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**Academics' Perceptions of Reading and Listening  
Needs for English for Specific Purposes**

**A Case from National University of Malaysia**

**Md. Momtazur Rahman, Ph.D. Candidate**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of the paper is to look into academics' perceptions of reading and listening needs for ES (English for Specific Purposes), necessary for the foreign postgraduates in the fields of science and technology at National University of Malaysia. Semi-structured interview, as the instrument for data collection, is used for the language needs analysis. Target Situation Analysis (TSA) is used as the theoretical construct for needs analysis.

The samples of interview include five academics in the fields of science and technology of the three faculties in the university: 1. faculty of science and technology, 2. faculty of engineering and 3. faculty of information science and technology.

This paper reviews literature on some fundamental features of ESP, language needs analysis, components of needs analysis as well as reading and listening areas in ESP. In fact, the findings of the needs analysis determine some important reading and listening tasks, which are necessary for the foreign postgraduates in the concerned fields, can lead to develop a language course framework for them focusing on these two areas in an ESP setting: reading and listening.

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**Keywords:** ESP (English for Specific Purposes); Needs Analysis; Reading and Listening areas in ESP

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Language needs analysis is the basis of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and leads to develop a focused language course. Needs analysis determines the components of a

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language course. In fact, needs analysis plays a pragmatic role in the field of ESP. Today, it has been a focused topic for the researchers and scholars, who are involved in ESP researches. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 122) argue that “needs analysis is the corner stone of ESP and leads to a very focused language course”. Munby (1978) stresses the importance of needs analysis of learners to design ESP courses. According to Munby (1978: 2), “ESP courses are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learners”. Robinson (1991) emphasizes on the primacy of needs analysis to design a language course. She states that “ESP courses develop from a needs analysis” (Robinson 1991: 3).

Malaysia, today, stresses the importance of English in higher learning institutions. Some of the universities in Malaysia offer ESP/EAP courses to equip the undergraduate students in terms of specific needs of English language. So far, in the public universities of the country, there are no ESP courses in postgraduate studies based upon the language needs analysis.

In line with the advancement of higher education in science and technology in public universities in the country, the number of foreign postgraduate students has been increasingly. The medium of instruction for these foreign postgraduate students is in English. Therefore, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses should be designed to prepare these foreign postgraduate students so that they can cope with the extent of English used in the concerned fields in public universities in the country.

In the context of National University of Malaysia, a language needs analysis is undertaken to develop an ESP course framework focusing on reading and listening areas for these foreign students in the concerned fields in the university.

The paper is concerned with conducting a needs analysis, which can lead to develop an ESP course framework for these particular foreign students focusing on these two areas in the field of ESP.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section will provide descriptions of ESP (English for Specific Purposes), needs analysis in ESP setting and TSA (Target Situation Analysis) as the basic component of needs analysis. This section will also focus on a description of two language areas in ESP: reading and listening.

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

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) movement resulted from general developments in the world economy in the 1950s and 1960s, growth of science and technology, the increased use of English as the international language of science, technology and

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business, the increased economic power of certain oil-rich countries and increased numbers of international students studying in UK, USA, and Australia (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 6) state that in ESP context, the effect of the historical occurrences resulted from a mass of people across the globe who wanted to learn English language because of the key language for the fields of science, technology and commerce. The emergence of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching movement resulted from the English language needs of the learners for specific purposes in accordance with their professions or job description.

Strevens (1988) formulates a definition of ESP, which makes a distinction between four absolute characteristics and two variable characteristics. The absolute characteristics are that ESP consists of English Language Teaching, which is:

1. designed to meet specified needs of the learners;
2. related in content (that is in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities;
3. centred on language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics and so on, and analysis of the discourse;
4. in contrast with ‘General English’.

The variable characteristics are that ESP:

1. may be restricted as to the learning skills to be learned (for example reading only);
2. may not be taught according to any pre-ordained methodology.

