



English for Specific Purposes: English Language Needs in Hospitality and Travel Industry

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Abstract

This research is designed to identify English language needs in the hospitality and travel industry. The data was obtained from the General Manager of Garuda Indonesia Padang, the HRD Manager of Grand Zuri Hotel Padang, and 24 employees working in both those companies. The researchers used instruments; an interview and a questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with the two managers, while questionnaires were distributed to the employees of the companies. The interviews were transcribed and then analyzed using a descriptive approach. The questionnaires were analyzed Software SPSS for Windows release 22.0. This research reveals that, in the hospitality and travel industry, speaking (35%) and listening (33%) are the most needed of the four (4) language skills. These skills are primarily needed to greet customers (who are dominantly non-native speakers of English). In addition, the employees in the two companies are mostly required to serve customers whose English is basic. The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable information for ESP teachers and curriculum designers in organizing ESP syllabus and teaching materials.

INTRODUCTION

Introduced in 1980s, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has received tremendous acclaim from either practitioners or researchers in the field of language teaching (Syahputra, 2014; Widodo & Kadarwati, 2013; Widyastuti, 2016). Although not massive, some educational institutions engaged in teaching English especially vocational schools and

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some study programs in various universities began to turn their attention to teaching English-based on certain disciplines (Azizah, 2018; Rukiati & Susanti, 2016; Setiawati, 2016). This is in line with what is mentioned by Aikenhead, (2017) stating that this shift leads many English courses to design their lesson plans on the basis of the "common core" underlying the subject content. Equipping students with English language skills in accordance with their respective fields of knowledge can facilitate them to get a job and perform the prescribed tasks appropriately at work (Shi, 2018).

The shift from teaching English for general purposes onto English for specific purposes certainly has an impact not only on changing the name of the courses offered in the curriculum but also in the formulation of learning goals, teaching materials, learning methods and learning evaluation. In practice, the teaching of ESP in developing countries (such as Indonesia and other ASEAN countries) has referred to the principle of ESP teaching that is actually based on certain disciplines in accordance with the majors chosen by students. In English for Hospitality courses for example, students will be exposed to materials related to hospitality that are written and explained in English.

However, these materials are sometimes not in accordance with what is needed in the workplaces, and potential to be a stumbling block for students to get a job after they finish their studies. Martiarini & Mufliharsi, (2017); Rahman, (2015); Setyorini, (2011) confirm that there seems to be a discrepancy between what is students learned from what is required in the field.

The mismatch between the material presented in the classroom and the market needs actually makes the alumni experience constraints not only to get a job but also to perform the works prescribed. Leonard, (2016) said that there are several things that make college graduates have difficulty in finding work, including limitations in foreign language mastery, and inability to work in groups and communicate. The mastery of the foreign language meant by Sing and Sing most likely refers to the mastery of English, because according to what is mentioned by Sumintono et al., (2012) in international scale employment, people still tend to use English as a means of communication. No wonder then many college graduates who have outstanding achievements during the study fail to get the job they dreamed of because they were unable to communicate in English.

Based on the above phenomenon, it is clear that the difference between what is taught in class and what is needed in the world of work results in graduates to have trouble in obtaining and displaying their best performance in the field. This discrepancy is the impact of the lack of information obtained by the English language teaching institutions regarding future graduate careers and the skills needed in the field (Agus Santosa, 2017; Ayu & Viora, 2018; Megawati, 2016). In connection with that, to get information about the needs of English and how English is used in the target situation, the authors feel that involving outsiders in the selection of teaching materials and formulating learning objectives is crucial. Outsiders are considered as the party who knows best and understands the needs of English in the field. To identify the form of use

of English in the world of work, the authors conduct Need Analysis in the target situation in this case in the Hospitality and Travel Industry.

A great number of needs analysis studies have been conducted in various ESP areas. [Javid & Umer, \(2013\)](#) investigated English language needs of Saudi employees in 101 companies representing different business sectors in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. The investigation measured the level of English proficiency required in the four skills. A questionnaire was distributed to different companies and filled out by 308 employees and managers. The results revealed that the English language knowledge was required for employment in most companies and that the level of proficiency varies among different companies. With regard to language skills, managers and employees rated listening as the most important skill followed by speaking, reading, and writing respectively. The study concluded that though the English language is needed in the private sector, an intermediate level of proficiency is generally sufficient to conduct the job.

