

## **Graduates' Perspectives On The Learners' Needs To Prepare The English Course Materials**

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**Abstract**

This study aims to identify the graduates' perspectives on the learners' needs in order to prepare the English course materials for the Computer Engineering students. The identification done by investigating the graduates or alumni perspectives which focused on the learners' needs in terms of the English course materials. This research adopted a quantitative method to investigate the learners' needs. The sample of the study consisted of 10 Computer Engineering graduate students who had been working at Telkom Akses Company for 1 year or more. The data were collected and generated from their perspective answers on the questionnaires. The results showed that the main purposes of learners to learn English were for social purposes. Then, the English language content areas should be General English which focused on Management or Administration. The English language to be used should only deal with speaking and vocabulary that emphasized on the presentation skills in a meeting to develop their professional communication.

**Keywords: Graduates' perspectives, learners' need, and English course materials.**

### **Introduction**

There are some challenges in preparing the English course materials, such as to identify, investigate, select, create, modify and develop the materials that are suitable for the learners. One of the most challenging problems issues concerning the English course materials preparation is that the materials should be exclusively or essentially subject specific. It is also difficult to identify subjects that learners need, want and are ready to learn based on their knowledge and experiences they have. Most of them have different needs, wants and interests, and those things could influence their motivation in the learning activity. Therefore, conducting the need analysis (NA) is important in preparing the English course materials. Need analysis aims to specify the learners' needs and what they have to do through the medium of English based on some perspectives. In short, need analysis is basically a *fact-finding* process through which scientists collect the data in order to decide the educational materials as well as the teaching approaches for a given English context.

Need analysis has generated a lot of interest among teachers, students, administrators of faculty as the internal stakeholders; then, the graduates or alumni, and industries as the external stakeholders. The need has never been more sensitive than it is now due to the standard shift in the work situation. Brindley (cited in David Nunan, 2001, 24-25) stated that need analysis in a broad sense means a tool that is administered to determine the current level

of understanding of English language among students and turns out to be a starting point to fulfill what students lack in terms of language usage competence in familiar, unfamiliar and similar industrial situations. Therefore, in preparing the English course materials, it should emphasize the awareness the learner's need. As stated by Basturkmen (2010) that currently, it is important for all teaching practitioners to investigate the learners' needs as the requirement in order to develop an effective and successful teaching and learning syllabus in various fields of language learning. The preparation of English language course is important for encouraging the learners to enhance the specific skill or ability they need, and to be fully carrying out the performers in the perspectives they want.

The preparation of English course materials should also relate to knowledge gained both in the learners' study and their future jobs or works in the industries. Dana (2015) stated that in preparing the English course materials, it must adapt the requirements and qualifications from industries' needs. This is important to prepare the students who should be successful in an increasingly competitive international market and the conditions of the growing importance of communication skills. Therefore, in developing of such materials, it should not only involve the internal stakeholders such as the students, teachers and faculty's management, but also involve the external stakeholders such as the graduates (alumni) and industries as the users of the graduates. In short, the investigation to the graduates who work in the industry as the external stakeholders could be as an attempt to propose the English course materials prepared for the learners. The investigation could be done by mapping and selecting the materials that are suitable for the learners at their level of professional development.

The students of School of Applied Science of Telkom University (SAS Tel U) are required to have English proficiency in relation to communication skills in a global standard with the religious character, and great nationality. It is hoped that they can contribute to the development of the nation directly, and compete in the global market-place. The students of SAS Tel U learn English to gain and develop appropriate knowledge and skills through English. The students need to learn English and gain adequate knowledge to practice it in their own subject areas and for their real life. It is hoped that if they have studied English during their universities years, it would be easy for them to adapt to their work conditions and would be easily employed in industries.

This research aims at identifying the graduates' perspectives on the learners' needs in order to prepare the English course materials for the students of Computer Engineering study program

in School of Applied Science of Telkom University (SAS Tel U). The identification done by investigating the graduates or alumni who work in Telkom Akses company perspective which focused on the learners' needs in term of the English course materials. It is hoped that, the research would help the learners to practice the theory during the course for their studies related to communication activities performance and in their real work context as IT specialists in the future. This study may also become "a grand design' which provide the English practitioners such as the teachers, curriculum developers, materials designers, and institutional authorities, with a clearer view of preparing the English course materials, and enable them to rethink the objectives of current English curricula.

### **Literature review**

According to Crystal (1997), perspectives, perception or attitudes are the feelings people have about their own language variety or the language varieties of others. It is believed that perception influences language learning in a number of ways. Therefore, it can be stated that perspective is a central part of human individuality; it may encompass effective, behavioral and cognitive responses. Perception can be said as a final thought of someone about something.