Robinson (1991) emphasizes the primacy of needs analysis in defining ESP. Her definition is based on two key defining criteria and a number of characteristics that are important aspects for ESP. Her key criteria are that “ESP is normally goal-directed” and that ESP courses develop from a needs analysis, which aims to specify as closely as possible what exactly it is that students have to do through the medium of English” (Robinson 1991: 3). Her characteristics are that ESP courses are generally constrained by a limited time period in which their objectives have to be achieved, and are taught to adults in ‘homogeneous classes’ in terms of the work or specialist studies that the students are involved in. Robinson (1991: 1) delineates ESP as an enterprise, which involves education, training and practice, and drawing upon three major realms of knowledge: language, pedagogy and the students’ specialist areas of interest.

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) provide their definition of ESP. They also use absolute and variable characteristics of ESP as Strevens (1988) centres on defining ESP (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998).

**Absolute characteristics:**

1. ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner;
2. ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves;
3. ESP is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to those activities.

**Variable characteristics:**

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

The definition that Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) offer is clearly influenced by that of Strevens (1988) and they have included more variable characteristics. Their division of ESP into absolute and variable characteristics, in particular, is very helpful in resolving arguments about what is and is not ESP.

ESP has traditionally been divided into two classified main branches such as English for Academic Purposes or EAP and English for Occupational Purposes or EOP (Dudley-Evans & St John 1998; Hutchinson and Waters 1987; Munby 1978; Robinson 1991). EAP (English for Academic Purposes) has emerged in the 1970s. EAP, a branch of ESP, refers to the specific English language teaching related to academic purposes. Jordan (1997: 4) cited Coffey's (1994) definition of English for academic purposes (EAP) as having two divisions 'common core' and subject-specific'.

## **Needs Analysis in ESP Setting**

The key stage in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is needs analysis. Needs analysis is the corner stone of ESP and leads to a vary focused course (Brown 1995; Chambers 1980; Dudley-Evans & St. John 1998; Ellis & Johnson 1994; Jordan 1997; West 1994). According to Robinson (1991: 7), "needs analysis is generally regarded as critical to ESP, although ESP is by no means the only educational enterprise which makes use of it".

Strevens (1977) suggests that needs analysis is a necessary first step for specific purposes language teaching; it is more concerned with the nature of scientific discourse. Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 53) argue that any language course should be based on Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

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needs analysis. Needs analysis is fundamental to an ESP/EAP approach to course design (Hamp-Lyons 2001: 127).

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 121) state that “needs analysis is the process of establishing the *what* and *how* of a course”. They argue that “needs analysis is neither unique to language teaching-needs assessment, for example, is the basis of training programmes and aid-development programmes-nor, within language training, is it unique to LSP and thus to ESP”. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 126) stress three aspects of needs analysis. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 126) state as:

First, needs analysis aims to know learners as people, as language users and as language learners. Second, needs analysis study also aims to know how language learning and skills learning can be maximized for a given learner group. Third, needs analysis study aims to know the target situations and learning environment so that data can appropriately be interpreted.

It is obvious that needs analysis is a very crucial first step prior to designing and developing a language course, producing materials for teaching and learning, and developing language test. West (1994) states that language needs analysis is essentially a pragmatic activity focused on specific situations, although grounded in general theories, such as the nature of language and curriculum. Therefore, in the ESP/EAP context, needs analysis is crucial in determining the aspects of language that are crucial for a particular area of teaching. As Robinson (1991: 8) suggests, needs analysis is not only just for determining the “*what and how of a language of teaching*”.

Robinson (1991) also suggests that needs analysis study should be repeated so that it can be built into the formative process. This would lead to a very informative database of learners, sponsors, subject-specialists and above all ESP practitioners’ view and opinions of English language. The main sources for needs analysis are the learners, people working or studying in the field, ex-students and documents relevant to the field, clients, employers, colleagues and ESP research in the field (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 132).

