EAP Course Design: A Need Analysis on Digital Business Students in Business Technology Institute of Riau (ITBR)

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Abstract

This research helps determine the necessary requirements to strengthen a design of an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course in the context of English as a foreign language, particularly in Indonesia, especially despite its marginal status in higher education curricula by exploring EAP student needs, specifically in the Digital Business department at the Institute of Digital Business Technology Riau (ITBR). Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research utilizes questionnaires and an interview guide to gather data from students, the head, and English instructor in the department in order to identify student needs through 1) target situation analysis, 2) discourse analysis, 3) present situation analysis, 4) learner factor analysis, and 5) teaching factor analysis. The findings reveal that the last four aspects of the needs analysis are evenly distributed, showing a total percentage of 21% of the overall percentage students' needs, indicating that students require authentic materials for the development of their skills and language components, they need proficient language skills, they also require motivation, varied teaching methods and learning environments, and they need appropriate classroom management. In contrast, the target situation analysis accounts for 16% of the overall percentage, mainly due to the differing perceptions between students, department chairs, and teaching staff. In conclusion, students in the Digital Business department have specific needs accompanied by high motivation, which supports their attainment of good communication skills in their field, emphasizing the importance of aligning perceptions regarding the needs in developing an EAP course to achieve EAP learning objectives.

Keywords: Digital Business Students, course design, English for Academic Purpose (EAP)

Introduction

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is a familiar term derived from English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia. The language studied in an academic context aims to prepare learners for studying or working which ultimately enabling them to communicate effectively and fluently. This is one of the goals of EAP that is encompassing their understanding of both linguistic and cultural aspects. The demand for active and fluent communication in English is a requirement that must be met by EAP students, including students in the Digital Business department at the Institute of Business Technology Riau (ITBR). Their ability to use language appropriately within the given context serves as an indicator that they possess communicative competence, which is also a prerequisite for mastering language skills in communication (Sabri, 2019). In other words, EAP learners are expected to have good communication in English particularly in their certain field they are in to.

The demand of using English based on particular target or condition in EAP aligns with the emphasis highlighted by (Basturkmen, 2012); (Basturkmen, 2018) who states that ESP/EAP should be developed according to specific needs so that learners can acquire specific language skills for particular learning purposes. Therefore, in order to accommodate the specific needs of EAP learners, needs analysis is a crucial initial stage to accurately formulate learning objectives, allowing for the development of an EAP course design that aligns with those needs as asserted as well by Lapele (2019) that an ESP/EAP course design is determined by need analysis. In brief, recognition of students' specific needs as EAP learners is crucial in developing their English in their own field.

Furthermore, even though, English for academic purposes (EAP) in specific fields occupies a marginal position, particularly at the university level, due to the lack of clear guidance from the Ministry of National Education or institutions, EAP practices which are brought as the results, become unclear due to the diverse substance of EAP curriculum policies itself outlined in Decree of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research Technology No. 011/200 (English language courses in non-English majors are compulsory and classified as basic general courses with 2-4 credits for freshman in non-English study programs). However, Solikhah (2020) constantly persisted that, particularly in Indonesia, based on this decree and the purpose of designing an EAP course, there are several aspects that need to be accommodated in the learning objectives of an EAP course design such as grammar literacy and proficiency, knowledge of academic vocabulary, academic listening literacy, academic oral presentation and discourse, academic reading texts and documents, and academic writing literacy. The inclusion of these aspects in the design of an EAP course provides clearer and more focused guidance for a course designer in formulating the learning objectives of the course so that the instructional design will be based on specific needs of EAP learners. In short, despite of its minor status in Indonesia curriculum, EAP course design based on initiated need analysis is required for achieving the desired goal for EAP learners by making sure all of the significant aspects are integrated within the design.

