

PRESENT SITUATION ANALYSIS: STUDENTS' EARLY CHARACTERISTICS IN WRITING FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

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APA Citation: Yundayani, A. (2018). Present situation analysis: Students' early characteristics in writing for academic purposes. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 6(2), 119-126. doi: 10.25134/erjee.v6i2.1262.

Received: 27-02-2018

Accepted: 30-04-2018

Published: 01-06-2018

Abstract: Present situation analysis is considered to be the umbrella that embraces students' lacks in language proficiencies. The aims of this study were to (1) find out current students' writing competence level; (2) identify students' entry behaviors and characteristics; (3) identify students' perception concerning with writing skill for academic purposes at non-English education study programs of STKIP Kusuma Negara Jakarta. The descriptive inquiry was used in identifying students' present situation. The respondents were non-English education study programs students of STKIP Kusuma Negara Jakarta in the academic year 2016-2017 and English lecturers. Non-English education study programs students of STKIP Kusuma Negara Jakarta had low-level writing competence for academic purposes, in the area of academic styles and genres based on their disciplines. Their previous experience in studying English was different with college requirement. They were not interested in studying writing for an academic purpose due to it was difficult and made them confusing. Most of them never practiced and learned it seriously but they realized the importance of having competence in writing for academic purposes, especially related with the learning process in the university level.

Keywords: *present situation analysis, writing for academic purposes, descriptive inquiry*

INTRODUCTION

Needs can be seen as the umbrella term that embraces many aspects, incorporating students' goals and backgrounds, their language proficiencies, their reasons in taking the course, their teaching and learning preferences, and the situations they will need to communicate in. Needs will involve what students know, don't know or want to know, and can be collected and analyzed in a variety of ways (Hyland, 2006). In the area of English for specific purposes, need analysis is required in order to know students' expectation concerning with learning process. It can be seen as the main driving factor to design the whole component of teaching and learning process (Yundayani, Emzir & Rafli, 2017). The result of need analysis will empower the teachers to interpret the language requirement into linguistic and pedagogical terms which in turn develops the suitable course's curriculum and offers the effective guidance to the

learning process (Nadzri, 2004). Needs analysis should be seen as the earliest action in the area of English for specific purposes approach, and it will be translated into forms of learning component (Kardijan, Emzir & Rafli, 2018). The result of need analysis supports learning designers in identifying the students' prospective professional needs, students' needs in terms of language skills, including their deficiencies in the area of language skills (Otilia, 2015). Kaewpet (2009) stated that students' needs also involve some areas,

- Teaching and learning styles with which the students are familiar;
- Appropriate or ineffective teaching and learning methods;
- Knowledge of specialized contents that teachers should have;
- Suitable instructional materials and study location;

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- Time of study and status of ESP courses;
- Expectations about what students should achieve in the courses;
- How necessary the courses are for the students

By perceiving student's requirement, curriculum designer will be easier in choosing the suitable learning materials and techniques to be applied in the learning process.

Students' previous experience in learning English having a big role in influencing the way students will learn. By finding the students' background, we can realize the students' learning objective in the area of ESP teaching that covers; (1) proficiency; (2) knowledge; (3) affective; and (4) transfer (Stern, 1992). The present situation analysis is an analysis of the present condition of teaching and learning situation covering aspects related to students' characteristics, staffing, materials, syllabus and academic records containing data about students' language learning (Gusti, 1999). Students' present situation analysis is a means to identify students' current skills and language use (Duddley-Evans, 2009), including the way of assessing students' specific needs. It will inform what can the students do with the language now (Hossain, 2013). Hyland (2006) stated that present situation analysis concerns with the information about students' current proficiencies and ambitions; what they can do and what they want at the beginning of the course; their skills and perceptions; their familiarity with the specialist subject; and what they know of its demands and genres. Present situation analysis can be seen as the process to find the students' lacks which cover the discrepancy between necessity and what the students have already known concerning with the subject and related with their current skills and performance.

