

**DIAGNOSING THE NEEDS FOR ENGLISH AT VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS:  
REDESIGN THE CURRICULUM 2013?**

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**Abstract**

This paper aims at exposing a research finding on critical thoughts of English for vocational school students in 2013 curriculum viewed from the theories of the English for specific purposes (ESP) in which needs analysis should be the basis. The designers of Curriculum 2013 of English seem to neglect that the main objective of the subject by paralleling English for senior high schools with that of the vocational schools. To scientifically prove it, in this research I did needs analysis in two study programs from three different vocational schools, Engineering and Accounting, involving 60 students. Students were given questionnaire, but other respondents were interviewed. The findings of this research mainly show that English subject for the vocational schools was presently an English for general purposes (EGP), not ESP. On the other hand, students of vocational school needs English based on the result of need analysis. Since it is clearly stated by the law that vocational school students should be prepared to enter directly to job markets appropriate to their study program, English for the students should be ESP in which its purposes and materials should be in line to their study program and specialties known through careful and systematic needs analysis. Thus, the findings imply that English for vocational school students should be carefully redesigned and reconsidered before it is widely used all over the nation.

**Key words:** *Needs analysis, English for specific purposes, 2013 curriculum*

**A. INTRODUCTION**

English at the Vocational High School (VHS) should be the lesson whose materials and purposes are adapted to the needs of students. Theoretically, ESP has been growing rapidly in many countries. In Indonesia, because the lack of experts in this field, ESP is neglected. ESP gets less attention from various parties because there may be a presumption that the English language is required by students is the same. As a result, English in vocational school is not much different from that is in general high school. Although there are handful attempts to adapt the English lesson with the scientific field of vocational students, learning objectives to be achieved in the form of the English language is still common. In addition, there are certain skills that are not necessary to master by students of VHS because they are not going to use such skills in their future jobs. Certain skills that should be more important for students get less attention so that they are is not well understood by the students.

A change in the curriculum is now a very good momentum and strategic to encourage the birth of the English curriculum in vocational schools. The purposes and materials for teaching English for vocational high school should be based on the results of the needs analysis conducted systematically and comprehensively. Vocational English curriculum is not determined unilaterally by curriculum designers who do not understand the ESP, but rather the result of a requirement analysis performed well. The mindset that had been supposed to be updated is in line with changes in the current vocational curriculum.

Parties who participated in the development of curricula for vocational English should involve relevant stakeholders, such as ESP experts, related professional organizations such as TEFLIN (Teachers of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia), an expert in English teaching, teachers who teach English at SMK, and other stakeholders who understand and know exactly what it is supposed to be given to vocational students with different specificity. All parties should be aware that the needs of students from different majors in vocational school are also different. Students majoring in hospitality, for example, desperately need the skills to speak, but students majoring in Engineering need more reading skills more than other skills.

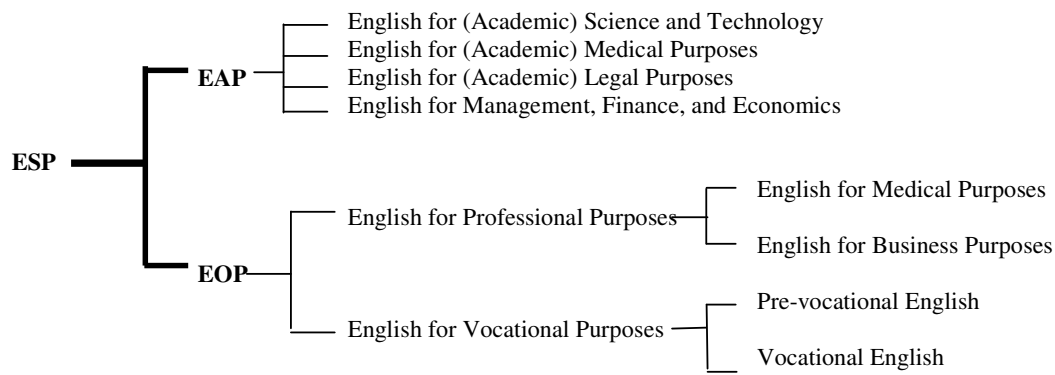
A lot of experts have given opinion about the basic theory of ESP. The basic and the most fundamental theory of ESP is proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). They reveal that ESP is an approach, not product. This expression means that, as a Definition, ESP is a process-oriented rather than a product. ESP should answer the question 'why does the learner need to learn a foreign language?' The answer to this question is obtained from the needs analysis. Strevens (1988) and Robinson (1991) define ESP through some absolute characteristics and variable characteristics. Then, these characteristics are enhanced by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 4-5). According to them, the absolute characteristics and variable characteristics of ESP are:

