BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE STUDENTS AND GRADUATES' PERSPECTIVES ON THE LEARNERS' NEEDS TO PREPARE THE ENGLISH COURSE MATERIALS

Pikir Wisnu Wijayanto¹
School of Applied Science, Telkom University¹
(pikirwisnu@tass.telkomuniversity.ac.id)

Abstract

The aim of this study was to identify the gap between the students and graduates' perspectives on the learners' needs in order to prepare the English course materials. This study investigated their perspectives which focused on the learners' needs in relation to the language skills (LS) and language content areas (LCA) that should be learned in classes. This research adopted a quantitative method to investigate the learners' needs. This research also used t-test analysis of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances for determining the gap of perspectives between them. The samples of the study consisted of 30 Computer Engineering students from the 3rd and 5th semester and 10 graduates who have been working at Telkom Akses Company for 2 years or more. The results showed that the significance value for LS and LCA were 0.04 and 0.07. It showed that the two variances were not equal. Therefore, the use of variance to compare the average population (t-test for Equality of Means) in the t-test, should use the equal variance not assumed based. At the equal variance not assumed based, it was obtained that the t value for LS was 2.379 and a significance level of p = 0.039. For LCA, the t value was 3.561 and a significance level of p = 0.001. The results showed that p < 0.05. It meant that there were significant differences in terms of the LS and LCA between the Computer Engineering students and graduates' perspectives. The level of LS and LCA between them were also fundamentally different.

Keywords: Perspectives, learners' need, English course materials

1. Background

In preparing the English course materials, there are some challenges such as to identify, investigate, select, create, modify and develop the materials that are suitable for the learners. One of the most challenging issues is that the materials should be exclusively or essentially subject specific for learners. It is also difficult to identify subjects that learners need, want and are ready to learn based on their knowledge and experiences. Most of the learners have different needs, wants and interests, and those things that could influence their motivation in teaching learning activity. In other words, to prepare the English course materials, they should emphasize the awareness the learner's need.

It is hard for many English teachers to prepare the materials which are adjusted specifically to the targeted situations. Most of the students learn English for some specific reasons, purposes, and in multiple contexts. For that reason, the aim of an English course should guide the teachers and students to determine the awareness of the need. By having the appropriate objectives based on the learners’ needs in teaching and learning process, teachers can develop or select the English materials for the learners in order to achieve the objectives and fulfill the learners’ needs. Robinson (1991: 3) explains that an English course is based on needs analysis, which aims to specify it is that learners have to do throughout the medium of English. Therefore, it has become important for English language teachers to accomplish a procedure of need analysis to investigate the learners’ needs, wants and demands or interests into primary consideration to providing the appropriate instructional material for the learners. Basturkmen (2010) also suggested to the English course developers, to design the course materials properly in conjunction with professional needs or needs analysis. Then, he stated that currently, it is important for all contributors to investigate the learners’ needs as a prerequisite 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 also 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. According to Dana (2015), 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 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’ management as the users of the graduates. In brief, 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 appropriate for the learners at their level of professional development.

This research aims at identifying the students and 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 was done by investigating the Computer Engineering students and graduates’ perspective which focused on the learners’ needs in relation to the language skills and language content areas that should be learned in classes. The students and graduates of SAS Tel U are required to have the English proficiency in relation to the communication skills with the global standard. Hopefully, they can contribute directly to the development of the nation, and compete in the global market-place. They learn English to gain and develop the appropriate knowledge and skills. They need to learn English and gain the sufficient knowledge to practice it in their own subject areas and for their real life. By studying English during their universities years, it would be easy for them to adapt to their work conditions and employ in industries. It is also hoped that the research would help the learners to practice the theory during 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 a clearer view of preparing the English course materials to the practitioners such as the teachers, curriculum developers, materials designers, and institutional authorities. Also, it would enable them to rethink the objectives of current English curricula.

2. Method

This study adopted a quantitative method to investigate the learners’ needs viewed from the students and graduates’ perspectives to prepare the English course materials for the Computer Engineering students at Telkom University. 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 samples of this study consisted of 30 Computer Engineering diploma students from the 3rd and 5th semester, and 10 graduates who have been working at Telkom Akses Company for 2 years or more.