Nevertheless, a lack of addressing EAP learner needs appropriately and precisely based on systemic need analysis before designing an EAP course analysis somehow will lead to unwell-managed ESP/EAP course design (Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017); (Poedjiastutie, 2017), including in ITBR, particularly for teaching English for the students Digital Business department. There is an absence for a need analysis as an inquiry perspectival conducted in designing digital business course. The condition was discovered by the researchers after conducting preliminary research for 3 (three) months during teaching and learning process in September – December 2022. Furthermore, the learning content that should provide professional content in the field of digital business is not clearly reflected in the taught materials as part of the planning of an EAP course which should encompass a diverse range of learning materials related to the future professional goals of business students in the workplace (Brieger, 1997).

Additionally, as can be observed within the three months of the learning process, the syllabus is questionable as well as it has not carefully considered the needs of digital business students as a primary requirement in conducting the EAP course. Accordingly, this is exacerbated by the fact that the digital business department is a new department in the institution, resulting in English language instructors in the department not having previously conducted a needs analysis, as mentioned by Sysoyev & Zavyalov (2019) who state that many issues encountered in a class studying English as a foreign language are due to the neglect of the learners' interests and needs, which are crucial pieces of information that should be readily available. Therefore, for the above reasons, it is so essential for the researchers to conduct a need analysis that the desired goals will be fulfilled.

Methods

This research is a descriptive and qualitative study tailored to the specific objectives of the study itself which naturally presents data of numbers and percentages. Gathering the data, the researcher utilized two instruments, namely a questionnaire and interview guides (students, the head, and the lecturer). The research data was obtained from a sample of 20 students, selected through total sampling from the entire student population in the digital business department at the Institute of Business Technology Riau (ITBR). These students were in their first semester of the academic year 2022/2023. Additionally, the head of the Digital Business program at the Institute of Business Technology Riau and English language lecturer in the same department were also included in the sample.

The open-ended questionnaire provided was a modified version of the questionnaire formulated by Basturkmen (2010); (Basturkmen, 2018) incorporating several categories such as target situation

analysis, discourse analysis, present situation analysis, learner factor analysis, and teaching context analysis. The analysis was done by calculating the percentage of the categories represented by the answer of the highest percentage through Likert Scale with the scoring criteria (5=very needed, 4= somewhat needed, 3=needed, 2=somewhat not needed, 1= not needed), then determining the rating scale and the total answering, and using the percentage technique. Additionally, interviews were conducted with the head of the department and the lecturer specifically to gather information about the target situation needs for students in the digital business department, which had previously been addressed in the initial phase.

Result and Discussion
Target Situation Analysis

To obtain data regarding the target situation needs of digital business students, the initial step taken in this research was to conduct interviews with the head of the digital business program and the English language lecturer who teaches English for business. Based on the interview results, the researcher obtained information that student in the Digital Business department who study English in their field need to learn vocabulary specifically related to their field. They also need to have good listening skills in order to actively communicate in English for business purposes, both orally and in writing. Additionally, they require the ability to read vocabulary and even business-related texts accurately in English, enabling them to understand business documents in English and write them using appropriate English sentences.

Furthermore, students are emphasized to have good communication skills, especially if they are involved in business matters that reach international domain. This is further encouraged by their chosen field of digital business, which provides them with extensive opportunities for conducting business activities. The head of the program and the lecturer similarly implied that: *"The materials or teaching materials provided to them must be able to accommodate the needs of digital business students, particularly when they enter the workforce in the future as our program is related to the use of digital media, which allows students to reach the outside world through various modern applications available to them. If they are supported by good English language skills, they will become competent graduates of this institution in their chosen field, specifically in digital business."*

Surprisingly, on the other hand, the data obtained from the questionnaire given to the students reveals a different outcome compared to the results obtained from the previous interviews. The total percentage of language skills and components can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Students' Target and Learning Need Analysis for Language Skills

No.	Skills/Component	Score (%)	Category
1	Listening	82.5	Needed
2	Reading	77.5	Needed
3	Speaking	77.5	Needed
4	Writing	82.5	Needed
5	Vocabulary	75	Needed

The results from the questionnaire, with a total percentage of 82.5%, indicate that students' listening and writing skill falls into the category of needed skills. This is followed by reading and speaking skill, both with a total percentage of 77.5%, which also fall under the category of required language skills. Furthermore, the total percentage for vocabulary mastery is 75%, representing the lowest percentage among the language components and still classified as a needed component for students in their respective field.

