STUDENTS' NEED ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH READING SKILLS FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

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Abstract: The study explores students' needs for English reading skills among students of English Language Studies. It also explores the difficulties in reading skill for academic purposes (English for research) faced by the students. The study is based on the two basic aspects of exploring language needs: Target Situation Analysis and Present Situation Analysis. The participants of the study are 13 graduate students of English Language Studies of Post-Graduate Program in the third semester. Questionnaire is an instrument for data collection. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed descriptively. The study showed that most of students often have difficulties in reading English texts for academic purposes. They want to improve their comprehension level through EAP course and enable to improve their writing performance.

Keywords: *Needs Analysis; Reading Skills; and EAP*

1   INTRODUCTION

In the globalized era, much information has been being exposed in many mass media, text books and journal articles moreover on internet. Everyday we face million of text and most of them are written in English. They have been already customized by EFL learners in searching information of references related to their study. Benhart (2011:19) states that millions across the globe routinely access expository information from the internet written in English—a second language for the overwhelming majority. Scientific works also seems to increase more and more during last decade, this is can be seen from many scientific international events conducted in domestic and abroad. Most researchers or lectures should deliver their new findings for public to promote the development of scientific works. Related to this phenomenon, reading has important role in getting and sharing information.

Reading is an important language skill for EFL learners in Higher Education in exploring information as references and additional materials for their study. One of the most important skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students that need to acquire is the ability to comprehend academic texts (Dreyer & Nel, 2003). In other word, reading is one of important language skills needed by EFL learners to get their expectation for their concern. Reading is assumed as the most

important skill to gain knowledge of their own discipline for university students in higher education today (Safdarian, et.al.: 2013:121).

Reading becomes a path to get knowledge as an input in interpreting a phenomenon or situation. When learners read academic text more, they enable to express their ideas into written text or well-structured speaking connected to the main discussion. In the other word, reading is an activity will be a way to fulfill learners' expectation for their academic needs. Grabe (2009) view reading as the most important skill required of people in multicultural and international settings, academic learning, and self-study situations.

Responses toward changing situation should be done by conducting needs analysis. This can be carried out by researcher and or educator involving staff and students. One of the purposes of need analysis is to know what needs should be fulfilled in matching with the needs of the work place or their profession. Reading is very important for EFL learners in adding insights on their study. We can always open the world window so that we can see the new things as references. Reading is a path to the wider world with different information. Need analysis needs to conduct in knowing the students' wants and the deficiency of the EAP course for them. So that needs analysis can be followed up by the confirmed program, and the accompanying problems during the course will be overcome.

2 THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1 Needs Analysis and Its Models

Needs analysis (also called needs assessment) is the gathering information activity that will serve as a basis for developing a curriculum to meet the learning needs of a particular group of students (Brown, 1995). Soriano (1995) indicates that needs analysis collects and analyzes data to determine what learners "want" and "need" to learn, while an evaluation measures the effectiveness of a program to meet the needs of the learners. This definition tries to make a line between needs analysis and evaluation. Needs analysis aims to determine the needs for a defined group of people, while an evaluation determines to what extent a program meets these needs.

Needs analysis is a systematic set of procedures undertaken for the purpose of setting priorities and making decisions about programs or organizational improvement and allocation of resources Witkin and Altschuld (1995). Richard (2001:51) states that procedures used to collect information about learners' needs are known as needs analysis. "Needs" here depends on the perception of those making the judgment. Teachers, learners, administrators, employees, parents, and stakeholders may all have different views as to what needs are. Based on some definition above needs analysis is conducted to should fill the "gap" of needs between the current state of affairs and the desired state of affairs, it is a line with Richard (2001) having

said that one of the purposes of needs analysis is to fill the "gap" of what a language program "lacks".

Jordan (1994) indicates that the main two approaches in needs analysis are the Target-Situation Analysis and the Present-Situation Analysis. Robinson (1991:8) argues that a needs analysis, which focuses on students' needs at the end of a language course, can be called a TSA (Target Situation Analysis). Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 124) refer to TSA as tasks and activities where learners are/will be using English for target situation". TSA generally uses questionnaire as the instrument. Dudley. TSA includes objective, perceived and product-oriented needs.

2.1.1 Target Situation Analysis

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998:124) refer to TSA as tasks and activities where learners are/will be using English for target situation". TSA generally uses questionnaire as the instrument. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998:124) explain that "TSA includes objective, perceived and product-oriented needs". Munby (1978) presents a highly detailed set of procedures for discovering target situation needs. He calls this set of procedures the Communication Needs Processor (CNP). The CNP consists of a range of questions about key communication variables (topic, participant, medium, etc) which can be used to identify the target language needs of any group of learners.

