

## **INVESTIGATING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEEDS OF PURCHASING DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES: A STUDY OF EOP**

**Multazam Abubakar**

*Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar*  
[multazam.abubakar@uin-alauddin.ac.id](mailto:multazam.abubakar@uin-alauddin.ac.id)

**Muthi'ah**

*Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar*  
[muthiah.rahim@uin-alauddin.ac.id](mailto:muthiah.rahim@uin-alauddin.ac.id)

**Muhammad Syahrudin Nawir**

*Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar*  
[muhammad.syahrudin.nawir@uin-alauddin.ac.id](mailto:muhammad.syahrudin.nawir@uin-alauddin.ac.id)

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims at investigating the needs of occupational English for Purchasing Department in PT. Bosowa Lloyd, Makassar. The subject of this research was 12 employees working in Purchasing Department consisting 6 males and 8 females, including one head which is called Purchasing Manager. The data were collected through a questionnaire, interview, and observation. The findings of this research indicates that Purchasing Department are required to have high levels of English proficiency. In order to prepare language program, the information of PSA becomes the starting point to design course and instruction material for the students. To identify TSA, the needs analysis for employee of Purchasing Department was performed through analyzing the responsibilities which were taken from company manual. Moreover, to meet the demands, communicative functioning (which covers discourse communities, business genre, key communication events and function, grammar and lexis), specific expectation of the students and the role of cross-cultural communication are also important to explore.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), needs analysis, purchasing

### **INTRODUCTION**

**E**nglish as lingua franca becomes the most widely used language in business (Lee, 2016). It can exceed international borders when used in trade and various kind of business. English has now become a global language for business all over the world to such an extent that it is the standard official language in certain industries such as the shipping and airline industries. It has resulted in the knowledge of English being a near-mandatory requirement for critical jobs such as airline pilots and naval officers, etc. Apart from having an impressive command of spoken English today's competitive corporate culture demands an equally impressive command of written English as well. It is mainly because almost all forms of business communication such as emails, presentations, sales and marketing and even corporate legal documentation are now carried out in English.

Every company all around the world involves in purchasing process, either domestic or international level. The part of company handles this process is called Purchasing Department.

Purchasing Department help keep the company financially healthy. They procure goods and services to meet the operational needs of company with the best value. They keep operations run smoothly since they monitor supply process and responsible to make deal with potential vendors. In procuring, sometimes Purchasing Department have to search vendors across the national borders. They find the needs in other countries and deliver the goods to Indonesia. Involved in international trading, Purchasing Department are required to possess good knowledge of English.

In order to have a good performance in English, Purchasing Department must be occupied with English course which meet the demands of their job. However, there is no specific major and department in any educational institution which specifically explore about purchasing and to prepare this department to work according to their task. This fact leads the importance of developing needs analysis of English for Purchasing department. All this time, the staff just start to learn English when they are accepted to work at the department. They learn English autonomously through searching any information they need through internet at their spare time; however, they face a lot of problems and confusion and have none to consult. Therefore, they require special language program which really meets their needs.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **English for Specific Purposes (ESP)**

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is considered as separate discipline with General English (GE). ESP is focused on English learning and teaching situation in which teaching methods and learning environment are different from General English. One of the main differences between ESP and GE is that the learners and their purposes for learning English. ESP learners are usually adults who already have some basic knowledge of English. They learn the language to communicate in professional situation, especially to perform particular profession-related activities. An ESP course is then designed based on an analysis of purposes and needs for which English is required. ESP focuses more on the use of language in certain context than on teaching language structures. ESP covers various fields of study, such as Business, Sciences, Medical, Tourism, Law and so on. Furthermore, based on the aims of study, ESP is also different with General English which teaches all the four skills. ESP requires certain analysis to determine which language skills are most needed by the learners.