Comparing the two results obtained both from the interview and the questionnaire, differences in the prioritization of language skills needed were identified. Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that students in the digital business department are expected to have strong language skills, particularly in oral communication. This is because they are engaged in the business world, which is

supported by the digital realm, and these skills will be highly beneficial for them, especially as their business ventures grow. This aligns with the statement provided by Madkur (2018), who asserts that teaching materials for students in specific majors should be provided to be useful in their future careers, with a focus on developing good English language abilities and proficiency (Wijayanti & Nugroho, 2021).

Meanwhile, on the other hand, listening and writing skills are more prioritized for students to master due to their involvement in the business world, which extensively utilizes digital media as well. Nevertheless, in line with the context of English for business, listening skills are considered the most challenging language skill, supported by a study conducted by Kho & Pradana (2019), which revealed that listening skills ranked the highest in terms of difficulty for business students in studying English. Similarly, writing skills are also crucial as they are deemed one of the mandatory skills for EAP learners, as emphasized by (Solikhah, 2020), who states that writing skill is a prominent outcome of universities, although other language skills are also accommodated in an EAP course design as well. It can be concluded that the dissimilar result between the interview and the questionnaire indicates the different point of view possessed by the teacher and the learners as two parties that use English in their daily practices.

Discourse Analysis

In relation to the implementation or use of English language in the context of business, particularly for students majoring in Digital Business at ITBR, the head of the program stated that there is an expectation for students to master certain language skills. It is hoped that the teaching materials provide original English-language content, such as transaction documents that can be sourced from the internet or business conversations extracted from film clips in a business context, which are relevant to the needs of students in the Digital Business program.

The results from the questionnaire also indicate a consistent total percentage of 80%, showing that the use of English in learning listening skills for formal/informal situations and conveying information in a business setting falls under the category of "needed" The same applies to the use of learned language in speaking skills, such as offering and similar functions, which also receive the same total percentage and are categorized as needed for students. Similarly, the use of language in reading skills, such as comprehending email content and business procedures, also falls under the category of "needed". The same total percentage is observed for writing skills and the need for language components, such as grammar learning, which are categorized as needed for students. The aligned results from the interviews and questionnaires indicate that the taught materials should be authentic and tailored to the needs of digital business students, as emphasized by Nadirah et al., (2020); Lapele (2019); Valeeva et al. (2019); and Keshmirshekan (2019) who stated that authentic materials support motivation and promote better EFL learning. However, when providing authentic materials to EAP students, it is necessary to consider several factors due to certain aspects of the students that need to be known beforehand, such as their learning styles, which undoubtedly will influence their learning approach and motivation. This is supported by a study conducted by Tymbay (2022), which indicates that the use of authentic media in ESP/EAP classrooms can lead to undesired learning outcomes, both for instructors and learners. In brief, awareness of the importance of authentic materials for EAP learners lead to the achievement of the learning goal since students become more motivated and encouraged to learn well in an EAP classroom.

Present Situation Analysis

To obtain information about the present situation in target situation, the results of this analysis indicate that digital business students require language proficiency in reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills. This is evidenced by a total percentage of 80%, categorized as a needed aspect. Furthermore, the need for involvement of native speakers in their learning process is highlighted as a requirement by students, with a total percentage of 85%. Similarly, the aspect of needing a wide range of business topics that apply or utilize digital media is also indicated with the same total percentage of 85%. In addition, the need for writing skills in their field, such as writing project proposals, reports, memos, invoices, and others, through digital media is considered needed, with a total percentage of 85%. Lastly, the need for a more varied vocabulary that is relevant to their field falls under the category of needed aspect, as indicated by a total percentage of 82.5% as can be referred to the table below:

Table 2. Students' Present Situation

No.	Aspect	Score (%)	Category
1	Language Proficiency	80	Needed
2	Native Speaker Involvement	85	Needed
3	Varied Business Topics	85	Needed
4	Varied Business Writing Ability	85	Needed
5	Digital Business Advance Vocabulary	82.5	Needed

