

Examining English Language Needs of Hotel and Tourism Management Graduates in ESP Context

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Abstract

The main aim of this study was to examine the English language needs of graduates of Hotel and Tourism Management of Hawassa University with the view of giving an input for designing an appropriate English course. To achieve this objective, questionnaires were designed and distributed to Graduates of Hotel and Tourism Management and Employer. The result of the study indicated that in occupational setting, the graduates (employees) need to listen to meetings, seminars and conference; listen to customers inquires, listen to managers explanations on Hotel facilities, listen to foreigners, read regulations and rules of the organizations, read articles, journals and news paper, read work /business report, write sales or daily report, write report on work performance, describe and explain menus for foreigners, speak to customers. Here, all the language skills are important with relative emphasis to reading, listening and speaking. The study has also identified that the graduates have difficulties in writing report in sales or progress report, writing office memos, budget information, presenting oral report, asking and answering during meeting, listening to video and listening to discussions at meetings. Relatively, the graduates are better in receptive skills than productive skill. The finding of the study has indicated there is a substantial gap between the Hotel and Tourism Management students English language needs and the current English course offered in the university. Thus, it has been recommended that syllabus designers and material developers need to design an appropriate English syllabus and course materials for Hotel and Tourism Management students considering the students' English language needs for academic and occupation purpose, and English language difficulties.

Key words: ESP, needs analysis, target situation, language, assessment

1. Introduction

People learn foreign languages for different reasons. According to Little Wood (1981) the role of language learning is to extend the range of communication where the focuses on meaning. On the other hand according to Jeremy Harmer (1991) the greatest numbers of students through out the world learn a foreign language because it is in their respective schools' curriculum. This also holds true for Ethiopian students. The curriculum of our country includes English as a foreign language all a long from grade one to the university. So it seems that Ethiopian students will have to study English whether they like it or not.

Teaching language in general and a foreign language in particular is a very difficult job. This is due to the very fact that people achieve various activities through language. These activities require different aspect of language. Teaching the language needed for these almost infinite activities is given very short time for the course is, therefore, impossible. The teacher, thus, will have to focus on some parts of the language which the students need most for their specific purposes (Yalden, 1987).

To select the parts the students need most, it would be necessary to conduct needs analysis. Only after the needs analysis has been conducted, one can design an ESP syllabus. ESP is focused on the real need of the learners for their educational and economic needs, unlike general purpose English. On this Hutchinson and Waters (1987:54) write:

“If we had to state in practical terms the irreducible minimum of an ESP approach to course design, it would be needs analysis, since it is the awareness of definable need to communicate in English that distinguishes the ESP learner from the learner of general English.”

Many other scholars like Munby (1987), Richards (2001), Dudley Evans and St. John (1998), Jordan (1997) etc believe that needs analysis is worth conducting as a preliminary activity in material preparation.

According to Chan (2001) ESP has been emphasized due to the academic, professional and social, private requirements of the trainees. Adding to this Strevens (1988) as cited in Fisseha Abate (2004) discusses that ESP has some four advantages. First, it does not waste time as it focuses on the learners need. Second, it is relevant to the learner. Third, it is successful in imparting learning; and fourth it is more cost effective than general purpose English.

The learners needs for their own learning purpose, is very important aspect in material designing because the learners are the central elements in the process of material preparation (Tomlinson, 1998 and Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). The learners’ needs analysis helps to specify content, select language skills and language forms. Tomlinson (1998) specify that the notion of the need analysis has been the prominent feature in the literature of the language teaching and learning for the past 20 years.

There are various needs analysis studies conducted both locally and outside Ethiopia. Thus, reviewing of some of the studies related to the purpose of this study is worthwhile. Chan (2001) conducted needs analysis of Hong Kong Polytechnic University students and identified their needs. Atef Selah Al Tamim(2005) conducted a study on ‘investigating English language needs

of petroleum engineering students at Hadham Mout university of Science and Technology and identified the English language needs of the students.

Regarding local research on needs analysis, there are some promising researches efforts have been made at different levels. Abraham (1993) looked at the existing situation of Air Craft Technicians of the Ethiopian air force. He reported that a syllabus for such a purpose should be topic based including; notion-function, vocabulary, skills and structure. As a result, the syllabus of the respective institutions failed to meet the needs of the learners. Beyene (2007) in his part investigated the English language needs of accounting students with the view of developing criteria for designing an appropriate English course .The finding showed that the contents of the new course to be developed emphasized the topics /themes related to the subject area and specialist vocabularies. Besides, the language domain should cover all the four language skills with emphasized place in order of priority on, listening, writing, reading and speaking. Abebe (2008) also assessed the English language needs of computer science students and found out that there was a considerable gap between the type and extent to English language, they are expected to use in both academic and occupational settings.

2. Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the English language needs of Hotel and Tourism management graduates of Hawassa University.

The study is intended to:

- Examine the target and learning needs of Hotel and Tourism graduates
- Investigate the extent to which the existing English course addresses the English language needs the graduates

3. Research Question

In order to achieve the above objectives, the researcher formulated the following basic research questions:

- a) What are the target and learning needs of Hotel and Tourism graduates?
- b) To what extent does the existing English course address the English language needs Graduates?

4. Methodology and Procedures

This part of the study deals with the description of the sampling procedures and data collection instruments. It also deals with data collection procedures, methods of data organization and analysis

4.1 Sampling Procedures

Because of both the need for more reliable information and the nature of the study, information was collected from different sources. These are: Employees (Graduates) of Hotel and Tourism Management, employers and text (material) analysis.

4.2 Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaire

In this study, close-ended questionnaire was used. However, the respondents were given chances to include whatever they thought were needed in the study. According to Robinson (1991), with questionnaire, one may seek information on a large number of points. Questionnaires are generally wide ranging because they are used for quantitative information and can also be sent easily to a large number of people.

Employees of Hotel and Tourism Management Questionnaire

The employees' questionnaire consisted of 4 items. The items in the questionnaire were aimed at gathering personal information, their difficulty in using English, the importance of the language skills for performing their duties and their English Language needs. Sixteen copies of the questionnaire were distributed to them and all of them filled and returned.

Employers Questionnaire

The employers' questionnaire consisted of 3 items. The employers' questionnaire was distributed and administered at their organizations. The items in the questionnaire focused on obtaining information with regard to the importance of English language skills, knowledge area (aspects) and sub skills for Hotel and Tourism management graduates (employees) to carry out their duties successfully. Eight copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the employers in their working environment and all of them filled the questionnaire and returned.

4.3 Data Collection Procedures

To gather data for this study, first the objectives of the study were explained to all subjects and asked their willingness to participate in filling the questionnaire. The questionnaire filling took about 60 minutes for graduates and was conducted in class under the supervision of the researcher.

4.4 Methods of Data Organization and Analysis

Data gathered through questionnaire were tallied and then calculated using percentage and analyzed quantitatively. The response of the graduates and employers were compared and contrasted to arrive at sound conclusion.

5. Results

An Assessment of Activities that Hotel and Tourism Management Graduates Need To Carry Out in English in Occupational Context

Regarding this, the graduates of hotel and tourism management were provided with different activities that are common to job context in general and related to hotel and tourism management activities in general under each of the four macro skills. Here, hotel and tourism management students' target needs were seen from the point of view of graduates (employees) in order to identify their target needs. The graduates were asked to report how frequently they need them in the working environment (professional setting). The sum of very frequently and frequently was taken into consideration to see which of the activities the hotel and tourism management graduates (employees) need to carry out more than other activities in the occupational context. In addition to the graduates (employees), employers were also asked about the language needs of their employees. This was meant to substantiate the responses which are given by the graduates.

Listening Activities

The following table presents the responses of hotel and tourism graduates with reference to their needs in different listening activities.

Table 1: Listening activities that hotel and tourism management graduates need in their job as perceived by graduates and employers

No	Activities		Very frequently needed		Frequently need		Sometimes		Seldom		Never	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
A	Listening to meetings, seminars, conference and workshop	Gr	6	37.5	6	37.5	3	18.75	1	6.25		
		Em	3	37.5	4	50	1	12.5				
B	Listening to customers /guest inquires	Gr	5	31.25	6	37.5	3	18.75	2	12.5		
		Em	3	37.5	3	37.5	2	25				
C	Listening to video /films	Gr	4	25	4	25	5	31.25	3	18.75		
		Em	2	25	2	25	3	37.5	1	12.5		
D	Listening to foreigners	Gr	4	25	5	31.25	5	31.25	2	12.5		
		Em	3	37.5	2	25	3	37.5	1	12.5		
E	Listening to managers explanation on hotel policies	Gr	4	25	6	37.5	5	31.25	1	6.25		
		Em	3	37.5	3	37.5	1	12.5	1	12.5		

Key: Gr= Graduates Em= Employers

With regard to listening activities, the hotel and tourism management graduates (employees) agreed that the most frequently needed activities were listening to meetings, seminars, conference (75%) followed by listening to customers or guest inquires (68.75%), listening to managers explanation on hotel facilities (62.5%), listening to foreigners (56.25%) and listening to video /films (50%). When we see the response of the employers, it is almost the same with the response of the graduates with few differences in order of importance. With regard to employers, the most frequently needed listening activities were listening to meetings, seminars and conference followed by listening to managers explanation on hotel facilities, listening to customers' inquires, listening to foreigners and listening to video /films.