Within the domain of English for Business, [Youn, \(2018\)](#) conducted a task-based needs analysis on business English use in the Korean business context with the purpose of identifying business English target tasks frequently performed by Korean business professionals. In addition, Korean business professionals' previous experience of taking business English classes were investigated as well as their attitude and wants regarding to the course. By using semi-structured interview and questionnaire, the information from 75 Korean business professional was gathered. The result of data analysis indicated that the target tasks that each interviewee stated were somewhat different from one another, depending on their company types and job responsibilities. Some of the respondents, however, said that they wanted to improve overall English skills rather than business English skills.

[Wu & Chin, \(2010\)](#) conducted a research designed for investigating the English language needs of banking and finance professionals in Taiwan, identifying the English skills they use more frequently in work settings, studying the communicative tasks they often perform in English and the extent of difficulty they encounter in performing the required tasks. In collecting the data, executive, managerial and staff-level employees in Taiwan's banking and financial sectors were involved. The data was gathered through interview and questionnaire. The result of the research indicated that among reading, listening, speaking, writing, Chinese-to-English translation and English-to-Chinese translation, the employees reported that they need to read in English the most often, and to translate from English-to Chinese the least. Of the different language skills they need in order to perform successfully at work, 85% of respondents perceived reading to be the most important, followed by listening (79%), speaking (77%) and again, Chinese-to-English translation being the least important (58%).

[Sari, \(2018\)](#) conducted a study investigating the challenges faced by an English teacher in ESP teaching in an Indonesian vocational higher institution. The findings reported in his study were based on the responses obtained from one of the ESP teachers, Kelvin (pseudonym) who has been teaching English in the institution for nearly ten years. The results of his study uncovered that there were four challenges faced by

the ESP teachers which were students' learning motivation, the mismatch between reality and expectations, lack of quality resources and heavy workload. As this study only gathered information from single source, the result might be less representative to describe the real situation thoroughly. Every teacher certainly had their own problems in the class so that this result could not be generalized to all of ESP classes.

Marhasni et al., (2013) conducted a research on needs analysis of English materials on Computer and Network Engineering students at SMK in Padang. She sought to reveal what the students' needs on English materials viewed from the elements of materials covering input, content, language and task. In this research she found that there are still some inputs, topics, language and tasks which have not been mastered yet by the students so that they can not achieve the optimal result in learning. This research, however, did not cover the interview done to the students and the teachers. The information from the two groups of participants is gathered only through questionnaires. It is also difficult for the researcher to identify the students' needs related to their tasks at work as the SMK students did not have a chance to work based on their major. The students also have limited opportunity to work based on their skill in the city where the research was conducted. Further, the questionnaire used in the research is not proper to measure the students' lack as the result might not be accurate.

Needs analysis was also conducted by Dja'far, (2017); Hermawati, (2016); Puspitaloka & Wahyuna, (2018). Her research was aimed at analyzing the Economics Faculty Students' English needs in learning Business English. The subject of the research were the students of Economics Faculty who were distributed in four study programs; Economic Education, Accounting, Management and Economics of Development, the chairman of each study programs, the lecturers of Economics Faculty, the English lecturers teaching in Economics Faculty and four Employees working at government institutions. In collecting the data she used questionnaire and interview guide. From her research it was revealed that more than 50% of students need English for occupational purposes. Based on the participants' response in the questionnaire and the result of interview it was known that the most important skill to be mastered is speaking and many students are willing to acquire this English skill. In the learning process, the lecturers were expected to use authentic materials and able to create an exciting learning atmosphere. Further, the result of interview indicated that the students' ability in English was still poor (Hou, 2013; Lolli, 2013; Schuckert et al., 2015; Sulasmini & Astina, 2018).

This current research is rather similar to Restika, (2014) study especially in terms of needs (necessities, lacks and wants) analyzed and the subject of the research who are the students of Faculty of Economy of UNP. To reveal the students' target needs, Restika used interview guide which was designed for four employees; an Economic teacher teaching at SMA 5 Pariaman, the Accounting Supervisor of Aquafeed, and Accounting Manager of Aquafeed. Based on the result of the interview with the four participants, it was indicated that they themselves did not work in a situation where English was required as a means of communication. Those, instead, were only able to provide their view on

the importance of English and what kind of skill that might be highly demanded in a particular workplace. In that research, to see the students' lacks, the researcher solely relied on the questionnaire. The students were asked to predict about their current ability in English and the difficulties that they found in learning the language. As the previous research studies have not significantly analyzed what kind of English is used and how it is used in the target situation, this research will focus on revealing the English needs by involving the outsiders (users) who certainly need and know the way English applied at work.