"Absolute Characteristics:

- ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner;

- ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;
  - ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres
- “Variable Characteristics”:
- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
  - ESP may use, in specific teaching Situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
  - ESP is Likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level;
  - ESP is designed for intermediate or advanced students;
  - Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.
- Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) also reveal the ESP classification based on disciplines and professions specified in the form of a diagram that is essentially the same as the tree diagram proposed ESP Hutchinson and Waters (1987).

Figure 1: Classification of ESP



ESP should be made to follow a set phase of cyclical activity. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) and Basturkman (2010), there are at least five main phases that must be completed in ESP. These five phases are: needs analysis, goal setting, selection and preparation of materials, teaching and learning, and evaluation.

According to Jordan (1997), Richards (2001), Basturkman (2010), and Flowerdew (2013) need analysis is the analysis of necessities, demands, wants, likes, lacks, deficiencies, goals, aims, purposes, and objectives. West (1994) and Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) argue that this needs analysis oversees various forms of analysis such as the target-situation analysis, present-situation analysis, deficiency analysis, strategy analysis, means analysis, and language audits and constraints. Some experts argue that this analysis can be done through interview, observation, testing, and administration of questionnaires to students, teachers, and experts. Based on the results of a systematic analysis of needs, then the goal of the ESP program is set.

Need analysis is one of the important activities that must be performed in the ESP program (Hyland, 2006; Flowerdew, 2013). As one of the main steps in the ESP, need analysis is the process of determining the beginning of what is desirable in an ESP teaching program. According to the Nation and Macalister (2010) need analysis is necessary because the design of the curriculum is a design consisting of the inner circle and outer circle. Inner circle is a goal as the core that contains three components: the content and layout sequence, format and presentation, and monitoring and assessment. Meanwhile, the outer ring covers the principles, the environment, and needs surrounding the practical and theoretical considerations that will influence in guiding the curriculum design process.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 125) state that need analysis is done to obtain information in eight ways:

- professional information about students (the target situation analysis and objective needs).
- personal information about students: a variety of factors that can affect learning, such as previous learning experiences, culture, reason and hope to come to learn, the attitude towards the English language (wants, means, subjective needs).
- information about the mastery level of English language learners (present situation analysis).
- weaknesses of students - the difference between points 1 and 3 above (lacks analysis).
- information needs to learn: how to learn effective language skills (learning needs).
- information on how language is used in specific situations (linguistic analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis)

- information about what you want from learning English (the target needs).
- information about the various supporting elements where English lessons will be implemented (means analysis).

Excavation of the eight above information will result in the conception of what the needs of the teaching program ESP. As a refinement of the various predecessors, Dudley-Evans and St. John's opinion can be regarded as the most complete and representative one, so that it serves as the main theoretical foundation of this research. Need analysis concept is a set of procedures, techniques, and media used to determine the material and ESP learning process.

Need analysis is the process of determining the need for an ESP teaching programs for students in particular disciplines and professions through an analysis of the eight elements proposed by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998). This analysis is important to do with the final decision in the form of cross-checking between requirements according to students, teachers, scholars, institutional users, and other sources in question so that objectives and priorities of teaching can be formulated. Whatever the source, and a data collection tool that will be used is highly dependent on information about the need to be analyzed so that the findings are not absolute but relative because it is very dependent on who is asking what, where, when, and how to interpret it.

