NEEDS ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH ACADEMIC WRITING FOR NON-ENGLISH LECTURERS LEARNING TO WRITE IN INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS

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Abstract: With the increasing demand for producing international publications, many university lecturers are now trying to improve their English skills especially for writing papers for international publications. The so-called training on journal writing for international publications is offered to and conducted for them. This research was an attempt to identify the learning needs of them so that appropriate goals and syllabus for courses can be formulated. The data were collected with a questionnaire covering the identification of their interests in improving English writing for an academic purpose, writing skills considered necessary for them, as well as their preference in training organization. Forty non-English subject lecturers of a university with different disciplines as medicine, engineering, psychology, laws, and education were randomly selected as respondents. The data show that non-English lecturers are interested in improving writing skill and are aware that not being able to write English paper will negatively affect their academic performance. Writing skills as writing sentences and paragraphs, making paraphrases, writing good introductions, body, and conclusion are necessary to be studied. For training, they like to have it during work days once to three meetings in a week.

Keywords: Needs analysis, academic writing, non-English subject lecturers, international publications

INTRODUCTION

The demand for Indonesian lecturers and researchers to publish scientific papers in international journals is now increasing. The Regulation of the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education (MRTHE) Number 20 of 2017 for example, explicitly stipulates that to have the professorship allowance, professors are obliged to publish scientific papers in regular basis (Menristekdikti, 2017). Some types of research grants provided by the government also require the grant awardees to have international publication as one of the required research outputs (Dimyati, 2018). In addition, the government also offers an incentive to lecturers who can publish articles in reputable international journals as Scopus-indexed journals (Kemristekdikti, 2018b). Since the number of international publications becomes a highly-scored item in institution's and department's accreditation assessment, many universities also encourage and facilitate lecturers to publish in international journals as well as offer interesting financial incentives for those who are successful.

For that purpose, many lecturers are now trying to improve their English in general and English writing skill in particular. They attend courses, training, or writing clinics. Likewise, universities through their language centers or research centers regularly offer training and many types of writing assistance in the effort to boost international publication records. The government itself, through MRTHE regularly offers training to lecturers and researchers on technical guidance (*Bimbingan Teknis*) for publishing papers in reputable international journals

(Kemristekdikti, 2018a). In this way, borrowing the term from Adnan, in the effort of increasing the number of international publication, the government has provided "carrots and sticks" (Adnan, 2009). Financial allowances serve as the carrots while the regulations are the sticks.

However, many writing training prepared and offered by universities and training centers or experienced individuals very often do not really cater what the lecturers' need because of the absence of clear syllabus or curriculum designed specifically to address the needed skills. The writer's experience of interviewing participants attending such training found that, while the training was somehow worthwhile and motivating, it couldn't go in details in addressing their writing problems which in many cases are very heterogeneous.

To narrow the gap between what the syllabus drafters or course designers assume to be the problems of the training participants and the real needs of the training participants needs analysis is necessary to be conducted. In this way, the gap between the trainers' and learners' expected teaching and learning goals can be identified (Nunan, 1988). English course for journal writing for international publication can be considered as English for specific purposes (ESP) since it is designed to serve stakeholders with different learning goals, and aim to train students to use English in a specific discipline or context (Aliakbari & Boghayeri, 2014). It is a course which is intended to prepare students for non-teaching uses of the target language (Sarré & Whyte, 2016) or for the English used in specific disciplines, vocations, or professions to accomplish specific purposes" (Orr, 2002).

Serving as an information gathering process (Boroujeni & Fard, 2013), needs analysis is the cornerstone of an ESP course since it helps curriculum designers identify the demands of the target and learning situation so that the course prepared can be directed into a "focused course" (Dudley-Evans, Jo, & John, 1998) as well as a needs-based course (Chostelidou, 2010). With needs analysis, problem areas and the gap between the present proficiency level and the required proficiency can be identified so that curriculum or syllabus can be made fitted to learners' needs. As Nunan states, courses should be designed to fit students, not fitting students to courses (Nunan, 1999).

Under the above perspective, this study was aimed at identifying and analyzing non-English lecturers' needs in improving their ability to write English academic writing for international publications with the following specific research questions:

1. How is the non-English lecturers' interest in improving their English writing skill?
2. What English writing skills are considered important for them?
3. How do they prefer the training to be like?