In order to select and choice the appropriate materials, teachers and designers need to evaluate, develop and prepare them in order to fit with learners' needs. Another important principle that should be taken into account when selecting materials is the level of language knowledge students have already acquired and the target level they will need to communicate successfully in their jobs. In English course practice, teachers are responsible for selecting and writing teaching materials should above all strive to prepare materials that will educate students and equip them with the skills that they (will) need in their present or future jobs. As stated by Ellis and Johnson (1994) that, the selection of English course materials should depend on the needs of the learners in relation to their future or present jobs. The learning process will be even more effective when the materials are motivating and relevant. A commonly accepted view on the decision about materials is that English teachers should primarily strive to provide students with materials that will equip them with the English language knowledge they will need in their working environment.

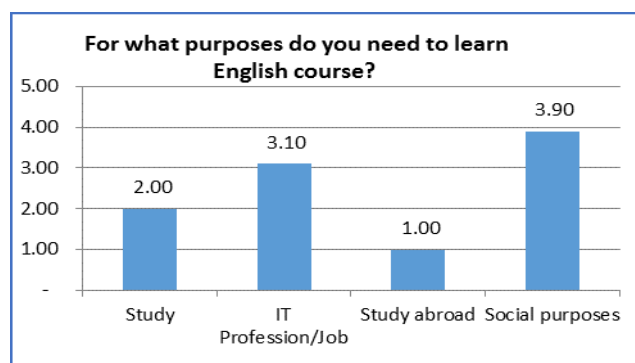
### **Methodology**

This study adopted a quantitative method to investigate the learners' needs viewed from the graduates' perspectives to prepare the English course materials for the Computer

Engineering students. Cohen et al. (2011) recommended the purpose of quantitative research is to test a theory or check a claim. In order to be as objective as possible, the research tries to minimize any effect that their own particular beliefs, values and opinions might have on the information. In this research, the questionnaires used in this research was focused on learners' needs in term of the English course materials that are related to their requirements of English competency that should be mastered by the Computer Engineering students. The sample of the study consisted of 10 Computer Engineering graduate students who had been working at *Telkom Akses* Company for 1 year or more. The respondents' choices were based on the priority scales number (see appendix). If the respondents chose the higher number than other choices, it was meant that their choice was as the main priority. Then, the data were collected and generated from their perspective answers of the learners' needs on the questionnaires.

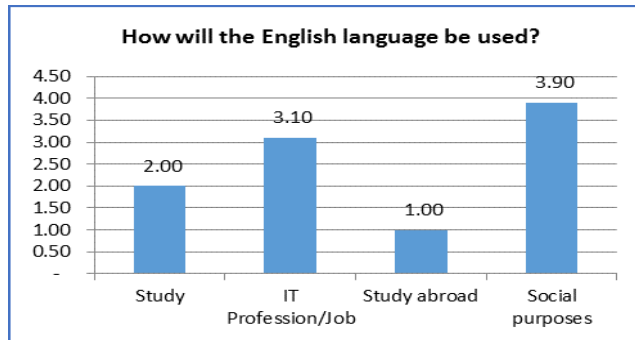
### Results and Discussion

There were some parts would be investigated related to the learners' need of English course materials according to the graduates' perspective, as follows:



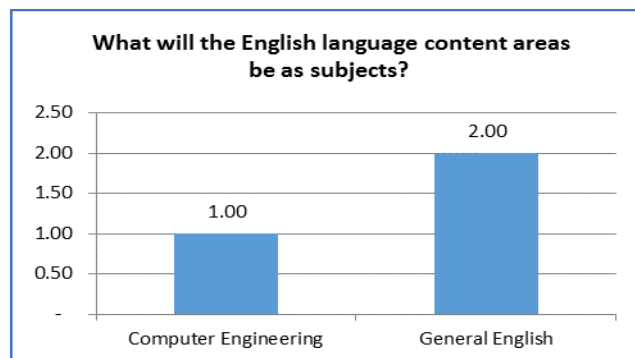
**Figure 1. The learners' purposes to learn English course**

According to the graduates' perspective as stated on the figure 1 above, the main purpose for learners to learn English course was for social purpose. The social purposes used in everyday or daily communication in oral and written forms with the general topic both of formal and informal language situation. Therefore, it could be stated that, even most of the learners would be as the employees who work in the IT field, it didn't mean that they should learn English course for IT profession or job as the main priority.