METHODS

This research is classified into Research Survey that aims to see participants' perceptions of English language needs in the workplace (Adzmi et al., 2009; Bailey & Russell, 2010). The conclusions about target needs are drawn from the results of data analysis that can only be applied in the hospitality and travel industry involved in this study. The sources of the data were the General Manager of Garuda Indonesia Padang, HRD Manager of Grand Zuri Hotel Padang, and 24 employees working in both companies. The information to be explored is related to: why is English needed in the workplace and how often is English used in the workplace, what kind of English is needed and how often that type of English is used, and who do the employees communicate in English with and how often. Data were obtained through interview guideline and questionnaire which were developed based on the concepts proposed by (Broad, 2003). Interview is intended to see the way English is used to perform the prescribed tasks in the field while questionnaire is sought to uncover the frequency of each task performed (Codó, 2018; Dawson et al., 2011). Data obtained through interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the steps suggested by Miles and Huberman and those obtained through questionnaires were analyzed based on the Likert Scale model.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Why is English Needed in the Hospitality and Travel Industry?

Based on the results of interviews conducted with the General Manager of Garuda Indonesia and HRD Manager of Grand Zuri Hotel, the answers to the question are as follows:

Grand Zuri Hotel	Garuda Indonesia
<i>"..... because we accept various guests who are from various countries"</i>	<i>"..... of course our correspondence uses English. English facilitates us to communicate and correspond with customers and partners"</i>

The above table shows that the need of English in the world of hospitality and travel is very high. The arrival of guests from various countries to the Grand Zuri certainly implies that the staff working at the hotel must master a means of communication that allows them to interact effectively with. Meanwhile, Garuda Indonesia shows a much higher and more complex level of English language needs compared to Grand Zuri. Staff on the flight uses English not only to communicate with customers but also with partners abroad.

The Frequency of Using English at Work

The term "English" itself is so broad to be used to define how often the language is used in hospitality and travel industry that it then is specified into its four major skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The following chart displays the extent to which the respective skill of English is performed at work.



Fig 1. Frequency of english skills used at work

Chart 1 above clearly presents that speaking (35%) and Listening (33%) dominates 2 of 4 English language skills in the workplace. The skills are often needed by the employees of the companies to perform their tasks. The fact that the companies involved in this research is engaged in services is probably the most likely reason for the high level of need for Listening and Speaking. These results inform both teachers and curriculum designers of ESP to prioritize both skills in the ESP syllabus. Teaching materials as well as learning activities should be able to facilitate students to acquire and practice the skills. Although far below Listening, Reading (20%) does not seem to be excluded from the syllabus of ESP class. The chart shows that this skill is needed in somewhat significant portion and is above Writing (12%). In general these results imply that the four main skills of English must be included in the ESP syllabus, and of course each gets its own portion proportionally.

The four skills mentioned above, in the workplace, are displayed in several types of text. Texts and the frequency of their occurrence can be seen on chart 2 below.