### **Target Situation Analysis (TSA): A Component of Needs Analysis**

Target Situation Analysis (TSA) is a form of needs analysis, which focuses on identifying the learners’ language requirements in the occupational or academic situation they are being prepared for (Ewer and Hughes-Davies 1971: 6, cited in West 1994). The earliest TSA procedures were designed to determine “how much” English was used (Ewer and Hughes-Davies 1971: 6, cited in West 1994). Robinson (1991: 8) argues that a needs analysis, which focuses on students’ needs at the end of a language course, can be called a TSA (Target Situation Analysis). Chambers (1980: 25-33) introduced and discussed this term. Munby (1978) formulates the best-known

framework of TSA type of needs analysis. He presents a communicative needs processor, comprising a set of parameters within which information on the students' target situation can be plotted.

The model formulated by Munby has, widely, been studied and discussed. Comprehensive data banks are among its useful features. For example, micro-skills and attitudes can be used as checklists for the resultant syllabus. A helpful insight, codified by Munby, relates to target-level performance: for certain jobs students may require only a low level of accuracy. The TSA may thus pinpoint the stage at which 'good enough' competence for the job is reached.

TSA refers to task and activities learners are/will be using English for target situation. TSA generally uses questionnaire as the instrument (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998: 125). According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 124), TSA includes objective, perceived and product-oriented needs. They explain that the objective and perceived needs are derived by outsiders from facts, from what is known and can be verified. Therefore, "to be able to spell English words correctly" is an objective/perceived need. Product-oriented needs are derived from the goal or target situation.

## **Listening in English for Academic Purposes**

Listening in EAP (English for Academic Purposes) refers to listening to lectures, and listening and interacting in seminars and tutorials (Robinson 1991). She reasons that problems with lecture comprehension may derive from features of the language as such, for example the use of informal language by the lecturer. Candlin et al. (1976: 52) point out that in order to decipher and identify the linguistic description, i.e., what we hear, it is important to consider how students hear. The listening tasks students perform in an academic context include:

1. informing transaction
2. note-taking activities

Listening activities are complex. Candlin et al. (1976) undertook a research on listening comprehension tasks. Candlin et al. (1976: 63) note that "the students they observed have to be able to receive a verbally and visually transmitted message; to decode and memorize facts of it after reception; to relate the newly received parts to the already perceived parts; to select from the elements they are to re-encode; and when this has been done; the re-encoded parts are written or copied down."

It is obvious that before students can begin to take notes, they have to develop considerable skills in speech perception. They need to be able to separate the main points from supporting details, to understand the organization of the argument, to match different comprehension strategies to the requirements of the spoken discourse and to

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be able to interpret information from a variety of sources.

According to Jordan (1997: 180), there are a number of micro skills for academic lectures in terms of academic listening. They are as follows:

1. ability to identify purpose and scope of lecture
2. ability to identify topic of lecture and follow topic development
3. ability to identify relationships among units within discourse
4. ability to infer relationships (e.g., cause, effect, conclusion)
5. ability to recognize key lexical items related to subject/topic
6. ability to follow lecture despite differences in accent and speed
7. familiarity with different styles of lecturing: formal, conversational, read unplanned
8. familiarity with different registers
9. knowledge of classroom conventions (e.g. turn taking, clarification request)
10. ability to recognize instructional/learner tasks (e.g. warnings, suggestions, recommendations, advice, instructions)

## **Reading in English for Academic Purposes**

Reading for academic setting is considered an important skill in academic English among the four language skills (Hughes 1973). Robinson (1991) also admits that academic reading is probably the most generally needed skill in EAP worldwide. Reading is vital for higher learning in institutions of education where the medium of instruction is in English (Fishman 1977).

Wood (1994) argues that students need to be proficient in reading to comprehend and absorb all information written in English. According to Wood (1994), students need to acquire effective reading skills that involve high-speed assimilation and comprehension of all sorts of subject matter and the ability to recall that subject matter later during testing. Once students have mastered the skills of reading, they should be able to double their reading speed, improve comprehension, improve note-taking and outlining skills and they would be able to write clearly and concisely (Wood 1994).

According to Jordan (1997), in the process of reading, students will be concerned with the subject-content of what they read and the language in which it is expressed. Jordan (1997:143) argues that students can have different purposes in their reading in academic setting such as:

1. to obtain information (facts, data, etc.)
2. to understand ideas or theories, etc.
3. to discover authors' viewpoints
4. to seek evidence for their own point of view and to quote all of which

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may be needed for writing their essays, etc.

