



Bridging the Gap: English Language Needs Analysis for Informatics Engineering Students in Higher Education

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Abstract

Needs analysis involves identifying and understanding learners' necessities, lacks, and wants within a specific context. This study aimed to analyze these aspects among informatics engineering students in learning English. Using a qualitative interview approach, the research was conducted at a private university in Banjarmasin with one English lecturer and three informatics students as research participants. The limited number of participants was intentionally selected to allow for in-depth exploration of perspectives and experiences, which is consistent with the exploratory nature of qualitative needs analysis in ESP contexts. The findings revealed that students' necessities are linked to academic and professional needs, particularly speaking skills and advanced English proficiency for effective communication. Their lacks included unbalanced teaching of the four language skills, limited evaluation, and varying proficiency levels. The students' wants showed strong motivation for independent learning through songs, films, and social media, as well as a preference for more engaging and interactive classroom activities. These findings provide important implications for ESP curriculum development by emphasizing the need for needs-based syllabus design, balanced skill integration, and the incorporation of discipline-relevant and technology-supported learning activities.

Keywords

English for Specific Purposes, English for Informatics, Informatics Engineering Students, Needs Analysis.

Introduction

The Industrial Revolution is an era where technology has a very important role in society. Rapid developments in the field of technology have a major impact on various sectors of life, from the manufacturing industry to digital services (Tangelangi et al. 2021). In this context, English plays an inevitable role as the main language in global communication. English has become very important in the field of technology because most of the literature, documentation, software, and industry standards are in English.

Many technological innovations and research findings are published in English, making English proficiency essential for accessing up-to-date information and developing professional expertise (Sri Andayani, 2022). Across countries and sectors, higher levels of English proficiency are consistently associated with better employment opportunities, career advancement, and leadership roles (Prasetya, 2023; Hiew et al., 2021; Karmaker & Hasan, 2025). Moreover, English functions as the primary language of global collaboration, enabling technology professionals from different countries to communicate, exchange ideas, and jointly develop hardware and software. Such collaboration plays a crucial role in accelerating technological innovation and its global application.

As one of the parties who study and participate in the development of technology, students have a very important role in dealing with the dynamics of the digital world that continues to grow. Technology continues to undergo rapid changes and innovations, ranging from hardware and software to new concepts in the field of artificial intelligence. Consequently, students must always update their knowledge about the latest developments in technology in order to remain relevant and competitive in the global market. This requires them to not only master technical knowledge and skills but also to continuously develop their ability to understand various information related to the world of technology.

One important aspect that cannot be overlooked in such an endeavor is an understanding of the language that is widely used in the world of technology. As an international language, English is the main tool to access various sources of information that are very important for students. Most technical literature, tutorials, software documentation, and scientific journals related to technology are written in English. Thus, mastering English allows students to get the latest information, communicate with fellow professionals around the world, and keep up with the rapid development of technology.

Informatics engineering students generally use Indonesian as their first language, while English is known as a foreign language that is not widely used in daily life. Most of their interactions, both on and off campus, are often conducted using Indonesian, given that it is the official language used in the Education system and everyday culture in Indonesia (Buragohain et al., 2023). However, the students realize that rapid global development, especially in the field of informatics engineering, is inevitable. They realize that in order to remain relevant and competitive at the international level, English language skills are crucial. English, which is often used in scientific literature, technical documents, and professional communications, is becoming the main tool for accessing the latest information and technology.

English for Specific Purposes has developed as a distinct discipline since the 1960s. English for Specific Purposes focuses on learning and teaching situational English using teaching and learning methods in a different learning environment from General English. English for Specific Purposes emerged as a separate field in the 1960s. The emergence of English for Specific Purposes was due to various events, including World War II in 1945, the rapid expansion of scientific fields, the growth of science and technology, and the increasing use of English as an international language in science and technology. The emergence of the English for Specific Purposes movement was triggered by the need to learn English for Specific Purposes that depend on a job or job description (Hutchinson & Waters 1987).

All programs are needs-based, and this distinction is the key difference between English for Specific Purposes and English for General, not only in meeting needs but also in recognizing those needs. Recognizing the situational need to communicate in English distinguishes between English for Specific Purposes and English for General learners. Furthermore, Hutchinson & Waters (1987) emphasize that the difference between English for Specific Purposes and English for General lies not in the learners' needs, but in the awareness of those needs. English language learning for adult learners can be categorized into two main groups: English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). These two categories have fundamental differences that depend on the individual's goals and needs. The first category, English for General, focuses on the general use of English and can be applied in various contexts. Learners who choose English for General usually want to master English for daily communication or social activities.