ESP recognizes learners' specific language needs, which are reflected in the development of specific approaches and materials, aiming to satisfy their present or future academic, vocational or professional purposes (Dudley Evas 2001). ESP is taught as a subject that concerns the learners' real life in their current or future profession, therefore it must be integrated with subject matter area. For example, an ESP program might emphasize the development of writing skills in students who are preparing for graduate work in Business Administration. An ESP program might promote the development of spoken skills in students who are studying English in order to become tourist guides (Rahman, 2015).

### **English for Occupational Purposes (EOP)**

Generally, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is classified into two main branches, they are English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), either based on learner's experience (when they take place) or professional area. The distinction between EAP and EOP is not clear, because whatever the students learn in university is actually a preparation of professional occupation they have to face after completing their education and can also be classified as EOP, for example, English for Business (Irshad & Anwar, 2018). The term EOP refers to English that is not for academic purposes, but to professional purposes in administration, medicine and law in which the learners already have the experience (Dudley-evans et al., 1998).

### **Needs Analysis**

Needs analysis is generally accepted as the appropriate starting point for both curriculum design and materials writing (Liu & Zhang, 2020). It can help teacher gather information to find out how much the students already know and what they still need to learn (Lee, 2016). Richards (2001) proposes that needs is language deficiency, that is the difference between what a learner can presently do in a language and what he or she should be able to do. Dudley-evans et al. (1998) define needs analysis as the process of establishing the *what* and *how* of how of a course. Needs analysis involves finding students' present situation (PSA) and target situation (TSA) before designing curriculum and syllabi (learning needs or LSA) (Sujana et al., 2019).

### **METHOD**

The study took place in PT. Bosowa Lloyd which is a shipping company that located in Makassar. The company was established in January 2011. The company's focus is distributing cement, in this case cement that produced by PT. Semen Bosowa Maros, to some parts of Indonesia and also some cities in ASEAN. It is a joint-venture company between Bosowa Corporation (Makassar, Indonesia) and CTI Group (Amman, Jordan). Therefore, many foreigners work in this company, either in office or on vessels as crews. Beside foreigners, the company also hires many local employees which are placed in all departments. Those employees are from multidisciplinary background. They are mostly alumni of general universities and not from marine school.

The subject of this study was Purchasing Department of PT. Bosowa Lloyd. The main job description of this department is to provide every needs to run the vessels, especially in buying goods and providing technicians. There were 12 employees working in this department consisting of 6 males and 8 females, including one head which is called Purchasing Manager. All of the employees graduated from university and have bachelor degree, except the Purchasing Manager who hold master degree. The employees of this department were from different educational background and all of them had no experience in purchasing field before working in that office. They also had very little knowledge in Business English while the situation of the office required them to be fluent in English. So, they required to learn a lot about Business English.

The data were collected through questionnaire, interview, and observation. The questionnaire is close-ended and covers three points. Firstly, it is used to measure English level of students which was taken from Richards (2001) which and translated into Bahasa Indonesia in which the students do self-assessment by choosing the item that indicates their proficiency. Secondly, it is used to reveal needs perceived by students. Thirdly, the questionnaire uncovers specific expectation of students. The interview was conducted to Managing Director as the head of company and Human Resource Department (HRD) to find out the students' needs based on their job description. The observation was performed during 1 week in that office in order to decide the materials that will be taught, to watch employees' activities, with whom they interact, how they communicate with other parties, genre and vocabularies that are commonly required and to collect authentic materials to be used during the course.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Present Situation Analysis (PSA)

The information on PSA becomes the starting point to design course and instruction material for the students. It covers students' current level of English, needs perceived by the students, preference in English learning activities, needs perceived by management.