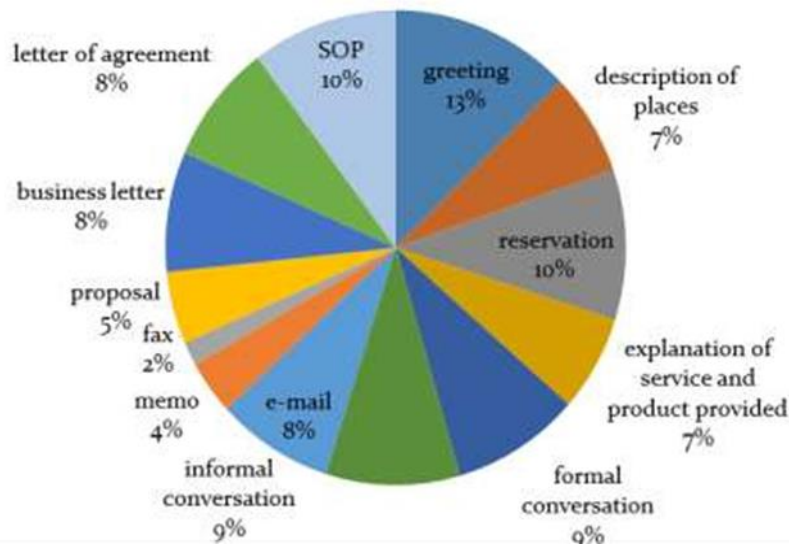


Fig 2. Frequency of certain types of texts performed at work

The above chart displays that most of the type of texts, except Memos (4%) and Faxes (2%), are performed in almost similar degree. Nevertheless, Greeting (13%), Reservation (10%) and SOP (10%) should get larger proportion in ESP curriculum design. The three are found as the texts which are often needed at work. This result suggests that the employees frequently use English to greet the customers, handle reservation, and read and write SOPs. They sometimes need English to conduct both Formal and Informal Conversation; Write Email, Business Letter, and Letter of Agreement; Describe Places; Explain Service and Products Available; and Write and Read Proposals. To design an ESP class, based on the above chart, teachers or curriculum designers need to carefully consider which text should get higher priority in terms of learning materials and practice. The sequence of the texts in syllabus or module may refer to the percentage of texts needed in the workplace, in this case Greeting certainly gets top priority and is followed by other types of texts.

What are the Topics Talked in English

The content areas or topics are the subjects which are likely to be talked in the target situation. The following table presents the content areas commonly communicated at work.

Informant Grand Zuri Hotel	Informant Garuda Indonesia
<p>..... like serving guests from other countries, doing check in or check out. doing correspondents, booking rooms,so their conversations use English.</p>	<p>..... of course our communications are English, such as doing reservations, ticketing, etc. They are always in English.</p>

Concerning with providing service to its customers, the staff in Grand Zuri Hotel, according to the HRD Manager, have more words of reservation and customer service in general. Unlike Grand Zuri Hotel, the staffs in Garuda Indonesia seem to perform more complex jobs in English. Instead of English for customer service, reservation and correspondence, they are also required to use English for ticketing. The data presented in the above table revealed that in the target situation,

English for customer service, English for reservation and English for correspondence are highly needed.

The Frequency of Certain Topics Talked in English

Besides the types of texts, this research also presents certain topics that usually appear and are used in communicating in the Hotel and Travel Industry. The topics are presented in the following pie chart.



Fig 3. Frequency of certain topics at work

Related to the topic or content areas of the language generally communicated, the employees are often demanded to be able to communicate in English for Information and Technology (27%), Hotel (22%), and Traveling (22%). They also sometimes need English for Business (14%). Meanwhile, the need to master English related to taxation and accounting, was seldom. Based on the data presented in the chart, Information and Technology topic should be defined as a must involved content in ESP syllabus. This then are followed by Hotel and Travel topics. Although performed in a very small scale, Accounting and Taxation are not supposed to be topics that have to be excluded. They could be presented as supplementary materials or topics to be discussed out of the classrooms.

Who Do the Employees Talk in English with?

In the target situation, the staffs of the two companies are required to communicate using English to the customers or guests who might be the native speakers or non-native speakers of English. From the results of the interview, it is identified that most of the guests the employees talk to are from abroad.

Informant Grand Zuri Hotel	Informant Garuda Indonesia
<p><i>“With guests from outside, of course. We also require our staff to speak English on Thursdays.”</i></p>	<p><i>“With our colleagues who are overseas, and also with Garuda representatives in Australia for example in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and our representatives in Asia such as Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Bangkok, Seoul Korea, Tokyo Japan, Osaka, Nagoya, then later in Europe. We have representatives in Amsterdam and London. Yaaa, even though</i></p>

they are Garuda people but they mostly local staff recruited there, in that country, of course our correspondents always use English ...”

As the companies are contenting to travel services, Grand Zuri Hotel and Garuda Indonesia were likely to get in touch with foreigners. Thus, the staffs in the two companies are challenged to be able to interact with guests from overseas and even the native speakers of English. In Garuda Indonesia, especially in overseas, all of staffs talk in English to each others. The General Manager of Garuda Indonesia for Padang Office explained that the staffs working in overseas are Garuda’s fellows, but they were recruited from the countries where they worked (local people), so to correspond with and talk to them should be in English.” The above description informs that in the target situation, the staffs are required to be able to communicate not only to foreign customers but also to colleagues living abroad.