On the other hand, English for Specific Purposes is more focused on specific purposes, such as the English language needs in professional or academic fields. For example, a professional in the medical or business field may need more targeted English, according to the terminology and context relevant to their profession. Accordingly, English for Specific Purposes is designed to meet specific needs, prioritizing material that is directly applicable in a particular field. The main difference between these two categories lies in the level of specification of the material taught. English for General provides a broader and more general foundation for a basic understanding. At the same time, English for Specific Purposes offers a more focused and in-depth approach according to the desired profession or field of study. Thus, the choice between English for General Purposes and English for Specific Purposes largely depends on the learning objectives that learners want to achieve, whether it is to broaden their communication skills in general or to improve language skills in a specific professional context.

Needs analysis is the process of collecting information about learners' needs in order to design effective instruction. Before conducting the analysis, it is essential to distinguish between target needs and learning needs (Sari et al., 2019). Hutchinson and Waters (1987), classify needs into two main categories: (1) target needs, which refer to what learners require to communicate effectively in the target situation, and (2) learning needs, which relate to what learners need in order to learn the language. Target needs are determined by the demands of the target situation, such as giving presentations, writing reports, or interacting with clients in professional contexts (Warti, 2020; Rahman, 2015; Yuzar, 2022). Furthermore, target needs are subdivided into necessities, lacks, and wants. Necessities refer to the language aspects required to function effectively in the target situation; lacks describe the gap between these necessities and learners' current proficiency, indicating what learners are not yet able to do compared with the target demands; and wants reflect learners' subjective preferences and goals regarding what they wish to learn, including specific skills, topics, or activities, which may or may not fully correspond with actual target-situation requirements (Warti, 2020; Haryono, 2020; Liu et al., 2011).

The needs analysis approach can include teaching methodologies and strategies. In addition, the needs analysis also includes design, such as materials, topics, and language features. Needs analysis aims to evaluate not only aspects related to the teaching and learning process, but also the relationship between teachers and students, including their attitudes and behavior. By conducting a needs analysis, both institutions and teachers can determine what should be improved and implemented. Accordingly, needs analysis is the first step in developing, analyzing, assessing, and evaluating English for Specific Purposes (Yulia & Agustiani, 2019).

To identify students' needs in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), several approaches should be employed to ensure that the language instruction is closely aligned with learners' goals and contextual demands. One of the primary approaches is situation analysis, which consists of several stages, namely Target Situation Analysis (TSA), Present Situation Analysis (PSA), and Learning Needs Analysis (LNA). TSA focuses on what learners must be able to do by the end of a course in their real-world target context, such as professional or academic settings (Rahman, 2015; Barghamadi, 2020; Wirawan et al., 2022). PSA, on the other hand, examines learners' current situation, including their existing language proficiency and prior knowledge at the beginning of instruction (Barghamadi, 2020; Nhut, 2021; Wirawan et al., 2022). Meanwhile, LNA involves identifying learners' necessities, lacks, and wants, as well as defining instructional purposes, methods, and how the findings of the needs analysis will inform course design, delivery, and evaluation (Al-Ismail et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2020).

Accordingly, a needs analysis is required to find out what students need to learn. Some of these needs can be identified based on the necessities, lacks, and wants of students. Needs are determined based on the target conditions, but as a researcher, it is necessary to know what the students need to be more effective in accordance with the objectives to be achieved (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). However, identifying needs is not enough, because English for Specific Purposes not only considers needs but also deficiencies.

English language learners will learn all English skills more easily if they have clear learning goals. Having purposeful goals can provide greater motivation and can help them to focus on mastering various aspects of the language, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Isma et al., 2024; Hotak et al., 2024; Asirah et al., 2023). With the right goals, learners can prioritize the skills that are most relevant to their needs, making the learning process more effective and efficient.

For students studying English in the context of informatics engineering, a different approach is required. English for informatics engineering focuses on the technical terms used in this field (Kurniawan & Fitriani, 2022). This is important because the world of informatics engineering often uses words or phrases that have specific meanings that are not always easy to understand without a deep understanding of the context. Consequently, students in this field are expected to be able to read and understand words or phrases used in computer, information, and technology texts.