### *Students' Level of English*

The English level of students was measured using self-rating taken from Richards (2001) which was translated into bahasa Indonesia in which the students do self-assessment by choosing the item that indicates their proficiency. The result of the self-rating is as follows:

**Table 1. The Result of Self-Rating of Students' English Level**

Level	Description	Number	Frequency
Basic (Lower)	Know a few words and fixed expressions; cannot manage conversational exchanges; respond to question and answer exchanges on a few topics; have a limited vocabulary, grammar and knowledge of idioms; pronunciation heavily influenced by mother tongue	-	-
Basic (Upper)	Know a limited number of common words and expressions; able to manage limited, short conversations on a few predictable topics; survival level knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and idioms; pronunciation heavily influenced by mother tongue	2	16.7%
Intermediate (Lower)	Reasonable fluency on a restricted range of topics but difficulty outside a limited range of topics; many problems with words, idioms, grammar and pronunciation	7	53.3%
Intermediate (Upper)	Can manage comfortably in familiar situations and with familiar topics, though still some difficulty with vocabulary, idioms, grammar and pronunciation	3	25%
Advance	Able to converse naturally on most topics; little difficulty with vocabulary, idioms, grammar and pronunciation	-	-

The table above shows students' level of English as the result of self-rating. In general, the average ability of students is at Intermediate (Lower) level. It is found that 2 students (16.7%) out of 12

respondents are in Basic (Upper) Level; 7 students (53.3%) are in Intermediate (lower) level, 3 students are in Intermediate (Upper) level and none of them is in either Basic (Lower) or Advance Level.

Given the fact above, the entry point to design language program is Intermediate (Lower) Level. It is based on the majority of student ability in English. Whereas, there are only small number of students who are in the other levels.

### ***Needs Perceived by the Students***

#### **1. Reason of learning English**

From the questionnaires distributed to the 12 student-employees, it is found that 41.6% of the students wanted to improve the communication skills (speaking), 33.3% expected to learn how to write e-mail and letter, and 25% out of 12 students intended to comprehend text in English. The difference of students needs is based on their job division. The employees who are responsible to deliver goods to vessels tend to choose communication skills rather than other reasons. The employees who take care of the administration rate learn how to write e-mail and letter as well as comprehend text in English.

The language program should be directed and designed to improve students' speaking, writing, reading and listening skills. Therefore, it must cover the materials and activities that allow the students to improve the three items that mentioned before in order to meet the students' needs.

#### **2. Skills to be developed**

Based on the students' responses of the questionnaire, it is revealed that 50% of the respondents focus more on speaking, 33.3% consider that writing is important to emphasize and 16.6% argue reading needs to enhance. With regards to sub-skills, 53.3% of the students put vocabulary and expression in priority, 33.3% agree with pronunciation improvement and only 8.4% of students want to learn grammar.

### ***Preference in English Learning Activities***

The result of questionnaire revealed that most of the students' preferred the activities that involve others due in running their job, the employees need to cooperate with each other. Pair-work activities are favored by 41.6% of students, small group activities are preferred by 33.3%, large group activities are voted by 16.7% and individual work activities are chosen only by 8.3% of respondents.

### ***Needs Perceived by Management***

The management of this study refers to Managing Director, the head of company, who is responsible for the whole company and also the staff of Human Resource Department (HRD) who knows all job description of employees and also responsible for their training to improve their performance. They acknowledge the students' needs and inform several topics that are useful to be taught during the course. So, the needs informed by students is in line with the one admits by management. They also emphasize correspondence and speaking as the main part of the language program and to meet the goals, the observation and using authentic materials are highly required.

### **Target Situation Analysis (TSA)**

The English language needs analysis for employee of Purchasing Department was performed through analyzing the responsibilities. In the current research, employees' responsibilities are taken from company manual. According to the document, the competence of Purchasing Department staff are:

- Good knowledge of vendor sourcing practices (researching, evaluating and liaising with vendors)
- Hands-on experience with purchasing software (e.g. Procurify or SpendMap)
- Understanding of supply chain procedures
- Solid analytical skills, with the ability to create financial reports and conduct cost analyses
- Negotiation skills

Moreover, competences of the department in connection with language ability based on the company manual can be summarized as follows:

- Capable of exchanging information with the colleague and vendors
- Capable of researching potential vendors
- Having knowledge and skills on negotiating contract terms of agreement and pricing
- Capable of comparing and evaluating offers from suppliers
- Capable of preparing reports (e.g. on orders and costs)

After analyzing the language-associated competencies above, it is found that Purchasing Department are required to have high levels of English proficiency. There are four language skills required by the employees: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Those for skills are considered essential for them since they communicate both in written and spoken form. In written form, the employees always send and receive emails and letters in English either from the company in Indonesia or from the vendor overseas; while, communication in spoken form is used when they communicate with fellow colleague in office and the crews of vessels since the company occupies a number of foreigners. Furthermore, in the matter of language aspect, the employees argue that vocabularies, pronunciation and grammar are highly required. The useful vocabularies for the employees are in the context of marketing, procurement process and vessel's operation. Pronunciation is also essential for them since they communicate directly with foreigners. Finally, they also required to master cross-cultural understanding in communication in order to avoid misunderstanding.

### **Details of Language Program**

#### ***Communicative functioning of the Language Program***

#### **1. Discourse communities**

##### **a. Whether the relationship is new or old**

In this Purchasing Department context, they establish both old and new relationship with sales/vendor. In purchasing some needs, they always collect quotation letter from vendors. They will ask the vendor to send them quotation according to requisition they send in advance.

For the new relationship, the communication is formal. The will start the communication, either oral or written, by introducing their company information. Purchasing Department will introduce their company information and also asking for the vendor company information just like *whether the vendor is certified by any of IACS Class society*. In marine, a good shipping company does not allow the company which is not certified by IACS class society to perform any test or repair onboard. This is to make sure that the vendor is good and qualified company. If the vendor replies the email by confirming that their company is certified, then Purchasing Department will send the job list and details of safety equipment to the vendor and the vendor will then reply by sending the quotation according to the job list. The language also is very formal and it has sense of being happy for establishing the relationship. For example, the use of phrase *your good company* instead of use *your company* to mention to refer the vendor side.

For example:

Dear Mr. Achmad,

Please find the attached requisition and kindly send us the quotation from your side accordingly.

Thanks for your kind attention

Best regards,  
**Cecilia Desyana**  
Purchasing Department

In communicating with old vendors, they are more relaxed since they already know each other. They do not need to introduce each other and can directly ask the vendor to send quotation. In the beginning of the letter, they can just mention the name of sales or PIC of the vendor instead of saying *Dear Sir/Madam* since they already communicate several times. In addition, the language used is straight forward.

**b. Where the balance of power lies**

The power lies on the Purchasing Department since in this context Purchasing Department is buyer while the vendor is seller. Seller is the party which most need compared with buyer. Based on the above two letters, it can be seen that the language used by buyer is like command to the vendor, it implies that they realize that the power is in their hands.

For example, in letter of new relationship, the buyer says *“Please advise if your good company is certified by any of IACS class society and kindly send us the copy certificate for our reference”*, while in the old relationship letter, the buyer says *“Please find the attached requisition and kindly send us the quotation from your side accordingly”*. Both sentences imply that the buyer commands the seller to do what they ask even tough in the first letter the language use is quite soft than the second due to the new relationship factor.

Dear Sir/Madame,

First of all, we are PT. Bosowa Lloyd, joint venture of Bosowa Corporation (Makassar, Indonesia) and CTI Group (Amman, Jordan). PT. Bosowa Lloyd is a shipping company which is located in Makassar.

Based on information we got from internet, your company can perform safety equipment annual test for vessel. Please advise if your good company is certified by any of IACS class society and kindly send us the copy certificate for our reference.

Thanks for your kind attention

Best regards,  
**Cecilia Desyana**  
Purchasing Dept.