Various expert opinions can be expressed with respect to models of learning (instructional model). According to Sagala (2005), a model in the study is a conceptual framework that is used as a reference for implementing the learning process. In the form of a conceptual framework, the model describes the systematic procedure for organizing learning experience to achieve the goals. Therefore, the model serves as a guide for the designers of learning.

In language learning, Richards and Rogers (2001) explain that the learning model is an attempt to implement a form of the language of science to support language learning. Thus they revealed that the controlled person's linguistic affect of language learning practice that he did because the development model of language learning should pay carefully attention to the concept and the nature of language itself.

As a basic theory in model development subjects in vocational English, the researchers followed the opinion of the ESP experts. Nevertheless, as a basis, the researchers used the opinion Weil and Calhoun (2009) on the main variables that need to be included in a model of learning. Component or the first variable refers to as syntax or phases of activity related to the procedure or steps of learning activities that must be performed in the learning process. The second component is a social system that is associated with mood or situation and norms are effective as contained in the model development and learning. Furthermore, the principle of reaction is the reaction pattern of activity that directs how should subjects perceive, respond, and treat students. Then, the variable that must be covered by the learning model is the support system that is necessary to assist the implementation of the learning process such as infrastructure and teaching aids or media. The last variables are the instructional effect and nurturant effect) in the form of learning outcomes achieved by students as well as other results outside about learning outcomes as the creation of an atmosphere of their own students' learning without teacher direction.

In addition to the opinion of Weil and Calhoun (2009), the elements that need to exist in a learning model is also put forward by Dick and Carey (2009). According to them the main elements that must exist in the model of learning that is the goal of learning, learning materials, learning strategies, and evaluation tools of learning.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

This research is within the realm of applied linguistics, in particular, concerns the design of courses in English for students of SMK-based theory of ESP. The method used in the survey revealed and explored information about students' need on English based ESP theory. This study was conducted in two vocational majors: Mechanical Engineering and Accounting. Both types of majors were selected because they both offer courses in English with basic objectives and teaching materials that are supposed to be different. Both of these departments were selected at random from a vocational school in Padang, West Sumatra. The data of this study were respondents' answers of the questionnaire and interview regarding the need analysis. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate the number and percentage of data in the form of tabulation. Qualitative data were analyzed descriptively in order to obtain accurate analysis results. Data were transcribed and grouped according to variables and sub-variables predetermined.

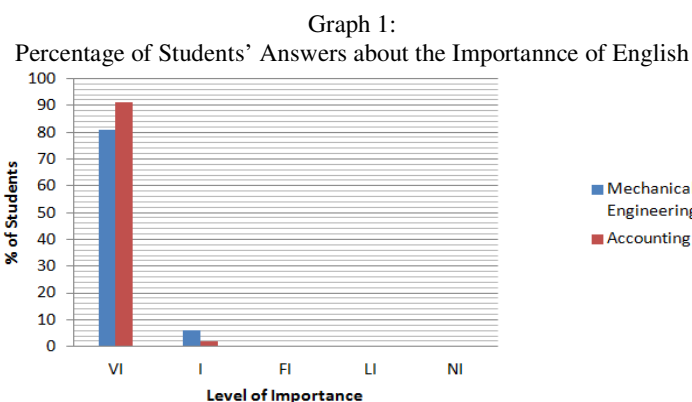
## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Needs Analysis (hereinafter abbreviated as NA) is the basis for setting goals and teaching materials that will be used in teaching English. The results of a comprehensive NA are expected to provide information that will be used as the basis for designing a program. In the discussion, NA is focused on the analysis of the target situation and the present situation analysis that cover four aspects, such as the importance of mastering

English for vocational students (necessities), the level of initial English mastery of vocational students (lacks), desired skills to be taught (wants,) and analysis of the inhibiting and supporting factors (means analysis).