Frequency of Native and Non-Native Speakers Served Using English

In order to get detail information about the frequency of English talked to native and non-native speakers, the data gotten from the interview was enriched with those obtained through questionnaire distributed to the employees working the companies.

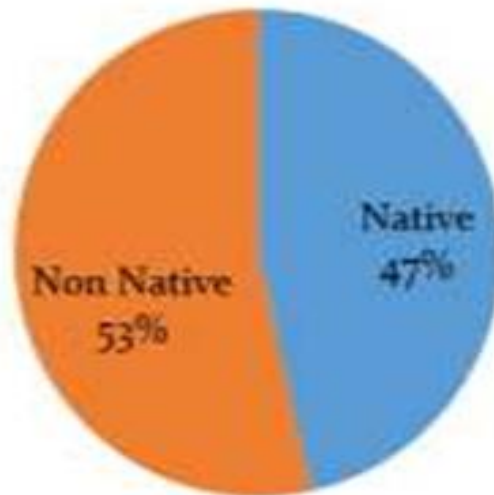


Fig 4. Frequency of native and non-native speakers served using English

Chart 4 simply presents that the employees in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry are sometimes required to speak English with either native or non- native speakers. The frequency of employees talking to non-native speakers is slightly higher than that of employees talking to native ones. Non-native speakers are those coming from other countries in which English is not their mother tongue. This phenomenon might imply that ESP teachers as well as curriculum designers need to take pronunciations, dialects and accents of several English into account.

In addition to pronunciations, dialects and accents of the speakers, the employees working in hospitality and travel industry are also demanded to use and comprehend English in various levels of

competence, including Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced. The following chart displays the percentage of the respective level performed in the field.

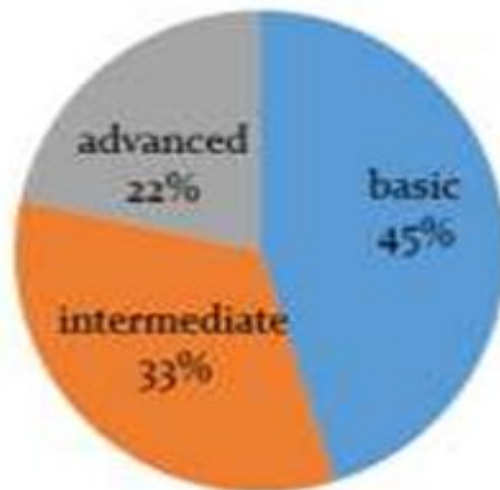


Fig 5. Frequency of basic, intermediate and advanced level of english needed at work

From the above chart, it is seen that the employees are often demanded to perform Basic English (45%) with the guests. Almost fifty percent of the English used in hospitality and travel industry is on this degree. This then is followed by Intermediate English which is also frequently required in the workplace. Meanwhile advanced English is rarely performed. These results show that in order to perform appropriately in target situation, especially in hospitality and travel Industry, students who are potential to work in that area have to master English at least in Basic level. Chart 6 below presents the frequency of employees talked to colleagues and customers in English.

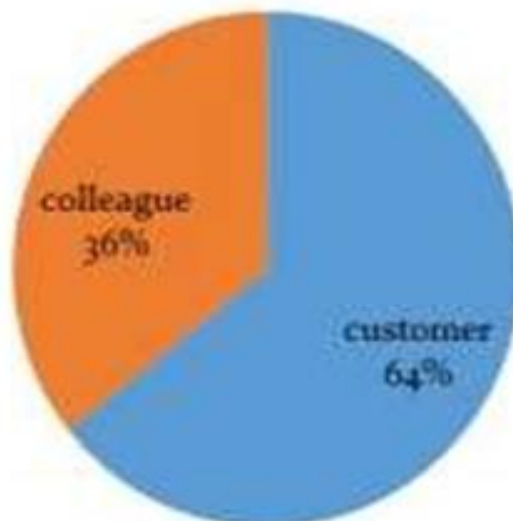


Fig 6. Frequency of english used with colleagues and customers

Based on the above chart, it is understood that the employees often talk in English to customers (64%), and they seldom do it to colleagues (36%). The smaller frequency of talking English to colleagues does not share that this competence could be ignored. In Garuda Indonesia, particularly, all of communication with staffs overseas is conducted by means of English.