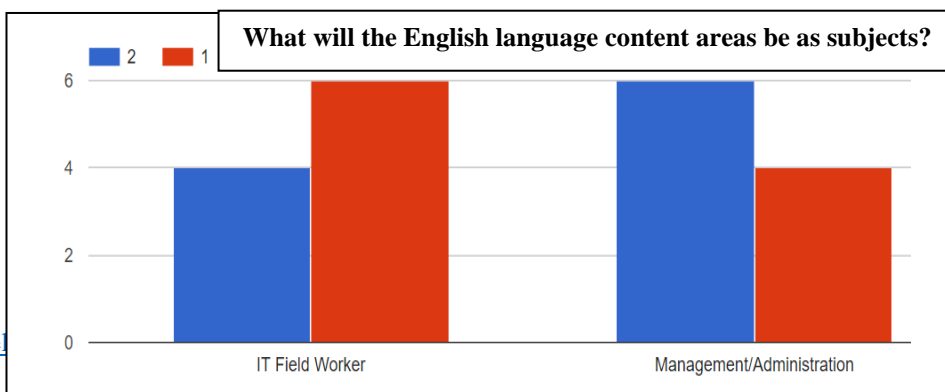
**Figure 2. The English language will be used for learners**

Similar with the learners' purpose to learn English, the graduates also gave their perspectives on the English language would be used in the course. As illustrated on figure 2, it was better for learners to use English language for social purposes related to the daily topic of conversation both of formal and informal language.



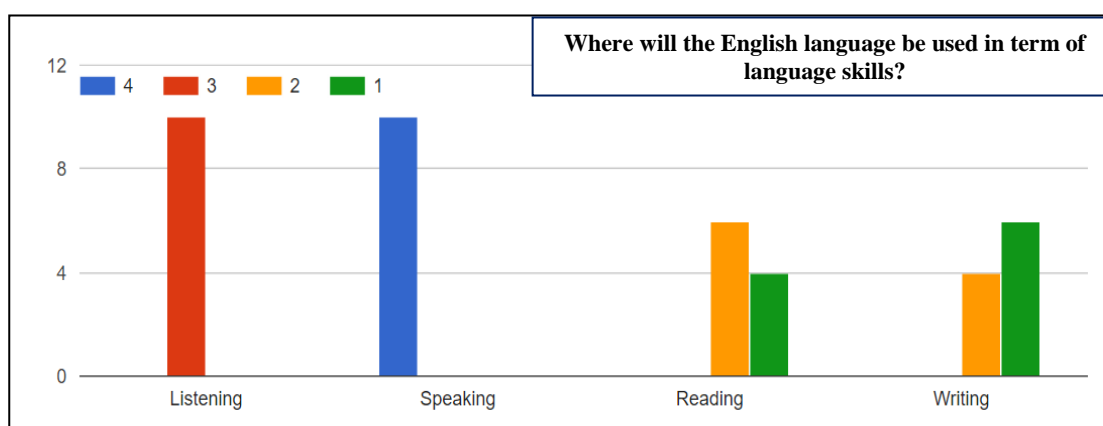
**Figure 3. The English language content areas would be as a subjects for learners**

According to the figure 3 above, the main priority of English language content areas that would be as subjects for the learners was General English. It was quite surprising that most of the graduates had the same perspective on it. It could be stated that even they work in the IT environment, it didn't mean that they had to be given the English for Specific Purposes related to their major in IT field as the main priority. Generally, in the work setting, English for general communication is needed more in order to support the job or profession.



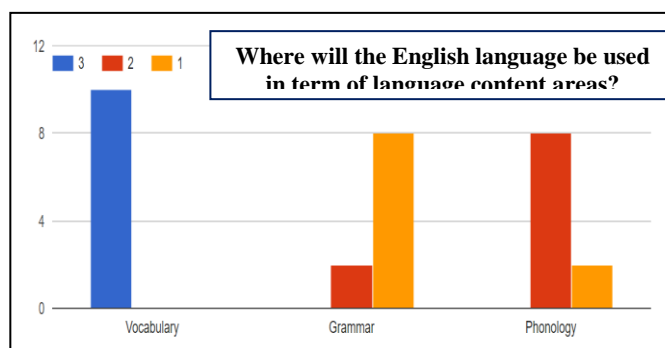
**Figure 4. The level of English language content areas would be as a subjects for learners**

Meanwhile, in term of the level of English language content areas that would be as a subjects, the graduates had a perspective that, even the learners learn and use general English as a subject for their course, the level of language was in the management or administration. It was in line with the faculty’s policy which stated that as the diploma students, they were prepared to support the management in the company after they graduate.