There are some important skills and sub-skills utilized in reading for academic purposes. Students must have ideas about this skills and sub-skills. Jordan (1997: 143-144) suggest this skills and sub-skills for academic reading aspect:

1. prediction
2. skimming (reading quickly for the main idea or gist)
3. scanning (reading quickly for a specific piece of information)
4. distinguishing between factual and non-factual information
5. distinguishing between important and less important items
6. distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant information
7. drawing inferences and conclusions
8. deducing unknown words
9. understanding graphic presentation
10. understanding text organization and linguistic/semantic aspects (e.g. relationship between and within sentences –cohesion and recognizing discourse/semantic markers and their function)

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology refers to how a study can be undertaken. This section will describe semi-structured interviews, sample of interviews and data analysis.

### **Semi-structured Interviews for the Academics**

Semi-structured interview for the academics of the three selected faculties in the university was finally constructed on the basis of the theoretical framework of the language needs analysis of the study. The interview questions were open-ended items. The questions in the interviews were constructed on the basis of target needs (TSA) and means analysis (information on how a language course can be run) on the basis of the theoretical framework of the study. The interview questions were constructed to further investigate and identify some important aspects of academic English: reading, writing, listening and speaking for academic purposes, which the foreign postgraduate students in the fields of science and technology require for academic purposes.

The interview questions of the academics sought the information concerning the following themes/aspects: 1. academics' perceptions concerning the importance of reading, writing, listening and speaking aspects/tasks for academic purposes and 2. their opinions and suggestions for an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) course for the foreign postgraduates in the fields of science and technology in the university.

### **Sample of the interviews**

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The samples for the semi-structured interviews in the qualitative research also involved the academics of the three selected faculties in the university (1. faculty of engineering, 2. faculty of science and technology and 3. faculty information science and technology). The academics include three associate professors, one professor and one lecturer, who teach or supervise their foreign postgraduate students in the fields of science and technology of these three faculties in the university. The academics were chosen because they were able to provide informed information on their perceptions concerning the foreign students' English language needs with regard to four language aspects/tasks used in the fields of science and technology for academic purposes. These academics also helped to fill in the information on their opinions and suggestions concerning a proposed ESP course (how the course can be run).

### **Data Analysis**

The qualitative data from academics' interviews were transcribed. For each of the questions in the interviews, all the responses were summarised and analysed in the qualitative way according to the different themes. The important points from the data of interviews were highlighted. Any interesting insights provided in both of the interviews were also noted.

## **ANALYSIS OF ACADEMICS' INTERVIEWS**

The section delineates the analysis of academics' interviews. First, I will analysis interviews according to the different themes.

### **The Profile of the Interviewees: General Information**

The interviewees were five academics, who were selected from the three faculties in the university: 1. FST (Faculty of Science and Technology), 2. FE (Faculty of Engineering) and 3. FIST (Faculty of Information Science and Technology). Two interviewees were selected from FST while two were from FE. One interviewee was selected from FIST. Academically, one interviewee was professor while three were associate professors. But, one interviewee was lecturer. Table 4.40 depicts the profile of the five academics from the three faculties in the university.

**TABLE 4.40: Profile of the Academics of Three Faculties in the University**

Academics	Gender	Position	Department/Area	Faculty
A	Male	Professor	Food Technology	FST
B	Female	Assoc. Professor	Electrical and System Eng.	FE
C	Male	Lecturer	Computer Science	FIST
D	Male	Assoc. Professor	Environmental Science	FST
E	Male	Assoc. Professor	Applied Mechanics	FE

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## **Theme Two: Academics' Perceptions of Importance of Reading Tasks in English for Academic Purposes**