2.1.2 Present Situation Analysis

According to Robinson (1991:8), "PSA (Present Situation Analysis) seeks to establish what the students are like at the start of their language course, investigating their strengths and weaknesses". Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) state that PSA refers to strengths and weaknesses in language, skills and learning experiences.

2.2 The Purposes of Needs Analysis

The effective needs analysis is very important for analyst and others (teachers, staff, students) involved in it in conducting needs analysis. We can refer to Richard's book on Curriculum Development showing us shows that needs analysis in language teaching may use for a number of different purposes, for example: 1) to find out what language skills a learner needs in order to perform a particular role, such as sales manager, tour guide, or university students; 2) to help determine if an existing course adequately addresses the needs of potential students; 3) to determine which students from a group are most in need of training in particular language skills; 4) to identify a change of direction that people in a reference group feel is important; 5) to identify a gap between what students are able to do and what they need to be able to do; 6 to collect information about a particular problem learners are experiencing Richard (2001:52).

3   METHOD

Participants in this present study are 13 EFL learners in graduate level of English Language Studies of Hasanuddin University. Questionnaires were distributed to gather the data purposed to know the EFL learners' responses related to their joining in EAP course especially on reading and their needs or wants for the course. In addition to questionnaires were distributed to students, interview was carried out to get supporting data from the Lecturer. Data were analyzed descriptively in table presentation.

4   FINDINGS

The findings are based on the questions related to students' target and present situations

3.1 Target Situation Analysis

Target Situation Analysis of this current study shows that most EFL learners want to read text books and journal articles as references for supporting their study. This is indicated in Pictures 1 as follows:
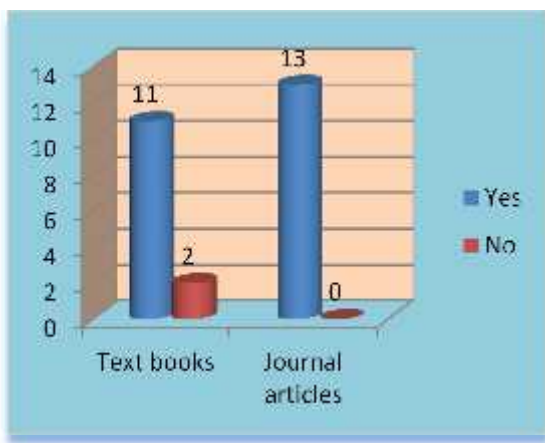
Source: Primary Data

Picture 1. The Expected Reading Material to Read

There are 11 (85%) EFL learners expect to read text books as references and 2 (15%) EFL learners do not expect text books as reading material. All EFL learners (100%) also expect to read journal articles as reading material. From the open questions, we got the answers from students as follows:

What are your expectations for the EAP course (especially for reading skill)?

My expectations for the EAP course particularly for reading skills are:

- to improve my comprehension in reading,
- to enrich my knowledge with the style of academic writing especially journal article,
- to enhance my reading skill.
- to improve my writing performance.
- to enable students to comprehend the content and structure of the references (books or journals)
- to improve reading skill in terms of speed, level of comprehension, etc.
- to know how to read well any references (using reading strategies)
- to read journal articles.

What reading strategies do you should use in reading English for Academic Purposes materials?

- Skimming

- Scanning

- Reading the abstract of journal article to know prior information about the article

- Guessing unknown words in the text

- finding main ideas

- pay attention to the reference used in that article.

- Predicting

- Guessing unknown words in a text and afterward ensuring their meaning by using dictionary

- Summarizing

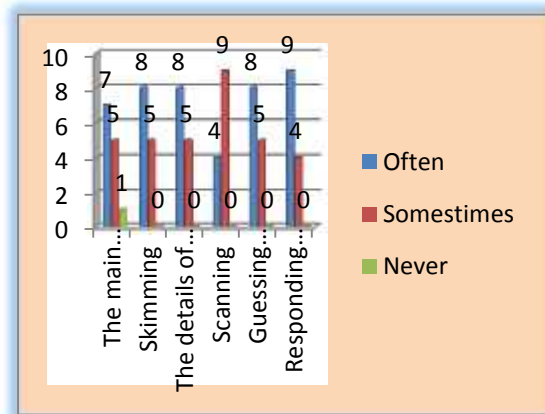- Responding

- Note taking / outlining

As an ELS student, what are your suggestions for the next EAP course (especially for reading skill)?