METHOD

This descriptive study was conducted at Sultan Agung Islamic University Semarang involving 40 participants selected conveniently from around 400 lecturers working at the university (10%). They were from departments other than English Education or English Literature as Engineering, Medicine, Nursing, Psychology, Management, Accounting, Mathematics, Elementary School Teacher Educations, Law, and Islamic Studies. Their general English and writing proficiency were heterogeneous, but when they were requested to self-assess their English competence by choosing the available responses of 1) *Basic*, 2) *Intermediate* and 3) *Advance*, 45% of the respondents chose "Basic", while the rest chose "Intermediate". Mostly they hold a master degree (77.5%), only 9 of them hold a doctoral degree (22.5%). Fifteen respondents were male (37.5%), while the rest 25 respondents were female.

Data for the study were collected by a questionnaire written in *Bahasa Indonesia*. It consisted of 4 parts which collect consecutively respondent's identity (Part 1), respondent's interest in improving English writing skill (Part 2), needs analysis (Part 3), and training preference (Part 4). Part 2 and 4 were presented in the forms of questions with 3 prepared options for the answer, while part 3 as the core of the questionnaire was presented in the form of Likert-type model of 5 scales indicating the degree of being necessary. Respondents were requested to respond to statements by giving a check (V) in which 1 is "**Absolutely Not Necessary**", 2 represents "**Not Necessary**", 3 is "**Undecided**", 4 and 5 consecutively represent "**Necessary**", and "**Absolutely Necessary**". The use of the questionnaire in needs analysis here is in line with Haque who suggests that collecting information on writing problems can be obtained through among others students or respondents via interviews and questionnaire (Haque, 2014). The data collected were then analyzed descriptively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
The Non-English Lecturers' Interest in Improving their English Writing Skill
The four questions in Part 2 of the questionnaire were meant to collect information on the non-English lecturers' interest in English writing skill. The results are as follows:

a. Responding to the question whether they were interested in improving their English writing skill, 5% of the respondents chose "not interested", 32.5% chose "interested", and the rest 62.5% chose "very interested".

b. Responding to the question whether they were interested in joining if a training on English academic writing was offered to them, the result is similar to the previous question in which 5% of the respondents responded by "Not interested", 47.5% responded by "Interested", and the last 47.5% responded "Very Interested".

c. Question 3 inquired whether university lecturers needed to have the ability to write journal articles in English. No one answered "Not necessary". All respondents were positive; 32.5% of the respondents answered "Necessary", and even the rest 67.5% answered "Absolutely Necessary".

d. For the last question in Part 2 which inquired what would happen to the lecturers' academic performance if the lecturers could not write academic papers in English, 12.5% chose "fine", 22.5% mentioned that nothing would happen to their academic performance, and the rest 65% stated that their academic performance would be negatively affected.

The data collected clearly show that Indonesian lecturers were very aware of the importance of being able to write and publish scientific papers in international journals. For that purpose, they were interested in improving their English writing skill because the ability to write journal articles is absolutely necessary and they believe that unable to write academic papers in English may bring a negative effect to their academic performance.

The English Writing Skills Considered Necessary by the Respondents

Part 3, as the core of the questionnaire, collected information on the degree of being necessary of the 12 items of writing skills listed in the questionnaire. The items range from skill to write correct sentences to write references. The results are presented in term of a percentage below:

Table 1 Respondents' Perceived Needs on skills in English Writing

No	Statements	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
1	The ability to write correct English sentences.	0	2.5	0.0	37.5	60.0
2	The ability to develop main ideas to paragraphs.	0	0	5.0	67.5	27.5
3	The ability to paraphrase.	0	2.5	5.0	50.0	42.5
4	The ability to write quotations.	0	0	2.5	50.0	47.5
5	The ability to describe data in the forms of tables or graphs.	0	5	5	47.5	42.5
6	The ability to compare and contrast data.	0	7.5	0.0	65.0	27.5
7	The ability to write a good introduction to journal articles.	0	5.0	0.0	40.0	55.0
8	The ability to write a conclusion.	0	5.0	0.0	40.0	55.0
9	The ability to describe the method used in the research.	0	5.0	7.5	45.0	42.5
10	The ability to write a discussion of the research findings.	0	0	2.5	57.5	40.0
11	The ability to write abstracts in English.	0	0	0	37.5	62.5
12	The ability to write references.	0	5.0	5.0	60.0	30.0