This research also used t-test analysis Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances to determine the gap perspectives between the Computer Engineering students and graduates on language skills and language content areas. The used of t-test analysis of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was for determining the gap between the Computer Engineering students and graduates’ perspectives on language skills and language content areas. The author used the questions on the list of the questionnaire to review the data processing quantitative and comparative test data. The lists of questions related to the learners’ information of English proficiency in term of language skills and content area, the English language skills that the learners most like to use now, and English language skills that the learners want or need to study.

This section presents the results of the research instrument in gathering data as well as data analysis in order to answer the research problems. This research also used t-test analysis Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances to determine the gap perspectives between the Computer Engineering students and graduates. The results of the t-test language skill and language content areas would be discussed as follows.

To review the data processing quantitative and comparative test data, the author used the questions on the list of questionnaire related to the learners’ information of English proficiency in term of language skills and content areas, the English language skills that the learners most like to use now, and English language skills that the learners want or need to study. Then the author also identified the similarities and differences between the students and graduates' perspectives in term of the learners’ needs of English course materials. On the part of the learners’ needs of English course materials, the respondents’ choices were based on the priority scales number. If the respondents chose the higher number than other choices, it was meant that their choice was the main priority. Then, the data were collected and generated from their perspective answers of the learners’ needs on the questionnaires.
3. Result and Discussion

Language skills and content areas

T-Test Language Skills

Table 1. Group Statistics of the Computer Engineering Students and Graduates

| Group                    | N  | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------------------------|----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Computer Engineering Students | 30 | 77.1667 | 4.70571        | .85914          |
| Computer Engineering Graduates | 10 | 86.2000 | 11.69805       | 3.69925         |

Table 2. Independent Samples T-Test for Equality of Means of the Computer Engineering Students and Graduates Perspectives on the Learners’ Needs in relation to the language skills

| Mark                            | F     | Sig. | t     | df  | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |
|---------------------------------|-------|------|-------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Equal variances assumed         | 9.576 | .004 | 3.523 | 38  | .001            | 9.03333         | 2.56410               | 3.84258 14.22409                        |
| Equal variances not assumed     | 2.379 | .039 | 9.988 | .039| 9.03333         | 3.79771         | .57015                | 17.49652                                |

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In terms of the language skills, based on the calculations results of the different test of the two average data presented in the table above, it could be seen that in the column Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, it had a significance value of 0.04 (p < 0.05). It showed that the two variances were not equal. Therefore, the use of variance to compare the average population (t-test for Equality of Means) in the t-test, should use the equal variance not assumed based. At equal variance not assumed, it was obtained that the t value was 2.379 and a significance level of p = 0.039. The results showed that p < 0.05, it meant that there were the differences perspectives in language skills between the Computer Engineering students and graduates. It could be said that the level of language skills between the Computer Engineering students and graduates were also fundamentally different.
**T-Test Language Content Areas**

**Table 3.** Group Statistics of the Computer Engineering Students and Graduates

| Group                      | Mean  | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----------------------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|
| Computer Engineering Students | 7.9667  | 2.28161            | .41656          |
| Computer Engineering Graduates | 6.3000  | .67495             | .21344          |

**Table 4.** Independent Samples T-Test for Equality of Means of the Computer Engineering Students and Graduates Perspectives on the Learners’ Needs in relation to the language content areas

| Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | t-test for Equality of Means |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| F             | Sig. | t   | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |
| Equal variances assumed  | 8.03 | .007  | 2.259 | 8.003 | 38 | .030 | 1.66667 | .73763 | .17342 | 3.15991 |
| Equal variances not assumed  | 3.561 | 37.82 | .001 | 1.66667 | .46806 | .71898 | 2.61435 |

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In terms of the language content areas, based on the calculations results of the different test of the two average data presented in the table above, it could be seen that in the column Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, it had a significance value of 0.07 (p > 0.05). It showed that the two variances were not equal. Therefore, the use of variance to compare the average population (t-test for Equality of Means) in the t-test, should use the equal variance not assumed based. At equal variance not assumed, it was obtained that the t value was 3.561 and a significance level of p = 0.001. The results showed that p < 0.05, it meant that there were the differences perspectives in language content areas between the Computer Engineering students and graduates. It could be said that the level of language content areas between the Computer Engineering students and graduates were also fundamentally different.

Then, the difference perspectives between the Computer Engineering students and graduates would be elaborated as follows.

Learners’ information of English proficiency in term of language skills and content areas

Related to the English language skills in listening, reading, and also in the language content area in terms of grammar, there were different perspectives on the proficiency between the students and graduates.