English for academic purposes is believed to be beneficial for students in the pre-tertiary or pre-university level in order to construct a strong academic English language background which will then support them in the effective learning process at a higher level. Hamps-Lyons (2001) pledges that the English language skills of non-native English speaking academics will develop as the demand is

getting higher. Another comment comes from Liyanage and Birch (2001), they believed that there has been little attention given in EAP research which with regard to the problems and complexities of EGAP instruction in English-speaking contexts. As a part of English general academic purposes, the ability of writing can be seen as a means to identify students' previous knowledge, their schemata and also their creativity in presenting the ideas, thinking, including the opinion. In the academic purposes, it is a means for extracting the received information, so it plays an important role in transforming knowledge and creating the new one (Yundayani, Emzir & Rafli, 2018). Some experts believe that writing is considered as an ability included in core academic skills and also as the most complex skill to be mastered when compared to listening, speaking and reading skill (Makalela, 2004; Nunan, 1990). As a productive skill, writing has many components that should be mastered by the students. Writing for academic purposes having some differences from writing skill at the high school level. It is common for the students to get some difficulties in applying it. Most of the problem appears due to students' failure to understand the difference of learning goal between high school and university level which initiate students into the scope of writing skill for academic purposes (Ivanic & Lea, 2006; Lilis & Scott, 2007).

Based on the preliminary research at non-English education study programs of STKIP Kusuma Negara Jakarta, it was found that present situation analysis has not been applied in designing writing material for academic purposes. It caused teacher did not have the data concerning students' current proficiencies including their expectations. Teacher tended to predict students' early ability in writing skill for academic purposes without trying the find the exact data concerning with the students' perceptions and what they have already known about the subject and the learning goals itself. That findings have an impact on the availability writing material for academic purposes. The given material was not suitable with students' requirement. Teachers' intuition employed in deciding what kind of material

that will be used in the learning process and as the consequences the students having low performance in writing for academic purposes, including lack of motivation in taking part in the learning process actively. Many studies believed that some factors, including English proficiency level, learning contexts, students' characteristics, educational backgrounds, culture, and experience are important to be the foundation in designing the suitable learning process, including the learning material (Oxford, 2003; Deneme, 2008; Khamkien, 2010). Furthermore, previous research found the connections between the choices of learning strategy and factors that influence language learning strategy use. The results have claimed that the variables of gender, age, motivation, language proficiency, and language learning experience, goals, and style affect students' selection of language learning strategy (Kunasaraphan, 2015). Therefore, this study is the development of previous research which focuses on finding the students' present situation analysis in writing for academic purposes.

METHOD

In determining the respondents, the purposive sampling technique was applied. 25 non-English education study programs students and 3 English lecturers involved in this study. The data was taken through survey questionnaire, non-participant observation, and semi-structured interviews.

This descriptive research intended to identify students' present situation in writing for academic purposes. It covered students' current writing competence level, their entry behaviors including their perception concerning with writing skill for academic purposes.

Learning process was observed in order to see the actual condition of students' performance. It was strengthened by the questionnaire and semi-structured interview to find the deeper information. The collected data were analyzed through an interpretive process, by reflecting personal viewpoints and shaping the data interpretations (Clark & Creswell, 2015).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the collected data, the research finding described in the following table.