The study program Informatics Department expect their students not only to have a general command of English but also to be able to understand it in a professional and technical context. English is the main tool for accessing literature, scientific articles, and software documentation, most of which are written in English. Thus, good English skills are essential to prepare students for the challenges of the ever-evolving world of technology. The ability to communicate well in English also supports a professional career in informatics engineering. In an international work environment, the ability to discuss, write reports, or collaborate with global teams often requires a good command of English, especially in specific technical terms. Consequently, learning English with a focus on technical terms is highly relevant and offers significant advantages for young professionals in this field.

Students will also explore the field of artificial intelligence (AI), which is rapidly growing and has numerous applications in modern life. Additionally, data and information processing are a major focus in the informatics study program. Students will learn how to analyze and process data using informatics engineering. This study program refers to Education that focuses on data processing and data analysis, which is very relevant in today's digital era. With the understanding gained, students are expected to contribute to developing informatics engineering -based solutions that address various problems across different sectors.

Various studies investigating the English language skills of students in Informatics Engineering have been conducted in different places and have shown varying results, depending on the context and specific needs of the students. According to Tangkelangi et al. (2021), their research revealed important findings regarding the English language skills possessed by informatics engineering students and which English language elements are considered most relevant and important to help them in their studies.

The results of this study showed that the two main skills that students considered most important were listening and reading skills. These skills are considered vital as they help them understand learning materials or resources, the majority of which are available in English. With the rapid advancement in the field of informatics engineering, most scientific literature, articles, and other resources related to Informatics Engineering are written in English, making the ability to understand these texts indispensable. Additionally, the results indicate that the topics and materials covered in the texts or literature should be directly related to the field of Informatics Engineering Department. This is so that students can become familiar with the technical terms used in their major, which in turn will support their mastery of English in the context of their future profession.

The research conducted by Ramadhani et al. (2023) began with the reality that most postgraduate students on this campus need the development of soft skills, particularly in English language skills, both spoken and written. This condition makes it difficult for them to compete in the job market or join both national and international companies, where English proficiency is one of the important soft skills. Data from the postgraduate alum tracer study conducted by this institution in 2022 shows that 85.75% of alums

expressed that one of the main obstacles in obtaining a good job is the lack of oral and written English proficiency required by companies (Chand, 2021). Therefore, additional English language learning, particularly in communication skills, is highly necessary for the students.

Many previous studies have explored how the English language needs can vary greatly in different contexts, depending on the situation in which English is used. However, the perceptions of some previous researchers who employed a qualitative approach with an interview study method regarding the use of English in the field of informatics, particularly in terms of necessities, lacks, and needs of students, have not been widely reported. Therefore, this study aims to find out the views on what the necessities, lacks, and wants of informatics students are in learning English.

Method

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach to gain an In-Depth understanding of the needs of informatics engineering students in learning English. This approach allows researcher to collect and analyze data inductively in order to explore meaning from the participants perspective (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The method used in this study was an interview study, which involves more than one respondent. This approach allows for the emergence of diverse perspectives and interpretations of their English learning experience (Knott et al. 2022). This method was chosen to explore a needs analysis covering three main aspects: necessities, lacks, and wants of informatics engineering students in learning English. The researcher focused on students' perceptions as active participants in the learning process to gain a deeper understanding of what they consider important to master, what they still perceive as weakness, and what they expect from English language learning. Therefore, this focus served as the basis for selecting the qualitative approach with interview studies in this research.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were three informatics engineering students in the sixth semester, and one English lecturer at the Informatics Engineering Department, with a total of four participants. The participants were chosen based on the results of students' low English scores, because by choosing participants who have low English scores, it will make it easier for researcher to identify gaps and dig deeper information. This research was focus more on the perceptions and experiences of students with low English proficiency, as well as the challenges they face in learning English. One lecturer chosen for this purpose is a lecturer who teaches English in Informatics Engineering Department.

Research Setting

This research was conducted at one of the universities in Banjarmasin. This university was chosen because it has a department that is being researched, namely Informatics Engineering Department. This engineering major was chosen because its requirements differ from those of other engineering majors. Informatics engineering requires proficiency in English to apply syntax (programming language), so mastery of vocabulary and reading skills is essential in this department. This research was conducted over approximately one month, from May 6 to 8, 2025.