The results align with the observations made by the researcher during the three-month learning process. The students demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm in learning the provided materials, as evidenced by their diverse questions related to their field, especially when it involved the use of digital media during the learning process. Their curiosity was also shown by providing feedback to the instructors, requesting more varied examples and practical exercises for each language skill being taught. According to the instructors, in order to promote their communication ability in English, the learning process was not limited to the classroom; they also provided opportunities for students to ask questions in English through a selected application, allowing for informal continuation of the learning process. This is consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Keshmirshekan (2019) that the use of digital authentic material does promote communication competence of EAP learners. In brief, allowing EAP students to learn through suitable, adaptable, and related materials in EAP learning teaching process, the ability of having communicative competence in certain area can be well accommodated.

Learner Factors Analysis

Motivation, learning styles, and students' perception of their own needs are components that can be taken into consideration when reviewing students' needs from their perspective as learners. Through learner factor analysis, the researcher obtained several insights regarding the aforementioned components, as presented in the table below:

Table 3. Learner Factors

No.	Factors	Score (%)	Category
1	Motivation	83.75	Needed
2	Communicative Learning Method	82.5	Needed
3	Mixed Classroom Atmosphere	80	Needed

According to the statements provided in the questionnaire, specifically regarding to the statement "motivation to learn English in the field of digital business," with a total percentage of 83.75%, it includes motivation to learn English in the field of digital business for future career prospects at 80%, motivation to learn English related to digital business as a compulsory subject at the institution at 80%, motivation to learn English in the digital business field to communicate with foreign relations at 87.5%, motivation to learn English in the field to work in foreign companies at 87.5%, motivation to pursue education abroad at 85%, and lastly, the motivation to communicate fluently in class at 82.5%. These percentages indicate that student motivation in these various aspects is needed. Similarly, the need for an effective and communicative teaching process using English in the field of digital business demonstrates a total percentage of 82.5%, and the need for a mixed learning environment both inside and outside the classroom shows a total percentage of 80%. These aspects reflect students' desires and are categorized as necessary or needed by them. Therefore, it can be concluded that students in the digital business department require motivation, communicative learning methods, and a mixed classroom atmosphere in the process of learning English in the field of digital business. This result is in line with the study conducted by Anwar & Wardhono (2019) that motivation in EAP learning does influence EAP learners due to its affectivity in developing conducive EAP learning environment,

including the learning process. In conclusion, supporting internal factors of EAP learners, such as the learners' own perspective significantly give positive impacts on the effort for achieving their learning goal.

Teaching Context Analysis

This analysis pertains to the design of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) learning, specifically what can be offered by instructors to their learners. With a total percentage of 79%, students express the need for engaging classroom management. Additionally, there is a preference for varied seating arrangements, as indicated by a total percentage of 85%. Group assignments are also desired, with a total percentage of 82%. Furthermore, the classification of group tasks based on different levels of intelligence is valued, achieving a total percentage of 80%. Finally, the provision of modules with appropriate teaching methods is favored, as reflected by a total percentage of 83.5%. The details can be observed in the table below:

Table 4. Teaching Context

No.	Aspect	Score (%)	Category
1	Engaging Classroom Management	79	Needed
2	Varied Seating Arrangement	85	Needed
3	Desired Group Assignment	82	Needed
4	Grouping Task	80	Needed
5	Module	83.5	Needed

