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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

EAP NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR UNDERGRADUATES
AT IIUM'S AHMAD IBRAHIM KULLIYAH OF
LAW

BY

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
MALAYSIA

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EAP NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR UNDERGRADUATES
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NUR MUHAMMAD INSAN BIN JALIL

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FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
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ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

KULLIYYAH OF ISLAMIC REVEALED
KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN SCIENCES
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
MALAYSIA

SEPTEMBER 2005

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in English as a Second Language.

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Revealed Knowledge and Human
Sciences

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references and a bibliography is appended.

Name Nur Muhammad Insan Bin Jalil

Signature _____

Date _____

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, the rapid growth in science, technology and economic activities on an international scale has resulted in an increasing need for the use of English. English has become a common medium of communication and access to much scientific and technical literature is difficult for those with no knowledge of English.

The increasing need for English has caused changes in English language teaching (ELT) especially in the last few decades, which requires a new look at one aspect of English Language Teaching, which is English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This is because ESP is about training of students in specialized language areas such as in law, economics, physics, medicine or catering.

There are two main strands of ESP: English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). EOP is concerned with “the preparation for the professional occupations students are likely to go into when they graduate” (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001:11). EAP on the other hand, refers to any English teaching that relates to a study purpose (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998). EAP is taught generally within educational institutions to students needing English for their academic courses. The language taught is based on particular disciplines at higher levels of education when the student is specializing (in-study) or intends to specialize (pre-study) (Kennedy and Bolitho, 1990).

The foundation of ESP, including EAP is ‘the specific needs of its learners/clients’ (Dudley Evans and St. John, 1998). All decisions as to content and method of teaching are based on the learners’ reason for learning. A needs analysis is necessary so that all subjective information can be collected and analyzed to define and validate the ‘language’ required of the students. It is an investigation of the purposes of the learner and the set of communicative needs arising from the purposes (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). This information will eventually lead to the construction of an English language course to fulfill the specific needs of the learners.

This study will investigate the language needs of law students at IIUM with the ultimate aim of providing a guideline for the design of an ELAP course for them. The study will be based on the students’ and lecturers’ opinions and expectations. The findings from the study can help the practitioners concerned in preparing an EAP course which is subject specific to AIKOL i.e., English for Legal Academic Purposes (ELAP).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In Malaysia, although the Malay Language or *Bahasa Melayu* (BM) is the national language, English language is still widely used in our legal system. This flexibility for using English is extended to the whole legal scenario: law-making processes, judicial proceedings, court proceedings and legal service (Noraini Ibrahim, 1997:19). Thus, it is imperative that law practitioners are proficient in the language to be effective in their profession. They should be equipped with the necessary language skills and sub-skills from their undergraduate years (perhaps by attending EAP courses) to enable

them to cope well with the complex legal language used in legal textbooks, research journals, case books, law reports and Acts.

Even though ELAP is already ‘an established’ sub-section of EAP (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998:48), there is no such specialized EAP course offered in IIUM. The current EAP syllabus in the university is taught across all disciplines. Students of different specializations like engineering, law, medicine, economics, science, Islamic studies and architecture students take the same EAP course of the same ‘generalized’ syllabus. This may not always be desirable in the context of students’ academic development. Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) pointed out that EAP is focused upon specific language appropriate to the target discipline. Thus, there is a danger that the current EAP course conducted might not be able to fully cater to students’ specific language needs especially when they come from different disciplines of studies. What law students really need is to be equipped the relevant language skills to enable them to cope with all the academic activities such as: understanding law lectures, participating in law tutorials, answering tutorial questions in law, participating in law discussions, or preparing for mock trials (Noraini Ibrahim, 1997).