### ***The Importance of English Mastery for Vocational Students***

There are three kinds of data that were extracted from the respondents regarding the importance of this. First, respondents were asked to express their opinion regarding the importance English, sorted out without the skills and elements. Second, researchers asked respondents to determine how important is each English skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and language elements (vocabulary and grammar) for vocational students. Third, respondents were asked to determine the level of interest of some sub-skills contained in the four skills. The respondents are required to determine whether these elements are very important (VI), important (I), fairly important (FI), less important (LI), or not important (NI). The following graph describes the percentage of students' answers.



The data in the above table show that students simply choose very important (VI) and important (I) with the largest percentage of VI. No one chooses fairly important (FI), less important (LI), and not important (NI). Thus, all students are well aware that English mastery is very important for them.

The same data are also captured through interviews with respondents from the RG, RGS, RKS/ RKJ, and RPK. The group was also asked to give their opinion on the importance of English mastery for vocational students. Interviews showed that all respondents (100%) assess English mastery very important for vocational students. Although with different expressions, all RG, RGS, RKS / RKJ, and RPK agree with the respondents that English mastery has a fundamental value, so that vocational students should learn and master English. The following quotations show students' opinion about the importance of English.

*RG-TM3: Itu amat penting dan mendasar bagi siswa SMK , jika mereka ingin sukses.*

*RGS-A1: Penguasaan BING, menurut saya, sangat penting bagi siswa Akuntansi*

In contrast to the questionnaire for the RS which only requires them determine the level of interest on English, the interviews with RG, RGS, RKS/RKJ, and RPK require them to state a rationale or reason why English is considered important. The data show that RG, RGS, RKS/RKJ and RPK suggest several academic and professional reasons.

*RGS-A2: Alasannya banyak sekali saya pikir. Tetapi yang paling penting adalah kenyataan bahwa setelah tamat siswa akuntansi dituntut untuk mampu berbahasa Inggris terkait dengan bidang mereka dalam bekerja.*

*RKS/RKJ-TM3: Untuk siswa SMK jurusan teknik mesin, alasan yang selalu didengungkan adalah lapangan pekerjaan yang akan menjadi pasar kerja alumni. Mereka dituntut untuk memahami berbagai buku petunjuk atau panduan tentang mesin yang selalu berbahasa Inggris, sehingga keterampilan membaca bahasa Inggris mereka harus dikembangkan.*

*RPK1: Ada beberapa alasan. Pertama, era globalisasi menuntut penguasaan BING. Kemudian, sebahagian buku teks bidang ilmu siswa SMK berbahasa Inggris. Di samping itu, pasar kerja juga mensyaratkan itu. Artinya, untuk kesuksesan pendidikan dan karir, penguasaan BING sangat penting.*

The above data show that there are three main reasons given by several respondents in this group. The first reason is for the sake of the work and the respondents' statement about the quality of English textbooks for

vocational school. The second reason is the respondents from this group consider that, after completing their study, English is very necessary to look for the job or to continue their studies to a higher level. Third, the status of English as an international language is another reason why English is considered important.

Subsequent data are about the level of importance of each element of English skills. The data obtained are expected to reveal the English skills mostly needed by students of vocational high school. The following table describes students' answers on each category.

Table 2:  
Distribution of Students' Option on the Importance of Language Skills

English Skills	VI		I		QI		LI		NI		0*		TOTAL	
		%		%		%		%		%		%		%
Listening	120	66.67	45	25.00	15	8.33	0	0	0	0	0	0	180	100
Speaking	132	73.33	39	21.67	9	5.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	180	100
Reading	146	81.11	25	13.89	9	5.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	180	100
Writing	97	53.89	83	46.11	0	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	180	100

This table shows that in general the largest percentage of the students' option is on the level of Very Important (VI) and Important (I). However, among the four skills, reading skill is considered as the most important skills by the respondents. The second one is speaking skill. For listening skills, the greater number of respondents thinks that listening is Important for them. From these data, it can be analyzed that vocational students are by and large chose think that English is very important for them, and only a limited number are choosing Important and Quite Important. The data also show that the tendency of the respondents to assess all the skills as equally important.