According to the analysis of the responses of the five academics of the three faculties (FST, FE and FIST) in the university, all academics (five academics) admitted that reading of articles in journals was an important reading task for the foreign postgraduate students in the fields of science and technology of the three faculties for academic purposes (Academics A, B, C, D and E). The vast majority of the academics (four out of five academics) also stated that reading of reference books was important for the foreign postgraduate students in the concerned fields of the three faculties for academic purposes (Academics B, C and E). In addition, the majority of the academics (three out of five academics) noted that review of related literature was also an important reading task for academic purposes (Academics A, B and C). According to one academic, reading of theses related to the concerned fields was also important. Another academic stated that reading of papers of proceeding conference was important for the foreign postgraduate students in the concerned fields of the three faculties for academic purposes. The five academics stated as:

“They are required to read subject matters related to their researches, review of literature review of researches, articles related to their research areas in English”.  
(Academic A)

“Reading of journal and reference books is important reading task for academic purposes. Reading of literature related to students’ specific fields is also important for academic purposes”. (Academic B)

“As my expertise area is computer science in this faculty. I have two foreign students, who are doing by research in their master levels in the medium of instructions of English. So, from my experiences, I can say that reading of journals, reading of theses and reading of reference books in the specific fields all are important. I think, reading of literature review is also very important reading task for academic purposes”. (Academic C)

“I think that reading specific topics in the science fields is important. Specifically, reading of reference books and

reading of review of past research are important. Reading of articles of journals related to the specific fields in this faculty is also important". (Academic D)

"Normally in research...reading journal is considered important. Secondly, reading of proceeding conference is important. Then...reading of textbooks is also important". (Academic E)

### **Theme Three: Academics' Perceptions of Importance of Listening Tasks in English for Academic Purposes**

According to the analysis of the five respondents, all (five respondents) stated that listening to lectures in classes was an important listening task for the foreign postgraduates in the fields of science and technology in the university for their academic purposes (Academics A, B, C, D and E). The vast majority of the academics (four out of five academics) admitted that listening to seminars was also important for the students in the concerned fields for academic purposes (Academics A, C, D and E). According to two academics, listening to supervisors in any academic discussion was an important task for academic purposes (Academics D and E). Another two academics noted that listening to other students in group discussions was also important for the foreign postgraduate students in the concerned fields for academic purposes (Academics A and B). As the five academics suggested:

"They are required to participate and listen to their lecturers in classes and group discussions. Listening to seminars is also important". (Academic A)

"Listening to supervisors is very important. In addition, listening to lab-classes and other classes is also important. I think, listening to other students in group discussions is also important listening aspect". (Academic B)

"From my personal views and experiences, I can say that listening to class lectures is the main important for academic purposes. In addition, listening to seminars is also important. That's all. I think, these two are the important listening tasks". (Academic C)

“Listening to class lecturers is very important. In this faculty, the foreign students, who are taking courses, have to attend classes. So, listening to class lectures is important. Listening to seminars is also important task. Foreign postgraduate research students have to attend to seminars. In addition, listening to supervisors in academic concerns is also important”. (Academic D)

“For curse work students, listening to class lectures is the main important. In addition, listening to seminars is also important. I think.... listening to what supervisors instruct for any academic matter is also important”. (Academic E)

### **Theme Five: Academics’ Suggestions for the Proposed ESP Course**

According to analysis, the vast majority of the academics (four out of five respondents) stated that the proposed ESP course should be run in the first semester of the students’ academic programmes in the fields of science and technology in the university (Academics A, C, D and E). Two respondents argued that students could benefit from the proposed course if the course is run along with students’ study programmes (Academics C and E). Four academics argued that the course should be offered for one academic semester (Academics A, C, D and E). Three academics responded that the course should be compulsory assessed one (Academics B, C and E) whereas two academics did not consider the course as compulsory one (Academics A and D). Three academics argued that the proposed course should be offered after a specific period of time (that is repeatable course) (Academics A, B and D). According to them, it should be offered in every semester. But two academics argued that the same course should not be offered in every semester (Academics C and D). All academics stressed the need for classroom facilities for language teaching (Academics A, B, C, D and E). According to them, language classrooms should be equipped with modern LCD, voice speakers. One respondent also emphasized the need for a language laboratory. Here are the transcriptions of the five academics:

“Well, it would be nice if the proposed course should be run in students’ first semester. At the same time, they will take the other courses. I think, the duration of the course should be one semester. This should be a short course. The course should be

optional so that students can learn English without hesitation. The course should be taught after a specific period of time. But, modification and changes need to be highlighted according to students' needs. Of course, there must be facilities of teaching and learning in language classrooms (such language lab, LCD etc). Today, the advent of modern electronic tools for teaching has facilitated teaching systems". (Academic A)

"I propose that the course should be run in the second semester. In the first semester, students can feel too loaded classes as they have to register for their regular courses. It would be better if the duration of the course is slated for two semesters. Students can learn English slowly and steadily. The course must be a compulsory and assessed one. In my opinion, the proposed course should be one-time course. It should be again taught after a specific time. Yes, the classrooms should be equipped with electronic facilities" (Academic B)

"I think, the proposed course should be run together with these students' programmes. The students can benefit from the course. They can know their strengths and weaknesses in English during their programmes. At the same time, they will overcome their problems because they will benefit from the course. The duration of the course can be slated for one semester. It should be grade-system so that students will be attentive. The course must be changed after each semester. I must say that the availability of teaching facilities in classrooms can help run a course". (Academic C)

"The course can be run in students' first or second semesters. It should be consistence along with students' core courses. It should be run for the duration of one semester. It should not be a compulsory course. I think, students feel boring if same course is offered in every semester. There

should be multimedia and LCD systems in classrooms. Actually, classroom facilities can fascinate students to language classes". (Academic D)

"I think, this course should be run in the first semester. At the same time, foreign students can take their other subject courses. It will be helpful for them. Off course, the course should be offered for one academic semester. It shouldn't last for two semesters. I also emphasize that the ESP course should be assessed and compulsory course. The course must be taught in every semester. But, content of the course should be slightly changed where necessary. For classroom facilities, classroom must be equipped with modern voice speakers and other electronic tools for teaching environment". (Academic E)

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS OF ACADEMICS' INTERVIEWS**

The section will provide a discussion of the findings of academics' interviews.

### **Academics' Perceptions of Importance of Reading Tasks in English for Academic Purposes**

According to the findings, all academics (five academics) considered 'reading of journal articles' to be important reading task for the foreign postgraduate students in the fields of science and technology of the three faculties for academic purposes. It would appear that reading of articles in journals was very useful reading task for academic purposes that all academics considered to be important for foreign postgraduate students in the target situation. This finding of interviews is similar to the findings of the students' questionnaires. According to the findings of the students' questionnaires, the foreign students of the three faculties considered 'reading of journals in students' fields' to be essential. The vast majority of the academics (four out of five academics) also stated that reading of reference books was important for the foreign postgraduate students in the concerned fields of the three faculties for academic purposes. So, from the findings, it would appear that reading of reference books was an essential reading task that the vast majority of the academics considered to be important for the foreign postgraduate students in the concerned fields of the three faculties in the target situation.

The findings of the students' questionnaires also support this finding. According to the findings of the students' questionnaires, the foreign students of the three faculties considered 'reading of reference books in students' fields' to be essential. The majority of the academics (three out of five academics) noted that 'review of related literature' was also an important reading task for academic purposes. The findings indicate that 'review of related literature' was an necessary reading task that many of the academics considered to be important for the foreign postgraduate students in the concerned fields of the three faculties in the target situation. Finally, 'reading of theses' and 'reading of papers of proceeding conference' were also considered to be important as revealed by the findings of students' interviews. So, it is assumed that these two reading tasks were necessary reading tasks that were considered to be important for the foreign postgraduate students in the concerned fields of the three faculties in the target situation.

From the discussion of the findings, it is suggested that 'reading of journal articles', 'reading of reference books in students' fields', 'review of related literature', 'reading of theses related to students' fields' and 'reading of papers of proceeding conferences' should be included in the ESP course. In fact, the findings of students' questionnaires suggested 'reading of journal articles', 'reading of reference books in students' fields' and 'reading of theses related to students' fields' to be included in the course.