An EAP course designed specifically for law students is nothing new. A research done by Howe (1993, in Dudley Evans and St John, 1998:51) on international students following undergraduate Law courses in Britain has shown that English for Academic and Legal Purposes (EALP) courses are “of great help to these students”. The University of Buckingham for instance, has its own pre-sessional law ESP course on top of offering EAP in Legal English courses for law students (Loftus, 1996). In Malaysia, the language centre of UKM has already played an active role in providing

the necessary language courses for the Faculty of Law by offering EALP starting from 1995/96 academic session (Noraini Ibrahim, 1997:51). Therefore, it is high time that IIUM also introduces specialised EAP courses that are required by students in their respective faculties and this study focuses on the preparations that should be made towards an EAP course for law students.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

This study aims to:

1. Identify the language abilities of law undergraduates at IIUM with regards to English listening, speaking, reading and writing.
2. Identify the lecturers' expectations of students' level of English language proficiency with reference to listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.
3. Based on the analysis, draw up a guide which can serve as a basis in preparing a more specialized EAP course for law students (i.e., ELAP).

Thus, this study will try to answer the following questions:

1. Are the law undergraduates in IIUM proficient in the English language with regards to the four language skills?
2. What are the lecturers' expectations of the language proficiency level of law undergraduates in relation to their academic pursuit?

METHODOLOGY

For this study, a needs analysis will be carried out to identify the language needs and language abilities of law students at IIUM. The two subjects involve are law

undergraduate students and law lecturers. Two sets of questionnaires will be used for data collection, the students' questionnaire and the lecturers' questionnaire. The questions in the students' questionnaire will try to elicit the students' opinion on their language needs in order to cope with their law courses and also their perception on their own language abilities. Similarly, the questions in the lecturers' questionnaire will look into the lecturers' views on the language needs of the law students as well as their insights on the students' current proficiency level. The data collected from the questionnaires will then be analyzed based on each question and feedback received.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study will address the basic concern in educational research that is to provide English language skills and sub-skills necessary for students, namely law undergraduates of IIUM. This will be particularly helpful for the students since English is the medium of instruction in IIUM and most IIUM students have English as their second or foreign language. Thus, they are likely to encounter difficulties in understanding lectures or participating in seminars which are closely content-related to a specific discipline like law. Identifying the language needs of the law students is a step towards ensuring that their academic needs are being met.

Besides that, the needs analysis will also address issues of immediate interest to law students and their academic needs because of its relevance to their discipline of study. It is hoped that by showing the clear relevance of the English course to their discipline, students' motivation could be improved thus making learning 'better and faster' (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:8). In addition, the findings could be used to

enable more effective and relevant planning of an EAP course specifically for law undergraduates in IIUM, and elsewhere.

The findings from this study could also be used for future studies to compare the language needs of students from different disciplines. This is because the main instrument used for data collection is adopted from previous studies on needs analysis in ESP but on different fields such as psychology and history. This case allows for a comparison of language needs of students from psychology, history and law faculties in IIUM.

ELAP is often described as ‘a relatively hostile terrain within ESP scenario’ (Noraini Ibrahim, 1997:15). It has so far received less attention from researchers that it deserves. Research on ELAP is mainly limited to textual and genre analysis (E.g. Bhatia 1993 and Garner 2001). To the knowledge of the researcher, very few studies have been published on the language needs of law students although such research is ‘more humanistic than research that looks at texts, genres, and academic context’ (Hamp-Lyons, 2001). This is because it incorporates ‘a wider view of *needs*’ and ‘typically includes students’ *wants* and preferences’ as well as more concrete needs (Hamp-Lyons, 2001). This study hopes to fill in the gap.

ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

This study constitutes of five chapters. Chapter 1 serves as an introductory chapter to the study where an overview and background of the study are presented. This is followed by the second chapter, which provides the readers with some literature and previous studies on the related areas. Chapter 3 elaborates the research methodology

undertaken in realizing this study. Chapter 4 presents the findings and analysis of data collected. Finally, chapter 5 provides the summary of the study and recommendations to the problems identified in the previous chapter. It will also discuss its practicality and its implications on the law students as well as the institution as a whole.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As mentioned in the introduction, this study will investigate the language needs of law students at IIUM with the ultimate aim of providing a guideline for the design of an ELAP course for the law students. In view of these objectives, this section reviews the relevant literature related to ESP, EAP, ELAP, syllabus design, the language skills in ESP and needs analysis.

ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP)

English for General Purposes (EGP), or also humorously known as TENOR (Teaching English for No Obvious Reason), is more like a typical secondary school English language course. Its syllabus is based on a conception of the kind of reality that the students have to deal with in English (Holme, 1996). Most of the materials and courses available are appropriate for those coming to study the language for the first time and suitable for younger learners. According to Jordan (1997:4), the purpose of such courses is not specific. It is mainly for passing school examinations or social purposes like conversational purposes and communicative situations. Abbot (1981) in Jordan (1997:4) who devised the acronym 'TENOR' explained it thus:

Most of the world's learners of English are schoolchildren.....
[who] are too young or too distant from any real communication
in English to have any intifiable 'needs'.

On the other hand, ESP is an 'enterprise' involving "education, training and practice", and drawing upon three major realms of knowledge: language, pedagogy, and

students' specialist areas of interest" (Robinson, 2001). Dudley-Evans and St John (1998:4), emphasize that ESP entails absolute and variable characteristics as follow:

1. Absolute characteristics

- ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learners;
- ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves;
- ESP is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate for these activities.

2. Variable characteristics

- ESP may be related to or designed to specific disciplines;
- ESP may be used in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
- ESP is likely to be designed by adult learners, either at tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be used at secondary school level;
- ESP is generally for intermediate or advanced students. Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

Hence, we can see how ESP is different from EGP. The essentially fluid nature of ESP is normally an extension of what is learnt in EGP. As the names suggest, the English Language Teaching (ELT) continuum as in Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998:9), moves from general (EGP) to very specific (ESP) courses.

There are two main divisions which help to distinguish ESP situations: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). The division is generally represented in a tree diagram as in Figure 2.1 below (taken from Robinson, 2001:3).

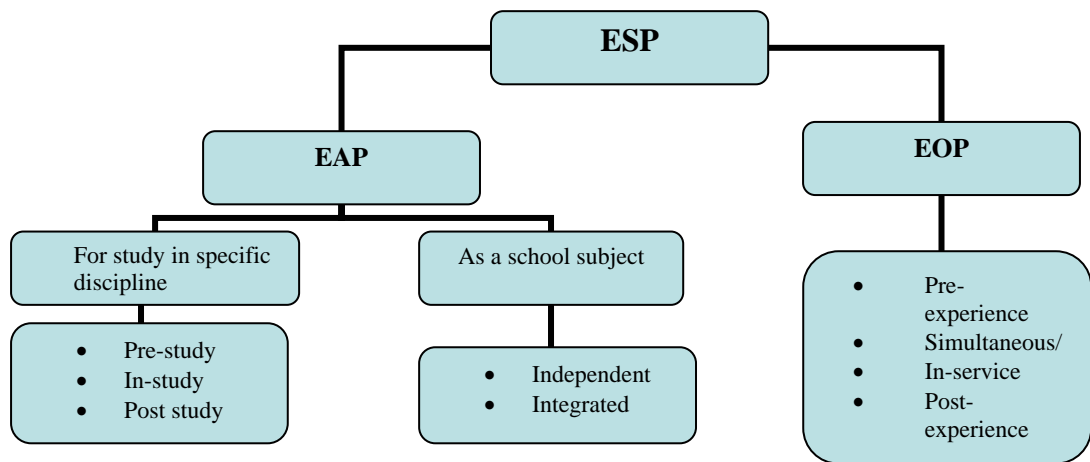


Figure 2.1
The ESP tree diagram

EOP involves work-related needs and training, it is not for academic purposes. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998:7), it includes “professional purposes in administration, medicine, law and business, and vocational purposes for non-professional in work or pre-work situations”. Unlike EOP, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) refers to any English teaching that relates to a study purpose (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998). It is taught generally within educational institutions to students needing English for their academic courses. Since this study is specifically looking at an EAP course for law students, we will not go further in discussing on EOP but will only look at EAP in more detail.

