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Analyzing Students' English Capability:
Do They Meet the Needs?

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Abstract
In the area of ESP, it is found that most research focuses on exploring students' learning needs based on the stakeholders' points of view, and a small portion reveals needs from students' perspective. There are no studies seeking to see what students' abilities are now, and compare them with demands in the field. Therefore, this research aims to measure students' English ability and to see whether their capability meets the needs at work. This research is categorized as a quantitative study. The subject of the research is the students of the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism of UNP taking English for Professional 3 subject in the first semester of 2019/2020. The data were obtained through tests. The results of this study provide an overview for lecturers about students' current ability, their strengths and lacks in certain skills, and how big the gap occurs between current ability and target needs.
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Keywords*: ESP, needs analysis, target needs, student capability*

Introduction

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) approach such as English for Hospitality and Tourism, English for Business, and a variety of English for other disciplines strongly emphasize the importance of conducting needs analysis before formulating learning objectives to be achieved. This needs analysis is an effort made by teachers or lecturers and curriculum designers to get an idea of what students are now, what they have already mastered, and what they must achieve in order to be able to perform appropriately at work. Since learning needs cannot be defined from a single perspective, various points of view including those from employers, lecturers, academic fellows, and students themselves should be taken into account. Information obtained through this analysis will be used as a guide in determining learning objectives, selecting teaching materials and learning strategies, and conducting evaluations.

So far, needs are indeed identified based on the viewpoints of the stakeholders, and rarely are they defined from the students' condition or capability. This capability analysis, however, cannot be marginalized, and is an inseparable part from needs analysis. Students may study English in accordance with their respective study programs but their learning needs cannot be translated into such a general context. In teaching English for Tourism for example, lecturers cannot always define that the materials needed by the students are matters relating to terms or activities in the world of tourism. To find out the real needs lecturers have to hold a needs analysis on what knowledge and skills are needed in the workplace and how students' current ability is (Richard:2001 and Hyland:2006). Once their abilities are revealed the lecturers can then compare them with the demands in the field. Using the results of analysis, the lecturers manage to measure how much gap is created between students' current abilities and the competencies needed in the field, and decide what strategies and materials will be used to bridge the gap.

Many researches have successfully identified English learning needs based on the demands of workplaces, but none of them reveals what students ability is now and finds out whether it already meets the needs of the target. Such studies have been carried out by hundreds and perhaps thousands of ESP researchers in different fields. They, for example analyzed students' perceptions toward the use of English in the workplace (Lehtonen: 2004 and Bergroth: 2007), the experience of employees with low English proficiency (Bergroth: 2007), the impact of using English in the workplace (Siiskonen: 2015), the importance English language skills in the employee selection process (Mäkiö: 2016), challenges in teaching ESP (Poedjiastuti & Oliver: 2017), and English language needs in Hospitality and Tourism Industry (Putri: 2018).

The absence of research that examines students' English ability actually implies an imbalance in needs analysis. This disproportion will certainly have an impact on the learning materials in which they are not adjusted to the needs and ability of the students. As a result, the learning materials may be in accordance with the stakeholders' expectation, but there might be a level of knowledge and skills that are overlooked or not yet taught to the students. On the other hand, there is also a possibility that the materials being taught has been

completely mastered by students. As this ability is not identified then there will be a repetition of the same materials that can lead to burnout and time wasting.

Considering the importance of analyzing students' ability prior to designing an ESP class, this study aims to reveal what students' ability in English (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) is, and to see whether their skills meet the needs of Hospitality and Tourism jobs.

Method

This research is categorized as a quantitative study. The subject of the research was the students taking ESP (English for Professional 3) course in the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism of Universitas Negeri Padang (commonly called FPP students). The number of the participants was 47 students. The data were obtained through tests covering the four skills of English. The data gathered were analyzed qualitatively.

