulties that the students' face when doing their tasks during internship program; (3) explore what language competence that the students want to improve based on their experience during the internship program. It is expected that the result of this study can become a valuable reference for improving the instructional components of ESP course, including the syllabus, lesson plan, teaching materials, teaching activity, teaching media, and assessment.

## II. METHODS

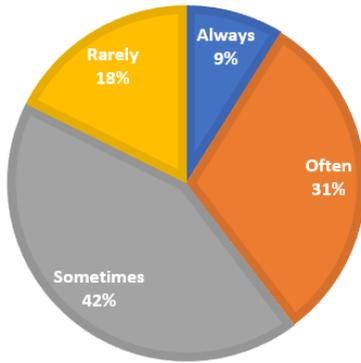
The researchers employed a survey method, in which an open-ended questionnaire is used to collect data. A field testing was conducted before the questionnaire was given to the participants using Google form. The questionnaire was distributed to 83 students of the Port and Shipping Management Department of PIP Semarang. However, only 68 students completed and submitted the questionnaire. All of the participants of the study were the eighth-semester students who had conducted internship program for twelve months in the fifth and sixth semester. They were asked to answer several questions and elaborate their answers. The questions were related to the activities they did during their internship program which involved the four language skills: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. They were also asked to describe their difficulties when doing their internship program, and also their expectations about what they want to improve and study. The result of the questionnaire was then recapitulated and analyzed.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In vocational education, it is important to ensure that students' competences match the demands and needs of the industry. The internship program can provide a good source of information about the students' competences that are expected by the industry.

The students of the Port and Shipping Management Department of PIP Semarang have an internship program during their fifth and sixth semester. They have opportunity to work in companies or institutions which are related to the Port and Shipping Management, such as shipping company, freight forwarder, port authority, agency, etc. They have to conduct the internship program for twelve months, then come back to campus to write a final report. During their internship, students can learn many things about professional working life, and how English is used at the workplace.

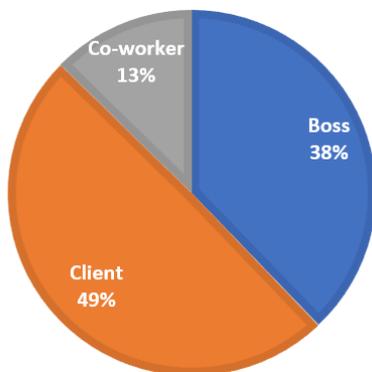
The first question asked to the students who participated in this research was the frequency of using English at the workplace. Based on the result of the questionnaire, there are only 9% of participants who always use English. 31% of participants claim that they often use English, 42% of participants explain that sometimes they use English, and 18% of participants admit that they rarely use English during working.



**Figure 1.** The frequency of using English at the workplace

The frequency of using English depends on the department that they worked at. Students that were placed at the crewing department or agency often engaged in communication with foreign crew. Their superiors or their bosses also often used English when having communication. Therefore, the students often used English too during the internship program. As figure 2 shows that 49% of the people whom the students communicate using English with, are the clients.

On the other hand, students who had the internship program at the operational department or purchasing department rarely used English. They usually had communication with their co-workers who spoke in their mother tongue. They also did not have direct communication with foreign clients.



**Figure 2.** The people whom the students communicate using English with

However, even though they rarely used English for speaking, they often had to handle documents which were written in English. The detailed answers of the research objectives are elaborated as follows.

**1.1 English-related-tasks that students have to perform during the internship program**

During the internship program, there were various tasks that required students to use English which involved the four language skills.

Related to speaking, students had to report to their bosses or superiors about the completion of their tasks and about important events that had happened. They also asked questions to other people to get information, explain procedures and company’s services to the clients. Another important task was to receive phone calls from clients or customers. Sometimes they also had to engage in discussions that required them to explain their ideas clearly and in detail.

Related to listening, students had to listen to oral instructions. They also had to listen to other people’s explanations, including their bosses, customers or clients. They had to receive customers’ or clients’ questions over the phone, and sometimes responded to their complaints.