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES (EAP)

EAP is a research field as well as an area of English language teaching, and there is a significant body of research into its effective approaches, methods of analysis of the academic language needs of students, and analysis of the linguistic and discourse structures of academic texts (Hamp-Lyons, 2001). However, the concerns of EAP are not specific to English only, many students aim to achieve higher level of academic achievement through English (Robinson, 2001:101). Therefore, the students are actually learning language strategies for the academic context of a particular discipline, for example economics, together with its disciplinary culture that include language structure, vocabulary, the particular skills needed for the subjects, and the appropriate academic conventions.

Goodwin (2001:261) emphasizes that an EAP course “must focus on students’ academic needs”. She also pointed out that numerous needs analysis have examined the academic demands placed on university students (e.g., Kroll 1979; Johns 1981; Ostler 1980; Bridgeman and Carlson 1984; Horowitz 1986; Ferris and Tagg 1996). Hence, the needs analysis will be carried out to provide raw data about the learners’ needs and the learning needs within the given context.

ENGLISH FOR LEGAL PURPOSES (ELP)

English for Legal Purposes (ELP) is also known as English for Legal Academic Purposes (ELAP), or English for Academic Legal Purposes (EALP). Before we can understand what ELP is, we need to know what exactly legal language is. Legal language, as pointed out by Bhatia (1993:101):

Encompasses several usefully distinguishable genres depending upon the communicative purposes they tend to fulfill, the setting or context in which they are used, the communicative events or activities they are associated with, the social and professional relationship between the participants taking part in such events, the background knowledge that such participants bring to the situation in which that particular event is embedded and a number of other factors.

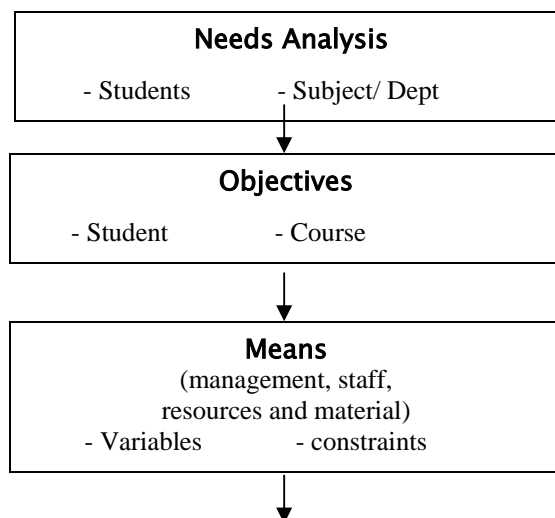
Hence, it is obvious that legal language is complicated and complex. Garner (2001) described it as having its own mind-boggling jargon, rife with bloated expressions that displace everyday words". It is an area often neglected but essential for students to cope with law tutorials (Loftus, 1996). One of the reasons it is not so popular is because of its 'obscure expressions and circumlocutions, long-winded involved instructions and tortuous syntax, apparently meaningless repetitions and archaism' (Bhatia, 1993:101). However, for the specialist community, these are "indispensable linguistic devices which bring precision, clarity and unambiguity and all-inclusiveness" (Ibid:102). Hence, with the complexity of legal language, it is evident that law undergraduates should be given training in a specific language course (ELAP) to prepare and enable them to understand the law 'language' before they are ready to handle actual law courses.

Bhatia (1993:2) has done extensive works on ELAP. He divides legal writing into three main areas: academic legal writing (textbooks and legal journals); judicial writing (court judgments, case book and law reports); and legislative writing (Acts of Parliament, statutory instruments, contracts, agreement and all of which serve to legislate). He stresses on the importance of academic (legal) writing in studying and practicing law. According to Garner (2001), there are many different types of legal writing such as demand letters, opinion letters, research memos, motions, briefs,

judicial opinions, contracts, statutes, and ordinances, to name just a few. Thus, we can see that ELAP is a thriving and important aspect of EAP. This is because of its complexity and it being more problematic than other divisions of EAP. Therefore, ELAP is a distinguished and specialised division in EAP that can cater for the language needs for the target group, the law students.