To sum up, based on the responses of graduates and employers, frequently needed listening activity to carryout different duties in the occupational setting are: listening to meetings, seminars and conference, listening to customers inquires, listening to managers explanation on hotel facilities (policies), listening to foreigners and listening to video/films in this order of importance.

Table 2: Analysis of speaking activities hotel and tourism management students need to carry as perceived by graduates and employers

No	Activities		Very frequently		Frequently		Sometime		Seldom		Never	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
A	Speaking to a customer	Gr	6	37.5	6	37.5	3	18.75	1	6.25		
		Em	3	37.5	3	37.5	2	25				
B	Speaking in workshops /meetings	Gr	4	25	4	25	5	31.25	3	18.25		
		Em	3	37.5	2	25	3	37.5	1	12.5		
C	Presenting report /paper	Gr	3	18.75	4	25	6	37.5	2	12.5	1	6.25
		Em	2	25	2	25	3	37.5	1	12.5		
D	Describing and explaining of menus for foreigners	Gr	5	31.25	6	37.5	3	18.75	2	12.5		
		Em	3	37.5	4	50	1	12.5				
E	Conducting tour on hotel facilities	Gr	3	18.75	4	25	6	37.5	3	18.75		
		Em	2	25	2	25	3	37.5	1	12.5		
F	Answering telephone calls for reservation	Gr	4	25	6	37.5	5	31.25	1	6.25		
		Em	3	37.5	3	37.5	1	12.5	1	12.5		

As the above table shows, the majority of the employees (graduates) reported that speaking to a customer was the most frequently carried out speaking activity. Moreover, 68.75% of the employees reported that describing and explaining of menus for foreigners was the second most frequently carried out activities that was followed by answering telephone calls, speaking in work shops or meetings, presenting report or paper and conducting tour on hotel facilities .

As regards the employers' response, it is different from that of the graduates (employees). 87.5% of the employers reported that describing and explaining of menus for foreigners was the most frequently needed activities followed by answering telephone calls for reservation, speaking to an interviewer or a customer, speaking in workshops /meetings, conducting tour on hotel facilities and presenting report/ paper were the most frequently needed activities in a rank order for occupational context.

However, taking the employees response in to consideration the importance of the speaking activities can be arranged as speaking to a customer, describing and explaining of menus for

foreigners, answering telephone calls for reservation, speaking in workshops, presenting report and conducting tour on hotel facilities from most important to least important.

Reading activities

The responses of hotel and tourism graduates and their employers concerning the needs of different reading activities are presented in the following table

Table 3: Reading activities the hotel and tourism management graduates need in their job as perceived by graduates and employers

No	Activities		Very frequent		Frequently		Sometimes		Seldom		Never	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
A	Reading articles, newspapers, magazines, journals related to hotel and tourism	Gr	6	37.5	6	37.5	2	12.5	2	12.5		
		Em	3	37.5	3	37.5	2	25				
B	Reading work /business report	Gr	5	31.25	6	37.5	3	18.75	2	12.5		
		Em	3	37.5	4	50	1	12.5				
C	Reading manual /directives	Gr	5	31.25	5	31.25	4	25	2	12.5		
		Em	3	37.5	2	25	2	25	1	12.5		
D	Reading letter of reservation	Gr	5	31.25	4	25	5	31.25	2	12.5		
		Em	2	25	3	37.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	1	12.5
E	Reading regulation /rules of the organization	Gr	6	37.5	7	43.75	2	12.5	1	6.25		
		Em	3	37.5	3	37.5	1	12.5	1	12.5		
F	Reading complaint letters from customers	Gr	4	25	4	25	6	37.5	2	12.5		
		Em	2	25	2	25	2	25	1	12.5	1	12.5

Key: Gr- Graduates

Em- Employers

When we come to the reading activities to be carried out by the hotel and tourism management graduates, the respondents were agreed that reading regulation or rules of the organizations was the most frequently needed activity followed by reading articles, newspapers, journals related to hotel and tourism management, reading work or business report, reading manuals or directives, reading letter of reservation and reading compliant letter from customers in order of importance. If we see the responses of the employers, there were a few differences in the order of importance. 87.5% of the employers reported that reading work or business report was the most frequently carried activities in occupational context followed by reading articles, journals related to hotel and tourism management, reading regulations of the organization, reading manuals or directives , reading letter of reservation and reading complaints letter from customers.