### c. **Cultural values and attitude**

Cultural values and attitude is also need to concern on this context. For instance, the language used in PT. Bosowa Lloyd company is English so the type of writing is quite straight forward just like western culture. It is different with Indonesian type of writing which is quite spiral (Kaplan 1966 in Brown 2007). Besides, people of business life always shake hands each other if they meet their collogues. If it is first meeting, then they will mention their name and their position while shaking hands.

### 2. **Business genres**

There are some business letters that are required by Purchasing Dept. They are request letter, transmittal letter/delivery note (to confirm that they already received the stuffs from vendor or/and for the crew onboard confirm that they already receive stuffs from Purchasing Department), response letter, complaint letter/letter of protest (to complain anything which is considered inappropriate with the supposed situation), confirmation letter, evaluation slip (to compare some quotations from several vendors in order to find the most benefit for them), working-order letter (to confirm that they agree with the vendor quotation and ask them to do the job), purchase order (to confirm that they agree with the quotation of supplying certain stuffs). The writer names all the letters above by **Purchasing Genre**.

### 3. **Key communication events**

There are several key communication events in this context, they are:

- Telephoning: Make and receive any phone call from any party, either from vendor, crew on board, etc. This is about how to talk on phone in good way.
- Socializing: How to behave in business life, how to interact with other parties either vendor or crew onboard.
- Making an appointment: This is about how to arrange, reschedule and cancelling meeting
- Making presentations: Present in a meeting about ay activities they do, any supply which is pending, done or cancel, present they financial requirement so Finance Department can prepare for them.
- Taking part in meetings: How to interrupt in a meeting, how to talk properly in a meeting.

- Negotiating: How to bargain with vendor, either to get cheaper price, more flexible terms of payment and shorter delivery period; how to start and end the negotiation, win-win negotiation.
- Corresponding: Writing email or letter to other parties.
- Reporting: Make report of their activities, delivery status and the problem they face in Monthly Review in the office; make report to the manager if they have very urgent situation and very big problem.

#### 4. Functions, grammar and lexis

The functions that required by Purchasing Department are taking turn, expressing their opinion and disagreeing. Taking turn is more about when they can speak in certain conversation, not just disturb other parties if they are talking. Expressing opinion and disagreeing are important to perform in a meeting either with their company staff or other parties, or discussion with managers or other staff in their department. Besides, expressing gratitude, apologizing, commands, polite request, expressing ability and disability, asking and giving factual information, expressing wishes and needs, like and dislike, asking and expressing choice, offering accepting and refusing help, asking for and giving permission, expressing and asking for certainty and uncertainty, agreement and disagreement, possibility and impossibility, warning and make invitation.

Grammar that required by Purchasing Dept is like in general English. However, *passive voice and active voice* are important due to they are used mostly in written form for corresponding. Besides, *modals*, some tenses like *Simple Present Tense, Present Continues, Present Perfect* and *Modals* are also important to be learnt by the students.

Lexis required is any technical terms that mostly used in purchasing. Some of them are *terms and conditions, ordering, prices, payment, delivery, penalty, secrecy, requisition, packaging, quotation, airway bill number, freight, shipping, customs, tax, invoice, country or origins, term of payment, force majeure, liability for defects, third party, replacement parts* and *availability*.

Some phrasal and sentence commonly used in telephoning are *I'm off to a conference.., no problem, bye..., hang on a moment and I'll put you through..., call back..., could you repeat that, please?; Can you speak a little more slowly, please?; Can I speak to.. ?; Would you mind spelling that for me, please?; You must have the wrong number?; Oh, sorry about that. I must have dialed the wrong number. Sorry to have troubled you.*

Some phrasal and sentences commonly used in presentation are *Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for coming along here today..; the purpose of today's presentation is to discuss....; now let me begin by.. ; secondly,.. ; and finally... I'd be very happy to invite you to ask question at the end of the session; if you have a look at this first graph...; Now let's look at..., as you can see...; Can I just ask.....?; Can you explain.....?; Yes, a very good question.*