All items of English writing skills listed in the questionnaire were responded positively. No respondent chose option 1 of "Absolutely Not Necessary", a very few respondents chose either "Not Necessary" or "Undecided". This means that non-English lecturers do need such kind of skills. Positive responses were divided into "Necessary" and "Absolutely Necessary". For "Necessary" option, the highest percentage of responses was with item "*The ability to develop main ideas to paragraphs*" as much as 67.5%, while the lowest percentage was in item 1 signifying "*The ability to write correct English sentences*" and item 11 "*The ability to write abstracts in English*." For "Absolutely Necessary" option, the highest percentage (62.5%) was with item number 11 "*The ability to write abstracts in English*", while the lowest was with item 2 "*The ability to develop main ideas to paragraphs*", and item 6 *"The ability to compare and contrast data."*

Since learners' responses in needs analysis reflect learners' knowledge (Gözüyeşil, 2014), when learners consider a skill to be necessary of absolutely necessary, it means that they are in need of it or they are poor on that skill. Therefore, the findings of this need analysis confirm the previous research finding that the English language competence of Indonesian people is generally low (Lie, 2007), and English language mastery has long become one among the causes of low international publication of Indonesian lecturers (Alimi & Rokhman, 2017)

Respondents' Preferences on the Training Implementation

This part presents data about the respondents' preferences on the training execution covering a) The day of the training, b) time, c) how many times per week, d) their preferred instructors/facilitators, e) budget for the training, and f) targeted learning the outcome.

a. The day of training

Respondents were given 3 options to respond to the question about when the training should be organized. The first is the workdays during work hours, the second is work days after work hours, and the last is during the weekend. The majority of the respondents preferred to have the training conducted during the work days and work hours (67.5%), 30% preferred to have it during the work days but after work hours, while only 2.5% preferred to have it during the weekends.

b. The time of training

Concerning the time of training, respondents were to choose one among 3 options of the morning (8-10), mid-day (13.00 – 15.00), and late afternoon (15.00 – 17.00). The result shows that mostly they prefer to have it in the morning (60%). Twenty-five percent of respondents prefer to have it during the mid-day, and the last 15% prefer to have it in the late afternoon.

c. Training frequency in a week

Respondents were given the option of once a week, two to three times a week, and every day. The result shows that once a week was the most preferred frequency (55%), but 2 to 3 times a week was still reasonable since it was preferred by 42.5% of the respondent. This choice was taken by considering the tight schedules of teaching hours as well as other important jobs of lecturers.

d. The instructors/facilitators

Respondents were given three options of 1) university instructors, 2) invited instructors, and 3) university and invited instructors. University instructors here refer to the experienced lecturers or staff from language center of the university where the respondents work, while invited instructors refer to journal writers or experienced individuals with good records of international publications from other universities/institutions. The result is 25% of the respondents prefer to have their own colleagues from the university, 35% prefer to have invited tutors, and the last 40% prefer to have the combination between colleagues and invited instructors.

e. The budget for the training

Budget always becomes an important issue when it is about training; whether the participants are charged some amount of fees or it is for free. No respondent had an idea of paying a charge for the training, but 12.5% of the respondents had ideas that the university and the respondents themselves had to bear the cost of the training. Majority of them (87.5%) would like to have the university fully paid the cost of the training.

f. Targeted learning outcome

When respondents were asked on the targeted learning outcome, 80% of them responded that as the training completed, the participants should be able to submit his/her manuscript to the international journal. Fifteen percent expected to have a lower level of learning outcome by having "the English manuscript completed". The rest 5% even had a lower level of targeted achievement by having only an ability to draft an English paper.

CONCLUSION

Needs analysis plays an important role in the process of curriculum/syllabus design because it can help identify what the language learners need and want as well as their language knowledge so that teachers and educators can fit the materials to the learners' needs. The study found that non-English lecturers are interested in improving their English writing skill and lessons on basic writing skills as writing English sentences, developing paragraphs are still considered

necessary besides academic writing related skills as paraphrasing, making quotations, describing data, comparing and comparing, and writing a good introduction, describing research method and conclusion. English teachers, trainers, and educators can help them by addressing those specific needs on their syllabus or training curriculum so that the non-English lecturers can be more motivated in learning since the training materials presented really match to their needs. For the implementation for the training, non-English lecturers prefer to have it during the working days and working hours. Since most of the lecturers have been very busy with their routines, they prefer to have training on regular basis as once to three times in a week and the cost for training should not be burdened on them.

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