In conclusion, the most frequently needed reading activities can be arranged as reading regulation or rules of the organization, reading articles or journals related to hotel and tourism, reading work or business report, reading manuals or directives, reading letter of reservation, and reading letter of complaints from customer are the orders from most important to least important.

Writing Activities

Table 4: Writing activities the hotel and tourism management graduates need to carry as perceived by graduates and employers

No	Language skills		Very frequent		Frequently		Sometimes		Seldom		Never	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
A	Writing business letters to institutions	Gr	4	25	5	31.25	3	18.75	2	12.5	2	12.5
		Em	2	25	2	25	2	25	1	12.5	1	12.5
B	Writing report on work performance	Gr	5	31.25	7	43.75	2	12.5	1	6.25	1	6.25
		Em	3	37.5	3	37.5	2	25				
C	Writing office memos /minutes in meeting	Gr	5	31.25	5	31.25	2	12.2	3	18.75	1	6.25
		Em	3	37.5	2	25	2	25	1	12.5		
D	Writing sales /daily report	Gr	5	31.25	8	50	1	6.25	2	12.5		
		Em	3	37.5	4	50	1	12.5				
E	Writing notes from seminar	Gr	4	25	4	25	5	31.25	2	12.5	1	6.25
		Em	2	25	2	25	1	12.5	2	25	1	12.5
F	Writing different information on reservation form	Gr	4	25	7	43.75	3	18.75	1	6.25	1	6.25
		Em	3	37.5	3	37.5	1	12.5	1	12.5		

As the above table shows, hotel and tourism graduates rated to what extent writing activities listed in the table are important for their occupational setting (purposes). Based on this, 81.5% of the graduates said that writing sales or daily report was the most frequently needed writing activity followed by writing report on work performance, writing different information on reservation form, writing office memos, writing business letters to institutions and writing notes from seminars. When we see the responses that were given by the employers, it is the same with the responses given by the graduates.

To sum up, based on the responses of both the graduates and employers, the most frequently needed writing activities are: writing different information on reservation form, writing office memos, writing business letters to institutions and writing notes from seminars in this order of importance.

6. Discussions and findings

It has been indicated that the main purpose of this study was to examine the English language needs of Hotel and Tourism Management graduates of Hawassa University with the view of giving an input for designing an appropriate English course. To achieve this, questionnaire; interview and analysis of the teaching material were used for gathering the data. By doing so, an attempt has been made to identify and prioritize the English language macro-skills, knowledge area (aspects) and language activities relevant to the students' field of study and future jobs. In addition to this, the graduates' (employees') language difficulties were to be identified. In line with the attempt made to achieve these objectives, the following conclusions have been made.

English Language Needs for both Academic and Occupational Purposes

All the four language skills are important for learning the subject area courses and for their future jobs, but with varying degree. For occupational purposes, listening to meetings, seminars and conference, listening to customers inquires; listening to manager's explanation on hotel facilities /policies, listening to foreigners and listening to video /films are some of the most frequently needed activities.

Reading activities that are frequently needed for studying the subject area courses are reading lecture notes, reading reference books, reading summaries, charts and tables, reading English websites related to Hotel and Tourism and reading articles; journals, newspapers. The most frequently needed reading activities in occupational context are reading regulations or rules of the organization, reading articles, journals or newspapers, reading work or business report,

reading manuals or directives, reading letter of reservations and reading letter of complaints from customers.

Writing down notes from lectures, writing notes from books or reference, writing dictations, writing course assignment or term paper on hotel and tourism and writing report on field trip or attachment were all the writing activities needed for students' academic study. In discharging duties at work places, writing sales or daily report, writing report on work performance, writing different information on reservation form, writing office memos, writing business letters to institutions and writing notes from seminars are some of the most frequently needed /important activities.

Asking and answering questions, participating in class discussion, participating in dialogue, presenting oral report, talking to foreigners and responding to an interviewer are some of the most important speaking activities for academic context. In occupational setting, describe and explaining menus for foreigners, speaking to a customer, answering telephone calls for reservation, speaking in workshops, presenting report and conducting a tour on hotel facilities are some of the most frequently needed (important) speaking activities.

7. Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations have been forwarded:

- a) The current existing course has to be revised and an appropriate course should be designed for students by taking into account the English language needs of future occupational settings. The contents or topics (themes) should also be related to the subject area of study (content based).
- b) Course designers and material developers should use a variety of activities which have relevance or similar to activities which may be performed in the students' academic study or future jobs.
- c) In designing English course, syllabus and developing course material; students' language difficulties in studying major area courses should be carefully considered and addressed in the material. Moreover, the language skills should be taught in context with the students' field of study.
- d) English language instructors should consider students' language difficulties and plan different mechanism when they teach English course to reduce the current problem.

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