Data Collection

The researchers used in-depth interviews as one of the primary data collection techniques in this study. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format, enabling the researchers to ask a series of open-ended questions and to allow the emergence of additional questions based on participants' responses. This approach facilitated the collection of valid and verifiable data pertinent to the central research question:

What are the necessities, lacks, and wants of informatics engineering students in learning English? The interviews were conducted individually with informatics engineering students and an English lecturer at a private university, selected in accordance with predetermined criteria. The researchers also used documentation to complement the interview data. The documentation involved the collection of relevant and complete records, such as students' grades in English courses for informatics engineering students. These documents provided supplementary information that was directly relevant to the research objectives and served to corroborate the findings obtained through the interviews.

Data Analysis

The accuracy and credibility of the research findings are determined by the extent to which the data are systematically processed and analyzed. In this study, the researchers employed the three stages of qualitative data analysis as outlined by Miles et al. (2014), namely: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

In the first stage, data condensation, the researchers undertook the process of summarizing, selecting, and focusing on information that was directly relevant to the predetermined research questions, specifically concerning the necessities, lacks, and wants of informatics engineering students in learning English. This stage involved selecting, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data derived from field notes, interview transcripts, and documentation into a more concise and manageable form. The second stage, data display, entailed the systematic organization and presentation of the data in a manner that facilitated comprehensive understanding and further analytical exploration. The data were arranged in an organized and condensed format, enabling the identification of patterns, interrelationships, and emerging themes in a logical and coherent structure.

The final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, was conducted in parallel with the data collection process. At this stage, the researchers interpreted the meaning of the analyzed data by identifying recurring patterns, formulating explanations, and establishing causal relationships. These conclusions were continually verified to ensure their validity, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the research findings.

Findings & Discussion

The analysis of necessities, lacks, and wants highlights a clear alignment between students' perceived needs and the linguistic demands of the informatics field. While advanced speaking skills are prioritized, challenges remain in achieving balanced skill development due to instructional limitations and lack of tailored evaluation. Students' proactive engagement in independent learning activities reflects their motivation, yet they continue to expect more varied and interactive classroom experiences to support their academic and professional aspirations (Hotak et al., 2024). The findings of this study reveal a clear relationship between the English language learning needs of Informatics Engineering students and their academic and professional aspirations. Consistent with Hutchinson and Waters's (1987) needs analysis framework, the results are categorized into necessities, lacks, and wants, highlighting the multifaceted nature of language learning requirements in a technical field.

Necessities

Informatics Engineering students demonstrated a strong need for comprehensive English proficiency particularly in speaking, listening, reading, and writing to support both academic success and career readiness. This necessity is rooted in the inherently English dominant nature of the discipline, where technical terms, software documentation, and scholarly resources are predominantly in English. The emphasis on oral and written communication skills, as also reported by Nasution et al. (2020) and Muntasir et al. (2025), suggests that English is viewed not merely as a tool for interaction, but as a core professional

competency. Student interviews reinforced this perspective, with participants expressing aspirations to work in global contexts, communicate with international colleagues, and engage with English-language learning materials. Participant 1, for example, linked oral communication skills to future employment abroad, while Participant 2 associated English mastery with the need to interpret and use domain-specific technical terminology.

These findings align with TSA principles, which focus on identifying the specific language tasks and skills required in the target situation (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Rahman, 2015). The lecturer's input (Participant 4) further confirmed this necessity by emphasizing practical skill development such as CV writing, job interview preparation, and professional presentations in English (Haryono, 2020; Warti, 2020). This aligns with workplace-oriented English for Specific Purposes approaches, where the target is not only linguistic competence but also communicative performance in authentic, job-related contexts (Barghamadi, 2020).

Lacks

While the necessity for advanced English proficiency is evident, a significant gap exists between students' current abilities and the required competencies. From the perspective of Present Situation Analysis (PSA), this gap reflects learners' actual language proficiency and learning conditions at the outset of instruction (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Rahman, 2015). The PSA also highlights that the actual language proficiency needs to be identified to provide more suitable learning experience for learners (Nhut, 2021; Wirawan et al., 2022).