Writing became one of the most important tasks for students. They had to make written reports, fill and complete forms and other documents, and write or reply emails and letters from clients or customers. In tasks related to writing, accuracy became very important to avoid mistakes and misunderstandings.

Students of Port and Shipping Management often had to deal with documents. They had to read carefully and examine forms, documents, letters, emails, work instructions, Standard Operational Procedures (SOP), and sometimes regulations. They had to read various sources to get information which had to be reported later.

**1.2 The difficulties that students face when doing their tasks during the internship program**

The students were asked to describe their difficulties related to English communication when doing their internship program. The difficulties were described based on the four language skills: speaking, listening, writing and reading. Related to speaking, they admitted that they have limited vocabulary and they have difficulties when constructing sentences orally. Sometimes they forgot the words that they wanted to say, sometimes they remembered the words but they found difficulties in putting the words together. They could understand what other people said, but sometimes still found difficulties to respond. Some of them revealed that they were not confident to speak up and were not sure about their pronunciation.

Related to listening, students found difficulties when people talked too fast so that they could not follow them. Limited vocabulary made them difficult to catch the words uttered by other people. Another difficulty was related to the different accents that caused unclear receptions. Especially when they had communication with people from China, Japan, or Korea who didn’t speak clearly.

Writing is one of important duty for the students during the internship program. They had to write daily, weekly, or monthly reports. They also had to write and reply letters or emails. Most of them had difficulties in writing sentences with correct grammar.

They also had difficulties when they had to use formal language in replying or writing letters. Most of the English communication that they had during internship were with the clients. They felt that they did not have sufficient knowledge of using formal language in English.

Related to reading, students did not find significant difficulties. Sometimes they found unfamiliar words in emails, letters, or documents. However, they could find the meaning using a dictionary or other translation tool.

### **1.3 Language competence that students want to improve based on their experience during the internship program.**

Most of the students explained that they wanted to improve their skills in doing communication using English. They realized that nowadays, they have to conduct communication not only with Indonesian people but also with people from other countries. This finding is in line with Wijayanto et al. (2017) who concluded that communication skills are important to support the success of students in the competitive international market. Students wanted to be fluent in speaking using accurate pronunciation and be able to respond to other people's utterances correctly. They wished to have an adequate vocabulary for conducting daily and business communication. They were also concerned with their writing skill since they have to do tasks which are related to writing such as writing reports, writing letters and emails, etc. Therefore, they also wanted to improve their grammar.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

Need analysis is important in English language teaching, especially in ESP. In vocational education institutions like in PIP Semarang, students have different language needs due to their different backgrounds, fields, and future workplaces. It is important to make sure that students have language competences which match the demands and needs of the industries. The internship program can provide valuable information about students' needs.

This research, which is aimed to investigate the language needs of Port and Shipping Management Department students of PIP Semarang based on their experience during internship program in the industries revealed that the four language skills: speaking, writing, listening, and reading are very important to support their tasks in the workplace. They have to make reports, whether orally or in written form, to their superiors. They often have to engage in discussions and respond to clients' or customers' requests. These tasks require good speaking and listening skills. They also have to handle documents and letters which requires good reading and writing skills. Students often found difficulties when doing their tasks due to limited vocabulary which is related

to business and formal conversation. They also admit that they had problems with grammar or sentence structure. Those conditions often made them less confident in speaking and writing. They wanted to improve their communicative competence so that they can communicate fluently and accurately. They also wanted to have an adequate vocabulary and good grammar to support their tasks.

Based on the findings, there are several suggestions for English teachers of the Port and Shipping Management Department proposed by the researchers. Firstly, it is important that grammar is not taught separately. It should be embedded with the tasks that students will do in the workplace, such as writing reports or emails, receiving telephone calls, etc. Secondly, the vocabulary should be taught in context to make students familiar and get used to it. Thirdly, the use of authentic materials is highly encouraged in the classroom. Teachers can use authentic documents, for example, to teach grammar and vocabulary, as well as to practice students' language skills. It is important to "bridge" the classroom materials with the real working situation.

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