Table 1. Present Situation Analysis Result

No	Information Categories	Data Sources	Students' Characteristics
1	Entry skills	<p>Interviews: Twelve students and five head of study programs</p> <p>Test Data: It was taken from students' performance record</p> <p>Observations: Learning process of the English subject</p>	<p>Performance Setting: Most of the students having low score and performance in writing for academic purposes and most have no motivation in joining the writing subject. They face difficulties in writing for academic purposes but they do not know how to solve it.</p> <p>Learning Setting: Target students are unskilled students in English subject. They prefer to discuss with peers and do cooperative learning.</p>
2	Prior knowledge of topic area	Same as above	<p>Students have limited knowledge of writing; started from making sentences and developing paragraph. In fact, they have no experience in writing for academic purposes. They having problems in presenting their idea in writing.</p>
3	Attitudes toward content	Interviews and observations: Same as above	<p>They have no interest in the material, including the learning content and its' presentation which was focused only on the structural items, such as grammar subject.</p>

4	Attitudes toward potential delivery system	Interviews and observations: Same as above	There is no guide book. Most of the material are given based on lecturers' decision and intuition without considering students' situation and needs.
5	A motivation for instruction	Interviews and observations: Same as above	Students are lack of motivation because they don't know the learning goal that should be achieved in writing for academic purposes.
		Questionnaires: Sent to fifty students in five non-English education study programs	The material is not suitable for students' needs. The way in presenting the material doesn't make them being active and involved in the learning process.
6	Educational and ability levels	Interviews and observations: Same as above	Education Levels: All students are beginner; they are in the second semester. They have lack of English abilities. They don't have any experience in English for academic purposes. Most of them are fresh graduate from senior high school.
		Records: Students' data from the application form	
		Test Data: No test data	Ability Levels: Most of the students have low ability in English. Their vocabulary mastery is low. They are not proficient students in applying English.
7	General learning preferences	Interviews and observations: Same as above	Students are not experienced with a variety of learning format. They prefer to be a part of cooperative learning. They like to be involved in the active learning process. They prefer to have the direct practice - oriented English learning. They require at least an English writing material for academic purposes that can be functioned as a guidance or source, especially for the autonomous learning process.
8	Attitudes toward learning organization	Interviews and observations: Same as above	Students have positive feelings about the English course. All realize that the English subject, especially writing for academic purposes is important for the learning process at a university level.
9	General group characteristics a. Heterogeneity b. Size c. Overall impressions	Interviews: Five Head of non-English education study programs and lecturers Observations: Same as above	Heterogeneity: Most of the students have similar educational background with low English proficiency. Size: There will be a total of twenty - five students enrolled in the English class. Overall impressions: The writing material for academic purposes, as one of the learning components, should be developed based on students' needs.

The above findings were discussed in term of, (1) students' current competence level in writing for academic purposes; (2) students' entry behaviors and characteristics; and (3) students' perceptions.

Students' current competence level in writing for academic purposes

The findings of this part are important to decide the beginning level of the instructional material that will be delivered to the students. The data showed that most of the students having low ability in English with limited vocabulary mastery. They were not proficient students in applying English. It caused their level of writing competence was under expectation. They had low score and

performance in writing for academic purposes. They faced difficulties in writing for academic purposes but they did not know how to solve it. Students had limited knowledge of writing; started from making sentences and developing paragraph. They had a problem in presenting their idea in writing. This condition emphasized by Soliman (2016) who stated that the quality of graduates nowadays needs to be enhanced, as they cannot be just vessels to be filled with information from the teacher, but they should be able to analyze information and conduct research.

Students' entry behaviors and characteristics

This part was focused on students' motivation, attitude and interest toward writing for academic purposes. There were approximately twenty-five students enrolled in the English class. The students were first-year students and their age varied from 18-23. The groups consisted of both male and female students from non-educational English study programs. All students were beginner; they were in the second semester. Most of them were fresh graduate from senior high school and they tended to have no motivation in joining the writing subject. Most of the students had similar educational background with low English proficiency. Related to this finding, Valli & Priya (2016) stated that in most of the schools, students were taught through the traditional way of teaching. Where in the teacher dictated the sentences or writes on the blackboard, which the learners were supposed to copy down. On the other hand on college level students are expected to write on their own.