Based on the research findings, it is revealed that the skills which are highly demanded in the field are listening and speaking, and there are a few needs for reading and writing which could not be ignored. Although the first two are highly required, having basic and intermediate English is found acceptable to complete the tasks at work. This result is similar to that was conducted by [Deale & Schoffstall, \(2015\)](#) investigating the English language needs of Saudi employees in 101 companies in Saudi Arabia but different from [Garrido & Codó, \(2017\)](#) conducting a research designed for investigating the English language needs of banking and finance professionals in Taiwan. Through his research, [Gursoy et al., \(2012\)](#) disclosed that managers and employees rated listening as the most important skill followed by speaking, reading, and writing. The study concluded that though English is needed in the companies, an intermediate level of proficiency is generally sufficient to conduct the job. Meanwhile [Huang et al., \(2019\)](#) figured out that reading was perceived to be the most important skill, followed by listening, and speaking. They, however, did not specify the level of English required for performing the tasks at work ([Phelan et al., 2013](#); [van Asperen et al., 2018](#); [Xie & Adamson, 2015](#); [Yasmin et al., 2016](#)).

The similar result of the current study to [Jakubiak, \(2012\)](#) is likely to be derived from the similar types of companies dominantly involved in the two studies. The data of the current study were obtained from a hospitality and a travel industry, while those of the previous one were obtained from 101 companies. Although the characteristics of the companies involved in the previous study was not clearly described, an assumption could be taken that the number of the financial institutions in a country where Almulhim took the data is commonly smaller compared to the non-financial ones. So, [Jeong et al., \(2017\)](#) was likely to gain more data from non-financial companies which were similar to the current study. Bank and other financial institutions commonly served people from country where the institutions located, while the non-financial ones seek to provide services or product for customers coming from around the world. As they have to serve and get in touch with people from in and out of country, the employees in non-financial institution are demanded to use English more through listening and speaking (mutually verbal interaction). Meanwhile those working in financial companies, frequently required to perform English only for business matters, such as writing and reading business letters, reading and replying an e-mail, reading SOP and so on ([Kardijan, 2017](#); [Lin et al., 2018](#); [Lyons, 2003](#)).

Wu and Chin, as it has been explained above, gained their data from banks and other financial institutions. The employees in these companies rarely required to communicate verbally with the customers. The interaction is likely to be with foreign colleagues or other similar companies abroad which are conducted through letters, e-mail or fax. That is why they are highly demanded to perform reading and writing skills ([Lyons & Wearing, 2012](#); [McKenzie, 2008](#); [Millar et al., 2010](#); [Oktadiana & Chon, 2017](#); [Ozgit & Caglar, 2015](#)).

In order to successfully perform the prescribed task in the target situations, the students certainly should be exposed to the way language used in the real world. Based on the data presented in the data description and data analysis, it is known that at work, English was commonly

performed in a package of tasks such as handling reservation, dealing with customer's complain, explaining products or services provided and so on. To deal with this fact, it would make sense when the learning objectives are formulated to enable the students to carry out the prescribed tasks at work (Baxter & Jack, 2015; Dja'far, 2017; Muijs et al., 2014). Therefore, the syllabus designed and the materials presented to the students should be around the tasks which are likely to be completed by using English in the target situation (Phelan & Mejia, 2015; Remington & Kitterlin-Lynch, 2018; Richards, 2013; Shin, 2016; Syafrizal & Rohmawati, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and the research findings, it is found out that the students' English needs in the area of hospitality and travel industry are to master the four skills of English of which listening and speaking skills were overwhelmingly used. At work, English is highly used in oral form. This certainly requires the students to be able to perform and comprehend spoken language through speaking and listening. Furthermore, although reading and writing skills are not demanded in similar degree to listening and speaking, the importance to master these skills cannot be aligned. There are still several tasks at work which require the staffs to perform reading and writing competence. These results imply that the ESP lecturers should ensure that the learning materials presented to the students are adjusted to the needs in the field. To design the materials, the lecturers should not solely rely on their assumption and facts found in the class. Instead, they should also identify the way English applied at work.

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