In order to see whether the FPP students' capability has already met the needs at work, the students' average score on each skill were compared to the skills demanded in hotel and tourism industries revealed in the research conducted by Putri (2018). The previous research showed that, English skills at basic level are still acceptable in hotel and tourism industry. Their ability is categorized based on the scores achieved in the respective test as described in the following table:

Table 1: The Levels of the Students' Capability Based on the Score Achieved

No.	Scores	Category	Level
1	80 - 100	Very Good	Advanced
2	66 - 79	Good	Intermediate
3	56 - 65	Fair	Basic
4	46 - 55	Low	Novice
5	< 45	Poor	

Results and Discussion

To see whether the students' English skills are in line with the needs of the hospitality world, a series of tests including listening, reading, writing and speaking tests were conducted. The results of respective test are explained as follows:

1. The FPP Students' Ability in Listening

Listening, along with speaking, based on the research conducted by Putri (2018) is regarded as the most demanded skill at work. To be able to perform appropriately in the target situation, the students at least have to achieve Basic level. The following diagram presents the distribution of the students' ability in listening:

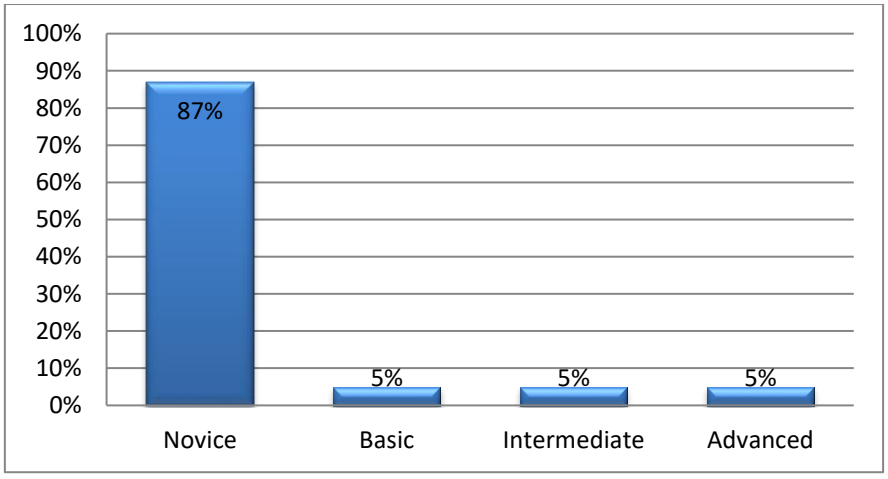

Figure 1. The FPP Students' Ability in Listening

The above diagram clearly presents that most of students are in Novice level (87%). There are only 5% of the students who are in Advanced level, 5% in Intermediate level, and 5% in Basic level. These results share that majority of students in the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism are not yet able to meet the market demand.

In order to get clearer picture about the student ability in listening, the researchers divided the test into three parts including the ability to respond to simple statements or questions, the ability to understand short conversations, and the ability to understand talks or announcements. In providing appropriate responses toward

simple statements or questions, 45% of the students are in Novice level, 16% are in Basic level, 16% are in Intermediate level, and 23% are in Advanced level. Meanwhile in understanding short dialogs, the number of students who are in Novice level is much larger (91%). There are only 5% of the students who are in Intermediate level, 5% in Advanced level, and none of them in Basic level. Furthermore, the students' ability in understanding talks or announcements is not much different from their ability in understanding short dialogue. Most of them (91%) are in Novice level, 5% of them are in Basic level and Intermediate level, and none of the students is in Advanced level.

Based on the results of the listening test, it is identified that listening skills of the FPP students do not yet fulfill the market needs. Their capability in every aspect of listening including providing appropriate responses, understanding short dialogs, and understanding talks or announcement in general are in Novice level.

2. The Students' Ability in Speaking

To find out the speaking ability FPP students, the researchers designed a test that demanded students to act as hotel receptionists handling reservations under certain conditions. The distribution of the students' speaking ability is presented in the following diagram:

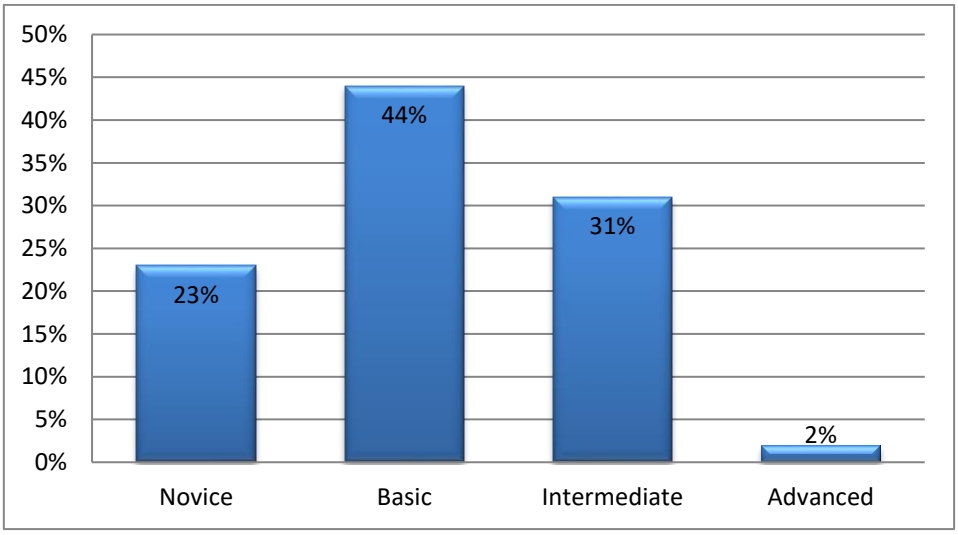

Figure 2. The FPP Students' Speaking Ability

The above diagram shows that 2% of the students are in Advanced level, 12% of them are in Intermediate level, 44% are in Basic level, and 23% are in Novice level. From the table, it is known that most of the students are in Basic level, and the number of those who are in Intermediate level is somewhat high. These results suggest that in general, speaking skill of the students of the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism meets the target needs.

Students' speaking ability in this research is viewed from 5 components including Grammar, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Fluency, and Pronunciation. In grammar component, none of the students who are in Advanced level. Nevertheless, 28% of them are in Intermediate level. The rest is 49% in Basic level, and 23% in Novice level. These data suggest that in general the students' speaking ability in Grammar component is in Basic category.

In vocabulary component, the percentage of the students who are in Advanced level is only 2% and that of the students who are in Intermediate level is 28%. The number of the students who are in Basic level is still dominant (40%), while that of the students who are in Novice level is similar to that achieving Intermediate level. Even though there are still few students who are in Novice level, the results might signify that most of the students have already had sufficient vocabulary to express their thought and ideas in English.

To see the students' speaking ability in comprehension component, the researchers had the students to do a role play through which they were assigned to perform a task of being a front desk staff at work. From this activity, it is revealed that there are 5% of the students who are in Advanced level, 28% of them are in Intermediate level, 53% of them are in Basic level, and 14% of them are in Novice level. These results show that most of the students are in Basic level indicating that they are able to understand simple questions or statements addressed to.

In Fluency aspect, there are 2% of the students who are in Advanced level, 30% of them are in Intermediate level, 37% of them are in Basic level, and 30% of them are in Novice level. This numbers indicate that most of the students' fluency in producing utterances was quite satisfactory. Some of them however, still did frequent pauses and hesitated to utter words.

Similar to other components of speaking, in pronunciation, the students' ability in general is in Basic level. There are 2% of the students who are in Advanced level, 35% of them are in Intermediate level, 5% of them are in Basic level, and 5% of them are in Novice level.

3. The Students' Ability in Reading

The table below shows the distribution of FPP students' reading ability in general:

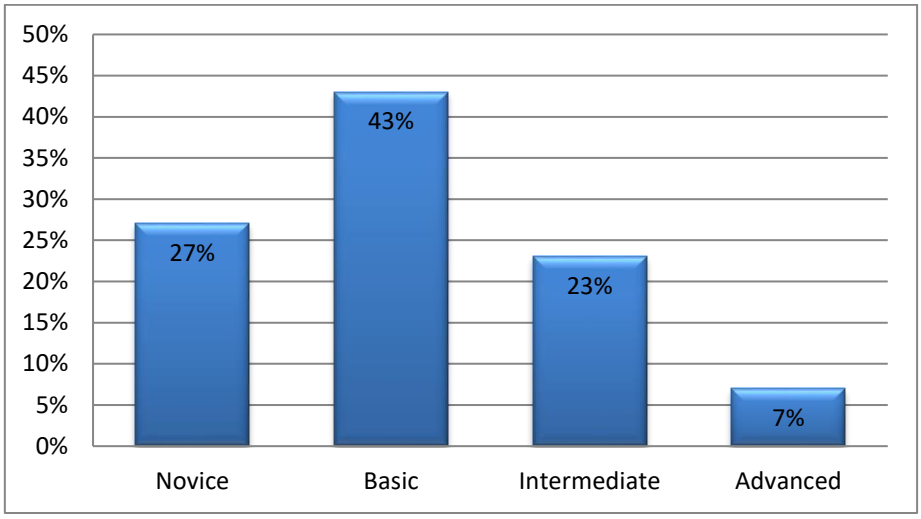

Figure 3. FPP Students' Reading Ability

The above diagram displays that 7% of the students are in Advanced level, 23% of them are in Intermediate level, 43 of them are in Basic level, and 27% are in Novice level. The data presented show that the students' reading ability is somewhat good as the number of those who are in Novice level is smaller than that of students in Advanced, Intermediate, and Basic levels. In general however, the students' reading ability is in Basic level

4. The Students' Writing Ability

To see the students' writing ability, they were assigned to write a memo containing instructions addressed to a lower-level staff. The following diagram shows the distribution of the FPP students' writing ability:

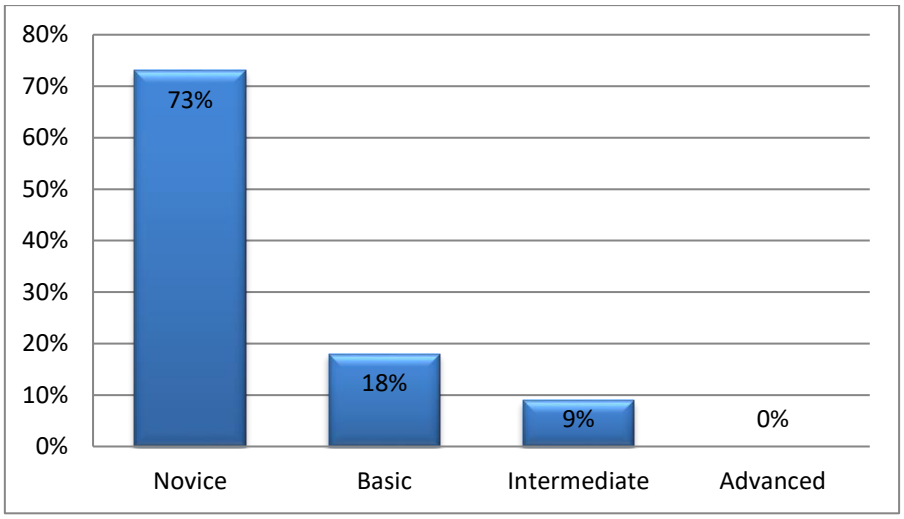

Figure 4. FPP Students' Writing Ability

Diagram 4 presents that there are no students who could be categorized Advanced in writing. There are 9% of them who are in Intermediate level, 18% of them are in Basic level, and 73% of them are in Novice level. From the table it is revealed that a big number of students are in Novice level suggesting that their writing capability does not yet meet the market needs.

In this research, the students' writing ability was viewed from three components including grammar, content, and task. In grammar component, the students' writing ability is still in Novice level (79%). There are

only 11% of them who are in Basic level, 9% are in Intermediate level, and none of them is in Advanced level. The data indicate that those students have problems in writing grammatically correct sentences. They are less capable in applying appropriate word forms, tenses, and subject-verb agreement.

In term of vocabulary, most of the students are in Basic level (61%). There are 25% of the students who are in Novice level, 5% of them are in Intermediate level, and 9% of them are in Advanced level. These data imply that the number of the students who have vocabulary deficiency is fairly small. More than a half of them demonstrate infrequent problem with word choice. As the number of those achieving Basic level was relatively big, the students' vocabulary in writing meets the field needs.

Related to content, the number of the students who are in Novice level is 73% and that of students who are in Basic level is 20%. Meanwhile there are only 7% students who are in Intermediate level, and none of them who are in Advanced level. Based on these results, it is known that the students' ability in writing business letter does not yet meet the level required. The content of the letter they wrote mostly do not match to the tasks assigned, and the tone was too informal for intended audience.

Conclusions

Based on the above findings and discussions, it was apprehended that listening and writing ability of FPP students do not yet match to the level of skills required at workplaces. Meanwhile their speaking and reading ability have already been acceptable in the field.

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