ESP SYLLABUS DESIGN

According to Jordan (1997:56), designing a syllabus involves examining needs analysis and establishing goals. It then entails the selection, grading and sequencing of the language and other content, and the division of the content into units of manageable material. Once the syllabus has been drawn up, the course can be designed, then realized and finally evaluated. In other words, a syllabus is an implicit statement of views on the nature of language and learning. Generally, the purpose of a syllabus is to break down the mass knowledge to be learnt into units. Figure 2.2 (Adapted from Jordan, 1997: 57) below summarizes the stages and considerations involved in designing EAP courses.



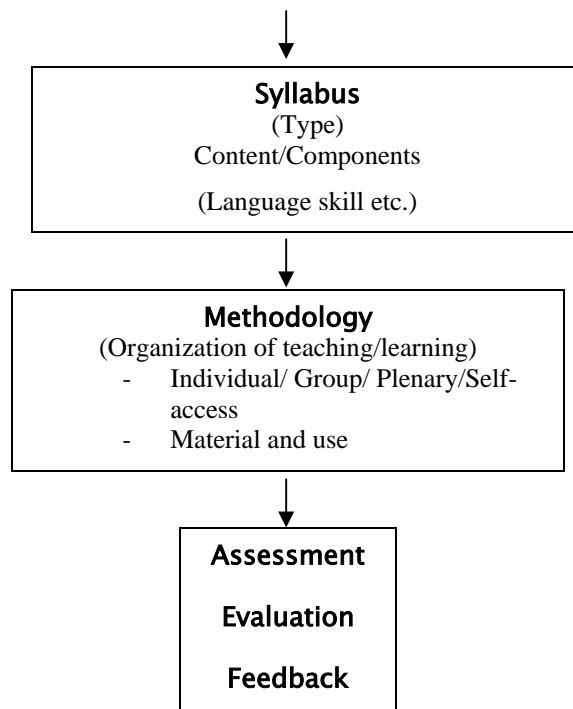


Figure 2.2
The ESP Course Design

According to Flowerdew and Peacock (2001), there are several approaches to syllabus design. The most popular approach is *The Learning Centred Approach* developed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). This approach ‘concentrated not on the language items and skills students needed, but rather on what they had to do in class to learn these processes’ where ‘there is an emphasis on meaningful and appropriate content and on communication within the classroom’.

Another approach is *The Genre Based Approach*. This approach uses materials and tasks based on authentic linguistic data in order to promote student awareness of the conventions and procedures of the genre in question.

The final approach, *The Content Based Syllabus* is also ‘a very influential approach’ (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001). This approach relates language teaching to the eventual uses to which the learner will put the language. It requires attention to prior knowledge, existing knowledge, the total academic environment and the linguistic proficiency of the students.

Robinson (2001) highlighted the need of the syllabus design stage to be preceded by developments in materials design and methodology so that the process of course design can take place. This is only done when the theoretical decisions about the objectives and syllabus are put together in context.

THE SKILLS IN ESP

There are considerable researches done on the four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in the field of EAP. The following are some of the issues discussed in the literature on the four skills.

Listening

Jordan (1997) pointed out that most of the academic research has focused on lectures although seminar participation is another language event where listening skills are needed. Interactive, or conversational listening, however, he added “is usually dealt with along speaking”. Flowerdew (1994, in Jordan, 1997) identified the following as especially problematic in the lecture genre:

The requirement to be able to concentrate on and understand long stretches of talk without the opportunity in engaging in the facilitating functions of interactive discourse, such as asking for a repetition, negotiating meaning.