Target students were unskilled students in English subject. They had lack of English abilities. In fact, they had no experience in writing for academic purposes, including no interest with the material, the learning content and its' presentation which was focused only on the structural items, such as grammar subject. This condition had an impact on the low level of students' skill in writing. Tevdovska (2015) stated that the textbooks and materials chosen for the EAP courses should correspond to the goals and objectives

of the designed course. Therefore, the materials should address the aforementioned goals and be appropriate in the terms of language level, design, and appropriateness. Students were lack of motivation because they did not know the learning goal that should be achieved in writing for academic purposes. The material was not suitable for students' needs. The way in presenting the material did not make them being active and involved in the learning process. Students were not experienced with a variety of learning format.

Students' perceptions

Findings also revealed students' perceptions concerning with the ability of English writing for academic purposes. Students have positive feelings about the English course. All realize that the English subject, especially writing for academic purposes is important for the learning process at a university level. This finding reflects their future role of being a teacher. It is a demand for this profession to master English ability. Solak (2016) stated that teachers play one of the most important roles in reaching educational objectives in all areas of education. Teacher qualifications directly influence the academic achievements of the learners.

On the other hand, the students stated some conditions and expectation concerning with English writing for academic purposes subject. In the learning process, they prefer to discuss in peers and do cooperative learning. They prefer to be a part of team, including peer teaching. They like to be involved actively in the learning process. They tend to have the direct practice- oriented English learning. They require at least an English writing material for academic purposes that can be functioned as a guidance or source, especially for autonomous learning process. As Evseeva (2015) observed there is a "transition from "education for life" to "lifelong learning" which is understood as continuous and self-motivated search of knowledge for different purposes either professional or personal." Thus, there was a need for a new teaching pedagogy that changes the role of the teacher from a knowledge disseminator to a learner coach and helper. Unfortunately the ideal

condition have not been found in the learning process. One of the learning components, the instructional material, have not been provided as the students' requirement. Most of the material are given based on teachers' decision and intuition without considering students' situation and needs. According to Jordan (1997, p. 264), a number of variables have to be taken into consideration while designing materials, namely students, teachers, syllabus, methodology, resources, time and finance. The writing material for academic purposes, as one of the learning components, should be developed based on students' needs

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study is to describe students' present situation as a part of need analysis in the field of English for specific purposes (Hutchinson, 1987). This research focuses on the students' ability in writing for academic purposes. The instruments explored the students' perceptions and beliefs concerning with their lack in writing for academic purposes.

In the area of students' current competence level in writing for academic purposes, the result described the low level of students' proficiency in writing skill. Most importantly, they encountered problems in vocabulary mastery, presenting ideas in written and difficult in making word formation. Students' entry behaviors and characteristics showed that most of them came from the same background with having no experience in writing for academic purposes. They had low motivation and enthusiasm in taking part actively in the learning process of writing for academic purposes. It caused their proficiency in writing have not caught up the target. In the other hand, students having a good perception on the requirement English mastery. They realized the importance of having writing skill for academic purposes in the university level learning process. It can be seen as a means to know students' competency, personal interest, and academic performance (Yundayani, Emzir & Rafli, 2017). In addition, students thought that the learning process including the instructional material did not suit their requirement. As the consequences, the

condition did not attract them to involve actively in the learning process.

By the end, the findings showed us that need analysis, including present situation analysis, should be done first and the results will be the base to design the whole learning components, including the instructional material. In the area of English for specific purposes, present situation analysis should be done together with target and learning context analysis. As Hyland (2006) stated that need analysis constructs a picture of learning goals bringing to bear the teacher's values, beliefs and philosophies of teaching and learning. It might be more accurate to see needs as jointly constructed between teachers and students in order to find the data concerning with the how and what of a course should be applied. This current research is developed from the result of previous research but still possible to be explored more detailed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported by the Research Fund provided by Directorate of Research and Community Service, Directorate General for Research and Development, Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education. In accordance with the Research Contract for Fiscal Year 2018, Number: 053/KM/PNT/2018, Date March 6th, 2018.

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