![Figure 1. The difference level of listening proficiency between the students and graduates](image)

According to the figure 1, most of the students (56.7%) had the low level for listening, while most of the graduates (60%) had the good level on them. Most of the students only had the strength of listening skill in understanding the keywords, expressions that are highly contextualized and predictable as the beginner level of proficiency. Meanwhile, most of the graduates had the higher level in listening skills. They could understand the
information conveyed in simple, sentence-length speech on familiar or everyday topics in listening activities.

![The current level of students’ in reading](image1)

![The current level of graduates’ in reading](image2)

**Figure 2.** The different current level in reading between the students and graduates

In the current level of reading proficiency as illustrated in figure 2, most of the Computer Engineering students (56.7%) had the intermediate level on it. They could understand the main idea and supporting details of the authentic narrative, descriptive texts, and information conveyed in simple, predictable, loosely connected texts. While most of the graduates (60%) were at the beginner level of reading skill. They only could get a limited amount of information from highly predictable texts in which the topic or context is very familiar.

*English language skills that the learners most like to use now*

The different level of English proficiency between the Computer Engineering students and graduates also influenced their perspective in terms of language skills that the learners most like to use.

![Listening to coworkers/colleagues](image3)

![Listening to classmates](image4)

**Figure 3.** The difference perspectives between the students and graduates in terms of
listening to classmates and coworkers/colleagues frequency mostly like to use
As illustrated in figure 3, most of the students (70%) stated that they rarely to practice the
listening to their classmates. However, all of the graduates (100%) stated that those kinds
of activities were sometimes used in the workplace. They sometimes practiced the
listening with their colleagues or co-workers.

Figure 4. The difference perspectives between the students and graduates in terms of
listening to spoken presentations frequency mostly like to use
Figure 4 stated that most of the students (56.7%) said that they sometimes practice to the
listening to a spoken presentation on the conversation in the learning process in the
classroom. While, most of the graduates (60%) stated that they often listening to the
spoken presentation, especially when the presenters were from abroad.

Figure 5. The difference perspectives between the students and graduates in terms of
writing texts/essays/references frequency mostly like to use
There was also different perspective between the students and graduate related to the
writing practice. As illustrated in figure 5, most of the students (73.3%) stated that they

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sometimes got the writing texts/essays/references in the classroom, but most of the graduates (60%) stated that they rarely did this activity in the workplace.

**English language skills that the learners want or need to study**

The needs of English language skills that the learners want or need to study were also related to the students and graduates’ perspectives on the English language skills that the learners most like to use which were discussed in the previous parts.

![Figure 6](image)

**Figure 6.** The difference perspectives between the students and graduates in terms of listening to spoken presentations skills that the learners want or need to study. As illustrated in figure 6 above, most of the students (90%) needed a lot of training in listening to spoken presentation. As stated on figure 4 before, they only sometimes practice it on the conversation in the learning process in the classroom. Therefore, they needed a lot of training on it. While only half of the graduates (50%) stated that they need training and a lot of training on it. It was because as illustrated in figure 4, most of the graduates (60%) often listen to the spoken presentation, especially when the presenters were from abroad.
Figure 7. The difference perspectives between the students and graduates in terms of listening to the conversation from the recorders/CD player that the learners want or need to study. Most of the students (70%) said that they needed a lot of training in listening to the conversation from the recorders/CD player. While most of the graduates stated that they just needed them in the training. Only 30% of them needed a lot of training on it.

The learners’ needs of English course materials

Figure 8. The learners’ purposes to learn English course based on the students and graduates’ perspectives.
According to the students’ perspective, as stated on figure 8 above, the main purpose for them to learn English course was for study. It meant that they only learn the English course for fulfilling the obligatory in following the English subjects. In contrary, the graduates had the perspective that the main purpose for learners to learn English course was for a social purpose. It meant that 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 9.** The English language will be used for learners based on the students and graduates’ perspectives

Similar to the learners’ purpose to learn English on figure 8, the students and graduates also gave their perspectives on the English language would be used in the course. As illustrated
in figure 9, the students chose to study as the main purpose to learn English. While the graduates also gave their perspectives on the English language would be used in the course that it was better for learners to use the English language for social purposes related to the daily topic of conversation both of formal and informal language.