#### **Specific expectation of the students**

- Group size: 5 students and maximum 6

- Hours/day: 1,5 hours/day; only working days (Monday-Friday) starting from 04.30 pm until 06.00 pm.
- Materials/handouts: Taken from authentic materials in which they face everyday
- Pace of classes: Fast
- Course length: 3 weeks so there will be 15 meetings
- Learners' age: Adult aged from 25 – 35 years old.
- Physical facilities: Classroom, desk, table, AC, whiteboard, stationary and LCD are provided by office while the teacher only prepares the materials.
- Assessment procedure: There will be 2 meetings for evaluation: in meeting 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>/last meeting. The evaluation in the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting will be about presentation, role-play negotiation including purchasing vocabulary; while in the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting will be corresponding by writing some emails which have to mentions purchasing vocabulary.
- Pre-course information: Printed booklet
- Quality and style of presentations: High
- Appearance/dress of tutors: Smart and formal

***The role of cross-cultural communication in the language program***

The role of cross-cultural communication is important in BE class since sometimes they will interact with other people from other country whose different culture. It may lead them to cross-cultural interaction. Cross-cultural knowledge is required in BE in order to help the students to behave for the sake of successful meeting and negation by knowing the politeness strategy and the negotiation tactic.

- Eye contact: In interacting with people from Indonesia, eye contact is not much required.
- Body space: in Indonesia culture people keep distance of people. Not to seat and standing very close by other people, but there must be some distance.
- Transparent: In Indonesian culture, people are quite not straight forward. They do not say what in their mind and their feelings directly but other things that related to his real feeling.
- In Indonesia, the boss is always the boss. The employee will keep respect and behave very formal to the boss whenever and wherever they are. It is hard for them to behave like friends out of office. But, they behave similarly either in office or outside their office.
- In Indonesia, it is bad to ask the colleague for drinking since they consider that drinking is prohibited. However, it is common to invite the colleague to have meal or coffee in a restaurant to talk about business and negotiation.
- Coming on time: Mostly Indonesian people hard to come on time. They always late even though they already know what time actually an event will be commenced.
- Most of Indonesian people are hard to manage their time. So, sometimes they do certain jobs near the deadline. Thus, it will make them stressful and under pressure to do the job.

- Indonesian people are accustomed to calling somebody using his given name while western people always call somebody by his family name.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that Purchasing Department are required to have high levels of English proficiency. In order to prepare language program, the information of PSA becomes the starting point to design course and instruction material for the students. To identify TSA, the needs analysis for employee of Purchasing Department was performed through analyzing the responsibilities, in the current research, employees' responsibilities are taken from company manual. Moreover, to meet the demands, communicative functioning (which covers discourse communities, business genre, key communication events and function, grammar and lexis), specific expectation of the students and the role of cross-cultural communication are also important to explore.

## REFERENCES

- Dudley-evans, T., Jo, M., & John, S. (1998). Developments in ESP: A multi-disciplinary approach. *Developments in ESP: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach*.
- Irshad, I., & Anwar, B. (2018). English for Specific Purposes: Designing an EAP Course for Computer Science Students. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*. <https://doi.org/10.22555/joeeed.v5i1.1533>
- Lee, C.-L. (2016). Principles and practices of ESP course design: A case study of a university of science and technology. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*.
- Liu, D., & Zhang, P. (2020). A Needs Analysis Proposal for ESP: A Case Study of a Short English Training Course for Bank Tellers in a Chinese Bank. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2020.87017>
- Rahman, M. (2015). English for Specific Purposes (ESP): A Holistic Review. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2015.030104>
- Richards, J. C. (2001). Curriculum Development in Language Teaching. In *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511667220>
- Sujana, I. M., Hanafi, N., Wilian, S., Syahrial, E., & Fitriana, E. (2019). Negotiating conflicts of needs in designing teaching english for midwifery students. *International Journal of Language Education*. <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v3i2.10657>