The most critical weaknesses were identified in speaking and listening skills, echoing findings from Silalahi et al. (2023). Students reported difficulties in oral communication, particularly in sustaining conversations with native speakers, understanding varied accents, and responding spontaneously. Similar challenges were noted in listening comprehension, especially when engaging with authentic, fast-paced speech in technical contexts. Factors contributing to these deficiencies include limited exposure to English outside the classroom (Sharma, 2024), a lack of structured practice in communicative situations, and over-reliance on translation tools. Interview data also revealed that some pedagogical practices, such as minimal feedback provision and the absence of systematic assessment, hindered progress in productive skills. The questionnaire data from Andas et al. (2021), showing that 70% of students self-assessed at a beginner level, further illustrates this proficiency gap, particularly in vocabulary breadth, grammatical accuracy, and domain-specific terminology.

These findings suggest that current instructional approaches, though relevant in content, may not sufficiently address performance-based language skills. The imbalance between theory-based instruction and communicative practice limits students' ability to function effectively in professional and academic environments where English is the medium.

Wants

The wants dimension revealed that students desire English learning that is more practical, interactive, and relevant to real-world applications. Speaking practice emerged as the most frequently expressed priority, with students requesting more opportunities for discussions, presentations, and collaborative activities. This aligns with the results of Nasution et al. (2020), where a substantial proportion of respondents identified speaking as the main skill they wished to develop. Students also expressed interest in integrating popular media such as films, music, and social media content into classroom activities, believing these formats to be more engaging and relatable. They perceived such materials as effective in expanding vocabulary, improving listening comprehension, and fostering a more natural use of language.

Additionally, the preference for varied teaching methods including games, quizzes, and group work reflects a desire for a shift away from lecture-based delivery towards active learning strategies. The lecturer's observations support this, noting higher levels of student engagement during tasks that involve practical application, such as mock interviews or project presentations. This alignment between student expectations and teaching observations indicates a shared recognition of the value of experiential and task-based learning approaches in ESP contexts (Isma et al., 2024).

Taken together, the results demonstrate a strong convergence between students' necessities and wants, with both pointing towards the need for advanced speaking and listening proficiency, integrated with domain-specific content. However, the identified lacks highlight that these priorities cannot be fully addressed without targeted intervention. Instruction should therefore focus on bridging the proficiency gap by incorporating authentic, technology-related materials and performance-based tasks that simulate real professional situations (Warti, 2020; Haryono, 2020; Rahman, 2015; Liu et al., 2011). Furthermore, enhancing opportunities for English exposure beyond the classroom, whether through extracurricular activities, online collaboration with international peers, or participation in English-medium technical events, could accelerate skill development (Nasution et al., 2020). Finally, structured assessment mechanisms should be implemented to monitor progress, adjust instruction, and ensure that learning outcomes align with both the demands of the discipline and the aspirations of the learners.

Conclusion

The researcher concluded that based on the findings and discussion in this study, Informatics Engineering students have clear and specific needs in learning English that are closely related to their academic field and future careers. They require English lessons that are relevant to their discipline, such as understanding programming-related texts, writing documentation, and developing speaking skills for presentations, discussions, and job interviews. High proficiency in English is also considered crucial for competing in the international job market, particularly for positions in global companies or for working abroad. Therefore, the teaching materials and learning methods must be tailored to the context of their field. However, English learning in Informatics Engineering classes still faces significant challenges. An imbalance in the emphasis of language skills where writing is prioritized while speaking is often neglected, affects the overall learning outcomes. In addition, differences in students' abilities and experiences are not fully addressed in the teaching process. The background of some instructors, who do not have formal English education, also limits the effectiveness of instruction. The absence of pre-tests at the beginning of the course further makes it difficult to measure students' progress over time.

Informatics Engineering students also expressed a desire for a more engaging, interactive, and flexible learning experience that connects with their daily lives. They prefer varied methods, such as quizzes, games, watching films without subtitles, listening to English songs, reading short stories, lyric guessing games, and using social media like TikTok. These activities are perceived as effective for expanding vocabulary, improving listening comprehension, and enhancing pronunciation naturally. They also hope for a balanced focus on the four core skills speaking, listening, writing, and reading so that English becomes a practical tool for understanding course materials, programming concepts, and computer science literature. In spite of these findings, further research is needed to explore the most effective strategies for integrating relevant, engaging, and skill-balanced English learning into Informatics Engineering programs. The Informatics Engineering department should align English content with students' academic and professional needs, involve qualified ESP-trained instructors, develop systematic teaching materials, and establish effective English learning strategies that can serve as a model for other technical departments in preparing students for global work environments. Such efforts are expected to better prepare students for both academic demands and professional challenges in the global context.

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