### **Academics' Perceptions of Importance of Listening Tasks in English for Academic Purposes**

As revealed by the findings of the academics' interviews, all (five respondents) stated that 'listening to lectures in classes' was important listening task for the foreign postgraduates in the fields of science and technology in the university for their academic purposes. In fact, the findings of the students' questionnaires support this finding. According to the findings of students' questionnaires, the foreign students of the two faculties in the university considered 'listening and taking notes to lectures in classes' to be essential. A study by Ferris (1998) echoes this finding. Ferris (1998) found that international postgraduate students and professors at California State University agreed that it was essential for the skill of note taking to be mastered.

The findings imply that 'listening and taking notes to lectures' was very necessary and common listening task that all academics considered to be important for the foreign postgraduates in the concerned fields needed in the target situation. However, the vast majority of the academics (four out of five academics) admitted that 'listening to seminars' was also important for the students in the concerned fields for academic purposes. The findings of the students' questionnaires support this finding.

According to the findings of students' questionnaires, foreign students of two faculties considered 'listening and interacting in academic seminars' to be essential. So, from the findings, it is assumed that listening to seminars was also a necessary task that the vast majority of the academics considered it to be important for the foreign students in the target situation. According to the findings, two academics considered 'listening to supervisors in academic discussions' and 'listening to other students in group discussions' to be important. It is assumed that these two listening tasks were necessary and common tasks that two academic considered them to be important for the foreign students in the target situation. Thus, from the discussion of the findings of academics' interviews, it is suggested that 'listening to lectures in classes/seminars', 'listening to supervisors in academic discussions' and 'listening to other students in group discussions' should be included in the course. Actually, the findings of students' questionnaires determined 'listening to lectures in classes/seminars' for inclusion in the ESP course.

### **Academics' Suggestions for the Proposed ESP Course**

According to the findings, the vast majority of the academics (four out of five respondents) suggested that the proposed ESP course should be run in the first semester of the students' academic programmes in the fields of science and technology in the university. It is assumed that the foreign students can know their strengths and weaknesses in English to study their academic programmes prior to entering their study programmes. In addition, they can benefit from the course to study their academic postgraduate programmes in the medium of English language if the course is run in the first semester.

The bulk of the academics (four out of five academics) stated that the proposed course should be offered for one academic semester. It is assumed that students may not feel bored if the course is slated for one academic semester.

Many academics (three out of five respondents) argued that the course should be compulsory assessed one. From the findings, it would seem that if the course is compulsory and assessed one, students will be attentive to the course. The majority of the academics (three out of five Academics) argued that the proposed course should be taught/offered after a specific period of time. It means that the course should be taught in every semester. From the findings, it would seem that they considered the course to be a repeatable course (a repeatable course is a course that is taught after a specific period of time, e.g., for every semester or year). All academics stressed the need for classroom facilities (such as voice speakers, LCD systems and so forth in classrooms) for language teaching and learning. One respondent also emphasized the need for a language laboratory. It is assumed that a quality of teaching can be accelerated by means of modern classroom facilities.

## **Suggestions of Reading and Listening Tasks for Inclusion in the ESP Course: A Basis on the Findings of Academics' Interviews**

Based on the discussion of the findings of academics' interviews, the following reading and listening tasks in English for academic should be included in the ESP course. Actually, these tasks were identified to be important by the findings of academics' interviews.

### **Reading Tasks for Academic Purposes**

1. Reading of journal articles
2. Reading of reference books in students' fields
3. Reading of theses related to students' fields
4. Reading of papers of proceeding conferences'

### **Listening Tasks for Academic Purposes**

1. Listening to lectures in classes/seminars
2. Listening to supervisors in academic discussions
3. Listening to other students in group discussions

## **CONCLUSION**

Needs analysis is a necessary tool for designing an appropriate ESP course that suits target groups in an academic setting. It determines target needs of learners. The paper determined some important reading and listening tasks in an ESP setting. In so doing, the paper focused on conducting needs analysis in the ESP setting. The important reading and listening tasks, which were identified by the results of the needs analysis can lead to develop a framework of an ESP course based on reading and listening areas for the foreign postgraduate students in the fields of science and technology at National University of Malaysia.

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