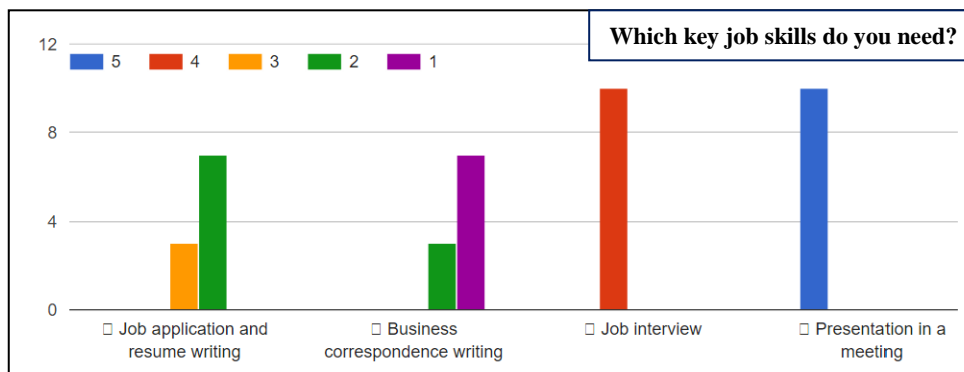
**Figure 5. The English language would be used for learners in term of language skills**

As illustrated on figure 5, all of the graduates agreed that speaking was the main priority in the English language skills, then followed by listening. It could be concluded that by developing the learners’ skills in speaking, it would enhance the learners’ fluency in spoken interactions with colleagues or co-workers. It was also in line with the purpose of learning English on figure 1.

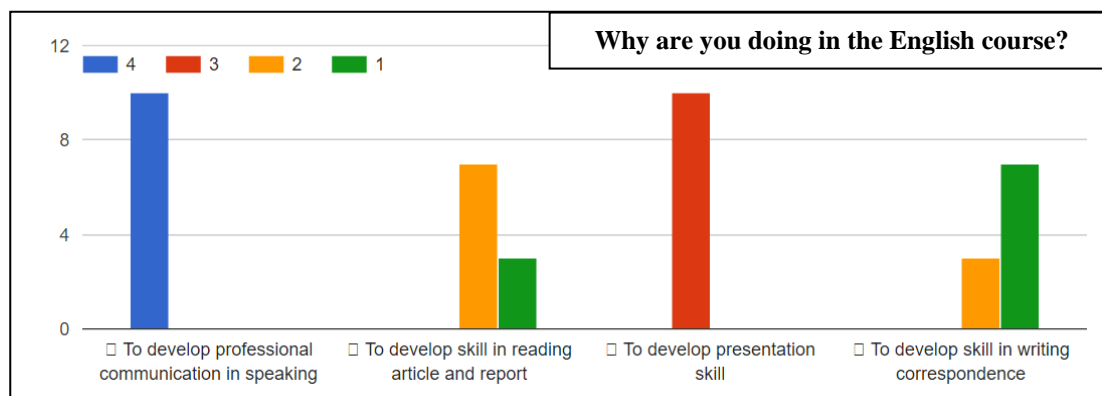


**Figure 6. The English language would be used for learners in term of language content areas**

Besides choosing the main priority into speaking proficiency in the English language skill, all of the respondents also chose vocabulary as the main content area of English.



Related to the key job skills which were needed in the English course materials, most of the graduates chose the presentation in a meeting as the most essential material should be delivered in the English course. It could be as the reason from them, because in the work setting, the employees often conduct the meeting presentation and seminar with the colleagues from different countries or foreigners.



**Figure 8. The reasons of learners doing in the English course**

According to the figure 8 above, the respondents chose the main reasons of the learners doing in the English course was to develop their professional communication in speaking. It was also in line with the respondents' previous answer, that the speaking was the main priority of language skill that should be used in the English course, in order to enhance the learner's ability in English communication.

## Conclusion

This research aimed at identifying the graduates' perspectives as the external stakeholders on the learners' needs in order to prepare the English course materials for the students of Computer Engineering study program in SAS Tel U. The research results showed that according to the respondents, the main purposes of learners to learn English were for social purposes. Then, they chose the general English as the main priority subjects of English language content areas for learners, and it should focus on IT field workers. They also gave the choice to the English language be used, should only deal with speaking and vocabulary which emphasized on the presentation in a meeting to develop their professional skill in communication.

This research findings could become "a grand design" and provide English practitioners with a clearer view of preparing the English course materials and rethinking the objectives of current English curricula, by involving the external stakeholders as the users of the graduates students in the future. For further researchers, it is better to conduct the follow-up qualitative interviews of representative to more deeply explore quantitative results. In short, the qualitative findings would be used to describe, explain, refine, clarify, extend or argue quantitative results.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire for Computer Engineering Graduates

#### Part I: Background Information

Instructions: Fill in the blanks or mark where necessary.

1. Name : \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender (choose one of them)  
 Male  
 Female
3. Current Position : \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long have you been working at this company? .....Years



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