Through interviews, questions about the order of these skills are also given to the RG, RGS, RKS/RKJ, and RPK. Opinions given by the RG, RGS, RKS / RKJ, and RPK also indicate that they think that reading the manual, reading the instructions, or guides are the most important skills for vocational students majoring in mechanical engineering. While for students majoring in accounting, speaking and listening skills are considered the skills they need mostly. However, there are 3 respondents from RG who think that writing skill is more important than reading skill. Consider their answers given in the following quote:

RG-A2: *Saya pikir kemampuan menulis yang paling penting bagi siswa SMK saya baru kemudian membaca, berbicara, dan menyimak.*

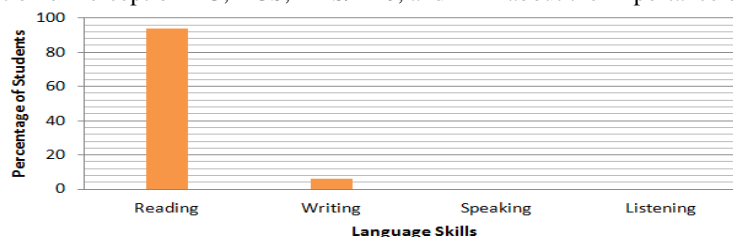
RG-A3: *Kalau dilihat keterpakaianya bagi siswa SMK kami di sini, writing ability merupakan keterampilan yang sangat penting. Urutannya: menulis, membaca, berbicara, dan menyimak*

Writing skills are considered the most important because, in their judgment, the characteristics of their field of study demand that skill. They say that the job market of accounting graduates need more writing than reading. The sequence that they give is writing, reading, speaking, and listening. By this reason, the skills taught to students of SMK is writing skills. Furthermore, the data also indicate that listening is also important. One of them says that:

RG-TM2: *Keterampilan apa saja tadi? ... Oh ya, menurut saya kok keterampilan berbicara yang paling penting. Siswa SMK harus mampu berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris. Keterampilan ini diikuti dengan keterampilan menyimak karena keduanya terjadi secara bersamaan. Keterampilan membaca dan, apa? Ya menulis yang berikutnya.*

The answers provided by RG, RGS, RKS / RKJ, and RPK show that, in terms of order of importance of English skills for academic purposes, reading skills are the most important and become the top for students majoring in Mechanical Engineering. In a number of very significant percentage of these skills are considered very important than other skills. Consider the data in Graph 2.

Graph 2:  
Distribution of Perception RG, RGS, RKS/RKJ, and RPK about the Importance of English



Furthermore, the data provided for the interest rate vocabulary and grammar shows that nearly all hospitals choose SP and P on the questionnaire item 6 and 7. There is a small number of respondents who choose LI for both mastery of vocabulary and grammar. The students think that these two language components are important in the effort to learn to master English language skills. Total percentage of their choice can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3:  
Distribution of Students' Option on the Importance of Vocabulary and Grammar

Language Elements	VI	I	FI	LI	NI	0*	TOTAL
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Vocabulary	71.88	19.06	6.25	2.81	0.00	0.00	100,00
Grammar	40.63	37.50	17.19	4.69	0.00	0.00	100,00

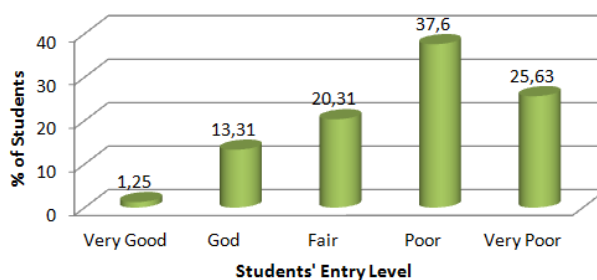
0\* = no choice

All respondents in the RG, RGS, RKS/RKJ, and RPK groups judge that vocational students must master the grammar and have a lot of vocabulary to be able to speak English. These two language components are considered to be the very important raw materials in improving their language skills. This is in line with the absolute characteristics and variable characteristics proposed by Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998), and it is appropriate to offer ESP to students whose grammar and vocabulary mastery are at the intermediate level. At this level, the mastery of grammar and vocabulary is believed to be adequate enough to keep the ESP program.