In designing an EAP (English for Academic Purposes) course, the role of the instructor is crucial in creating a comfortable, enjoyable, and conducive learning environment that meets the needs of the students. This aligns with research findings that emphasize the learners' desire for effective and communicative instructors in the EAP learning process, as it contributes to the creation of an effective and interactive learning environment (KOC, 2020). Additionally, based on the above analysis of needs, the following pie chart provides a general overview of the percentage distribution of each indicator of students' need, as shown below:
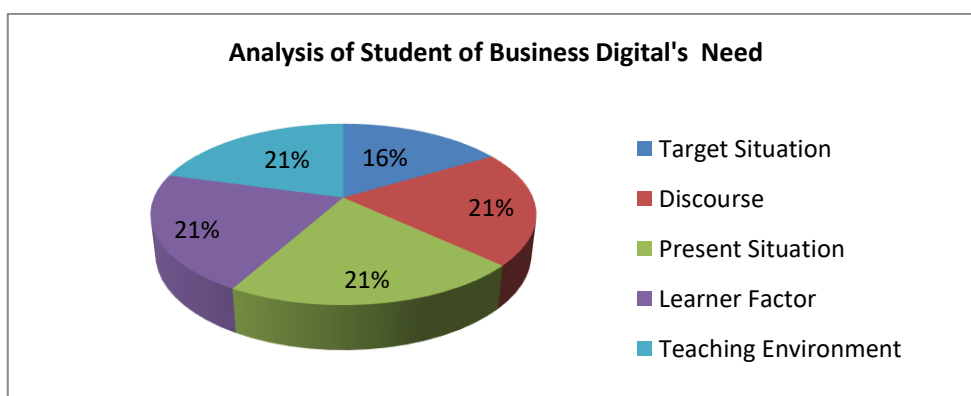

Figure 1. Overall Percentage of Each Aspect of Students' Need

The information obtained and collected from the questionnaire provided to the students yields results that each indicator of the aspects required in the analysis of student needs as EAP learners studying English in the field of digital business shows the same category of needs that are equally important for the students to be able to actively and effectively use English in their field. Out of the total percentage of 100% student needs, 16% of the students are aware of the need for language skills, including speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills, as well as the need for language components such as vocabulary in the field of digital business. Furthermore, the need for language usage aspects in accordance with the context is also required by 21% of the students, which constitutes a significant

portion of their overall needs analysis. Similarly, the need for students' awareness of the use of English in the field of digital business, which requires a certain level of mastery, is indicated by a percentage of 21%. Likewise, the learner factor and teaching environment, which are analyzed indicators of needs obtained from the students, also account for 21% of the overall percentage, similar to the previous two indicators.

This indicates a balance in the needs of digital business students, particularly, in learning English in their field, aiming to help them develop communicative English language skills, and generally, for EAP learners as can be noticed from some studies that had been conducted concerning the importance of need analysis for ESP/EAP learning and teaching, material development, and course design (Wijayanti & Nugroho, 2021); (Nugroho, 2020); (Dayu & Haura, 2016; Ekayati et al., 2020; Fatmawati, 2017; Gestanti et al., 2019; Jendrych, 2013; Lapele, 2019; Marleni & Asilestari, 2019; Mentari, 2019; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020; Nawir et al., 2021; Nurhaliza, 2019; Nurwahida, 2017; Ranasuriya & Herath, 2020; Tahang et al., 2021; Wulandari & Hustarna, 2020). Shortly, the importance of conducting a needs analysis in ESP/EAP learning process cannot be overstated, as it greatly influences the development of a learning plan aimed at achieving the goals of EAP learners themselves. With the current student-learning centered approach that underlies the learning process, it has become an obligation for instructors, teachers, and even course designers to undertake this analysis as an initiating step in realizing an effective and communicative ESP/EAP class. By doing so, the desired outcomes can be maximized, especially in the use of English language within the appropriate context or field where the language is employed.

Conclusion

The inevitably importance of need analysis lead this research to reveal the specific needs of Digital Business students at the Institute of Digital Business Technolgy for an EAP class. Difference specific EAP learners indicate particular needs as well. Therefore, based on the result, a syllabus could be more systematic and well-planned based on the students of Business Digital's need. The desired original teaching materials that are relevant to their field which require professional language skills specific to their domain could also be easily provided so that the students' motivation can be more enhanced, teaching methods can be more suitably chosen, and the classroom environments are more adaptable. Additionally, the emphasis of the importance of appropriate classroom management tailored to their needs enabling them to achieve students learning objectives in the process of studying English within their field through the syllabus. However, it is important to note that this research was conducted in a recently established department, and the findings of this needs analysis are limited in scope, with a narrower perception analysis for a general EAP course design. Therefore, there is a need for a broader needs analysis and a comparison of an EAP class design implemented over an extended period.

Acknowledgments

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