- EAP course should be taught in the first semester and not in the last semester since it is very useful for ELS students; the present materials are very good and appropriate with the students' needs however the subject credit is supposed to be increase from 2 to 3;

- The next EAP (especially for reading skill) should lengthen the duration of meeting.

- EAP course should focus on the development of students' awareness in reading journal articles, so it can help the students easily get the main idea and

information gap as the future reference in writing a paper.

3.2 Present Situation Analysis

Picture 2 below shows students' difficulty frequency in reading text. It is seen that most (7) of EFL learners (55%) never have difficulty in understanding the main points of text. 5 students (40%) students sometimes have difficulty in understanding the main points of

text and a student (5%) do not have difficulty in understanding the main points of text.

Picture 2. The Difficulties Related to Items in Reading Material

The next response is how often they have difficulty in reading a text quickly in order to establish a general idea of the content (skimming). 8 students sometimes have difficulty in reading a text quickly in order to establish a general idea of the content and 5 students have never difficulty. The same proportion of students also occurs in reading a text slowly and carefully in order to understand the details of the text. When they looked through

a text quickly in order to locate specific information (scanning), most of them (9 students) sometimes have difficulty in scanning the text and only 4 students often have difficulty. The last response is that there are 9 students (70%) sometimes have difficulty in reading text in order to respond critically and only 4 students (30%) never have difficulty.

From the open questions, we got the answers from students as follows:

Please mention the benefits of EAP course (especially for reading skill) in supporting your study at ELS Program!:
EAP course:

- makes more familiar with academic articles
- improves my motivation to read journal articles
- enriches my sights about many kinds of article writing style
- enhances my comprehension in reading journal articles
- helps me in comprehending the content of the journal article.
- helps me to know how to determine main ideas in a text,
- helps me to recognize the structure of journal articles by identifying move in research paper.

- adds much knowledge on how native speakers arrange their writing especially in a journal article.

What constraints do you experience in reading EAP materials?

- Speed reading and comprehending the journal articles
- Distinguishing between research-based and literature review journal articles
- Understanding the new words that I have not know the meaning
- Reading the new topic that I have not known before
- Takes more time to find main ideas (skimming seems do not effective for this part)
- Having difficulties in understanding the words.
- Lack of vocabulary
- It is not interesting, that may be caused by the layout, design of the written text.
- Having difficulties in finding relevant materials, no guidelines (such as where we can get the materials or the sources of materials).

5 DISCUSSION

Needs analysis, of course, is very important to do, it is caused that students' wants and needs will be known. So these two things will be fulfilled and the deficiencies of the ongoing EAP course will be dismissed. Based on the target analysis, students often have

difficulties in reading text. Most of the students expect to read journal articles as reading material. This is in line with the lecturer's suggestion that the students to read more journals independently at home to practice their reading comprehension. Other results from Target Situation Analysis are the students want to improve their comprehension in reading and want to apply some reading strategies in order to their learning EAP course being more effective. This analysis is also effective in stating students needs for their EAP course. This is in line with Shing and Sim (2013) concluding that in the effort to determine the learners" academic language needs in the target literacy contexts, "needs analysis" is undoubtedly the most practical and effective platform

The Present Situational Analysis showed that the students have difficulties in comprehending text. This is in line with the students' answer through the open questions given to them, as well as from the lecturer's interview. For example: students often have difficulty in understanding the main points of text, they also have difficulty in reading a text quickly in order to establish a general idea of the content (skimming). They often read a text slowly and carefully in order to understand the details of the text. The lecturer suggested to change the duration of EAP course from 2 to 3 hours, by this it is expected that students will be

able to review the journal articles more detailed and comprehend them well.

From those analyses showed that needs analysis is very important to conduct to know the students' needs and lacks, so this condition can be confirmed with other information (Lecturer's comments or suggestions) to revise the current curriculum to get optimal results. This is in line with Brown (1995) that identifies the term needs analysis (also called needs assessment) as the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum which meet the learning needs of a particular group of students. In language program, the purpose of needs analysis is to fill the "gap" of what a language program "lacks."

6 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION
6.1 Conclusion

From the findings of this paper can be concluded that most of students (EFL learners) often have difficulties or constraints in reading English texts for academic purposes and they want to improve their reading strategies in detail and comprehension level through EAP course in general and to improve their writing performance.

6.2 Suggestion

At this time this paper suggests that the decision makers should pay attention all of the students' responses, especially that EAP course should be conducted in the first semester not in third semester and students should always improve their reading strategies individually at

home to foster their reading ability in comprehending text.

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