**Students' Entry Level on English**

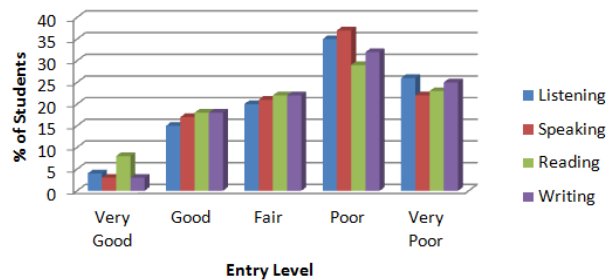
To implement the ESP program in vocational school, the entry level of Student English ability must be identified in order to know their mastery and knowledge of English by the beginning of learning. We do not only identify the level of interest but also weaknesses (lacks) and strengths of their English (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). The following graph shows students' English entry level.

Graph 3:  
Distribution of Students' Entry Level on English



The data in this table indicate that more respondents choose Poor, Very Poor, and Fair compared with those who choose Good and Very Good. This means that, more respondents are recognizing and assessing their entry level as Poor and Very Poor. This is acceptable because English as a foreign language is considered to be one of the weaknesses of most Indonesian students. Various forms and levels of national examinations conducted are an indication of how many students who have problems with English. Furthermore, the data for the percentage of the entry level of each English skill also show a tendency that reading skills are the best skills they mastered in comparison to other skills. This can be seen in Graph 4.

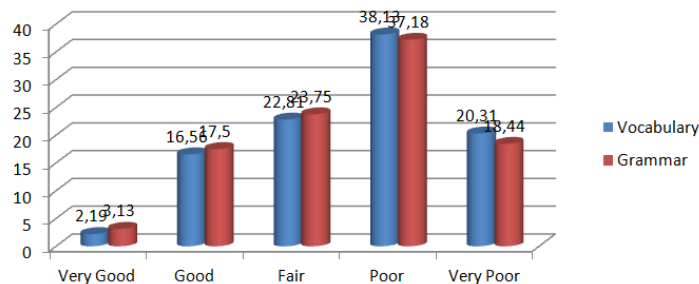
Graph 4:  
Distribution of Students; Option on their English Entry Level



The data in this diagram show that the Students' entry level on each English skill is low. The highest percentage for all skills is Fair. The percentage of students who choose Fair for listening is 50.71%, speaking (39.90%), reading (35.37), and writing (37.25%). Listening skill is assessed by more than a half of respondents as the lowest skill.

Furthermore, for the two language components, the data obtained from the questionnaire can be seen in Graph 5.

Graph 5:  
Distribution of Students' Options on Vocabulary and Grammar



This graph illustrates that the choice of the respondents on the mastery of vocabulary and grammar is also similar to that of skills. The highest percentage is Poor, followed by Fair and Very Poor. If these data are used as a benchmark in determining instructional materials, the allocation of time should be more widely available. As a result, the language components (vocabulary and grammar) also need to be learned by the students, and these components should be integrated to the teaching of language skills, especially reading and writing..

#### D. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the needs analysis and the analysis of the objective situation of learning English in the Vocational School, there are two things that can be concluded. First, English for Vocational High School is School Based Curriculum 2006 is different from that of in Curriculum 2013, but both equally are not based ESP, as it should be. Second, the results of the analysis of learning needs indicate that their initial weakness is the language skills and language components on general English. Based on these results, there are two suggestions that can be proposed. First, the government is expected to provide opportunities for improvement in English for vocational high school in the curriculum 2013. Second, teachers are advised to provide teaching materials that suit the needs of the students..

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