**Figure 10.** The English language content areas would be as a subject for learners based on the students and graduates’ perspectives

Then, in terms of the English language content areas that would be as subjects for the learners, according to the figure 10 above, students and graduates chose the same choice. They chose General English (GE) as the English language content areas that would be as subjects for learners. It was quite surprising that most of them had the same perspective on it. Therefore, it could be stated that even they would work as the IT specialists, it didn’t mean that they had to be given the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) related to their major in IT field as the main priority. Generally, in the work setting, English for general communication is more needed than ESP in order to support the job or profession.

**Figure 11.** The level of English language content areas would be as a subject for learners based on the students and graduates’ perspectives
Meanwhile, in term of the level of English language content areas that would be as a subjects, most of the students and graduates also had the similar perspectives. They stated that it was better for learners to learn and use general English as a subject for their course in the level of 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 12.** The English language would be used for learners in term of language skills based on the students and graduates’ perspectives

As illustrated in figure 12, most of the students and graduates agreed that speaking was the main priority in the English language skills. 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 8 based on the graduates’ perspective.

**Figure 13.** The English language would be used for learners in term of language content areas based on the students and graduates’ perspectives
Besides choosing the main priority into speaking proficiency in the English language skill, the students and graduates also chose the similar priorities in terms of vocabulary as the main content area of English. Then it was followed by phonology and grammar as the rest choices of language content areas that should be used for the learners.

**Figure 14.** The key job skills which were needed for learners based on the students and graduates’ perspectives

Related to the key job skills which were needed by the learners in the English course materials preparation, most of the students and graduates chose the presentation in a meeting as an essential material that should be delivered in the English course. This key job skill would support the productive skill in terms of speaking they chose previously. It could be the reason from graduates that in the work setting, the employees often conduct the meeting presentation and seminar with the colleagues from different countries or foreigners.

**Figure 15.** The reasons of learners doing in the English course based on the students and graduates’ perspectives
After choosing the similar key job skills which were needed by the learners in the English course materials preparation, the student and graduates also chose the similar main reason of 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 as states on figure 12 and 15.

**Figure 16.** The aspects of English language would be focused in terms of language skills for learners based on the students and graduates’ perspectives

Related to the aspects of English language would be focused in terms of language skills for learners, the students and graduates had the same perspective on it. They chose the speaking skills as the main priority in the English language skills that should be focused in the course. It was similar to the perspective on the English language would be used for learners in term of language skills as illustrated in figure 12.

**Figure 17.** The aspects of English language would be focused in terms of language content areas for learners based on the students and graduates’ perspectives
The similar perspectives between the students and graduates also stated on the aspects of English language would be focused in terms of language content areas for learners. It was related to their perspectives on the English language would be used for learners in term of language content areas as illustrated on figure 13. They chose general and technical vocabulary as the main priority of language content area that should be focused to the learners. Then it was followed by phonology and specific grammar as their rest choices.

3. Conclusion

The research results showed that there were the differences perspectives in terms of the language skills and content areas between the Computer Engineering students and graduates. In terms of the language skills, based on the calculations results of the different test of the two average data presented, it could be seen that in the column Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, it had a significance value of 0.04 (p < 0.05). It showed that the two variances were not equal. Therefore, the use of variance to compare the average population (t-test for Equality of Means) in the t-test, should use the equal variance not assumed based. At equal variance not assumed, it was obtained that the t value was 2.379 and a significance level of p = 0.039. Related to the language content areas, it also had a significance value of 0.07 (p < 0.05). The two variances were not equal. The variance to compare the average population (t-test for Equality of Means) in testing t-test, should use the equal variance not assumed based. At equal variance not assumed, it was obtained that the t value was 3.561 and a significance level of p = 0.001. Both of the results showed that p < 0.05, it meant that there were the differences perspectives and the level of language skills and content areas between the Computer Engineering students and graduates.

Then the researchers also identified the similarities and differences between the students and graduates’ perspectives in term of the learners’ needs of English course materials. In term of the learners’ needs of English course materials, the difference perspectives between the students and graduates were only on the learners’ main purposes to learn English course and the English language will be used in the course. They had the similar perspectives on the English language content areas would be as a subject and the level on it. Then, they also had the same perspectives on the English language would be used for learners in term of language skills and language content areas, the key job skills which were needed for learners, the reasons of learners doing in the English course, and the aspects of English language would be focused in terms of language skills and language
content areas.
The 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 students as internal stakeholders and graduates as the external stakeholders. 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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