

A NEED ANALYSIS FOR LEARNING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

Firda Amalia, Albiansyah

*albiaansyah@gmail.com

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

A growing body of literature has discussed need analysis in a certain domain. The issue raised since English to Young Learners was important to support the process of language learning in the classroom. The present study was employed to investigate student's need analysis, especially for the teaching of English to young learners in the elementary school level. The data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and analyzing the documents of sample students. Questionnaires were distributed to 25 students of grade 5A and 5B, and interviews were conducted with an English teacher of grade 5 at an elementary school in Jakarta. The findings revealed that the students were expected to master language skills so that they could be more confident in reading and writing. Furthermore, they also have several preferable topics to be discussed in the learning process such as family and friends, foods, or meals. They prefer to have topics that could be related to their daily life and their background knowledge. Moreover, there are several factors that may hinder the teaching of reading and writing. The irrelevant topics to their daily life and interest, lack of vocabulary knowledge, and anxiety in writing were the factors that made them hard to read and write. Therefore, the development of class materials needed to be relevant to students' needs.

Keywords: Need Analysis, English to Young Learners, Learning Materials

INTRODUCTION

The educational system in Indonesia is always developed, especially in the levels of elementary to high schools, since the regulation of the curriculum has been shifted from Curriculum 2006 to Curriculum 2013. One of the main shifts is the position of English lessons as a local content to an extracurricular activity in elementary schools. Therefore, as an optional subject, English in elementary school still affects student's attitude towards their needs in learning. The schools have their own authority to decide the implementation of English teaching for their students by considering students' needs.

The importance of need analysis in reading and writing appeared since the students' reading and writing abilities ranged within the average to fairly good range, and there was no apparent improvement from one academic year to the next. In order to improve the students' skills, teachers should work to improve the current circumstances (Sakkir et al., 2021). Writing and reading become important since the students are required to comprehend such skills in order to fulfill the learning objectives. So, the need analysis in reading and writing should be carried out to give the benefit for the students in learning process.

* Corresponding author

Albiansyah

Email: albiaansyah@gmail.com

Mostly, the need analysis in English language learning is conducted by focusing on the specific needs such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and vocational programs (Richards, 2001). Then, it is broader to be involved in English as General Purpose (EGP) in every level of the school, Junior high school, and Senior High school. Since the following notion of development in teaching and learning English, it is utilized to investigate students' needs in level elementary school. Especially in private schools, they use English as their language in daily lives. Furthermore, the label as the bilingual school makes English is important to be taught in the classroom.

Hence, Brown (2008) mentioned that in the formal and technical sense, conducting a need analysis for general purposes recently happens. However, it actually has been employed informally by the teachers for many years in order to investigate student's needs, wants, and lacks so that they can arrange the lesson planning and strategies appropriately. As a result, a need analysis will be used to improve the betterment of the teaching and learning process.

Need analysis plays a vital role in designing the teaching and learning of language. As West (1994) described that need analysis is determining what learners will be needed to do with their foreign language in the target setting and how they can best acquire the target language during their training term. By conducting need analysis, teachers can obtain the information as the basis to develop a curriculum or syllabus that is needed for the groups of learners (Tzotzou, 2014). It means that need analysis is the starting point in designing and implementing effective teaching and learning language processes.

Moreover, Macalister & Nation (2010) added that in conducting a need analysis, it could be viewed as subjective and objective needs. Subjective needs are viewed as the students' needs, such as lacks, wants, necessities, desires, and constraints. Meanwhile, the objective needs are viewed as the aims or objectives, or gap between the expectation and the reality.

It is in line with Hutchinson & Waters (1991), who added that necessities, lacks, and wants are categorized as situation needs. Necessities are viewed as the demands of the target situation. The things which encourage students to learn can be identified as necessities. In this term, necessities equip themselves with language to achieve the task. By involving the students to choose the topics, it can be considered as the necessities in need analysis. Then, lack refers to the gaps between a student's expectation and the reality during the process. In other words, the problems or difficulties which hinder the students from achieving their goals. In this term, the cause of a student's difficulties in writing and reading can be the information of the student's lack of need for analysis

Last but not least, wants are involved in a need analysis since the notion of wants is to determine the student's expectation in obtaining their learning goals. Wants will be essential if they can encourage students in the learning process (Sulistiyani, 2018). So, necessities and lacks will be complete packages if wants are involved in the package.

Therefore, the present research showed both subjective and objective needs of English learning for fifth graders of an elementary school in Jakarta. Hence, the students' need involves their wants and lacks in learning English as well as the learning objectives based on the principles of teaching English to young learners. In this term, the researchers used the notion of learning topics as their chosen preference. Then, as the frame to reveal the investigation of both the subjective needs and objective needs, the term of learning materials is raised. That is why the development of teaching materials should refer to the principles in teaching English to young learners.

In order to identify the principles in teaching English to young learners, we can infer the character of young learners. Scott & Ytreberg (1993) mentioned the character of young learners in learning language are preferring to have a concrete concept, having the ability to diversify between facts and fiction, having a lot of curiosity in their head, which motivates them to ask questions. They prefer to speak and move rather than a passive one, having the ability to confirm what they want to learn, like or don't. Then, they like to be critical about teacher's information related to their background knowledge and the new information. Furthermore, young learners tend to work in groups because it motivates them to do the activities.

Several studies have been conducted related to student's need analysis for English learning to young learners. Sunengsih & Fahrurrozi (2016) conducted research about need analysis at Azkia Integrated Islamic Primary Schools and student's needs towards learning English. The findings revealed introducing English at the primary stage, copying the English language in the classroom and daily lives, emphasizing vocabulary size and its development, applying the theme as the topic, and providing a variety of instruments in teaching can help to engage students to use English every day. Hence, the present research is also in line with the need analysis, which was employed by (Surtikanti, (2019). The research and development (R & D) were aimed to develop learning materials by conducting preliminary survey, designing and developing the prototype of the product, conducting limited testing and product validation, having a revision process, and describing the research result. In this term, the research involved students' need analysis in investigating what materials are appropriate to be implemented in learning English. Based on the previous research above, the researchers attempt to conduct the study related to need analysis from different perspectives. In this term, the focus is on student's needs by involving student's motivation in language learning.

Therefore, the objective of the present study is to investigate the student's need for analysis in learning English at Al Azkar Islamic Elementary school, Jakarta. The issue raised in the present study underlines the questions as follows: *"What are the needs of English learning for the fifth graders of Al Azkar Islamic Elementary school, Jakarta in Academic Year 2020-2021 in terms of learning language attitude and learning."*

METHODS

The present study was conducted in the academic year of 2020/2021. The participants consisted of 25 students of grade 5 who are all about 10-11 years old and an English teacher who taught class 5 in Al Azkar Islamic Elementary School, Jakarta.

The reason why the researchers chose the participants was that the researchers attempted to find out the needs of fifth-grade students in Al Azkar Islamic Elementary school related to wants and lack in learning English so that the teacher can give specifics and detailed information related to her student's language learning attitude in the learning process. The teacher can also reveal the challenge in the teaching and learning English process.

This study utilized a qualitative method by using a case study because it concerns the individuals in the group regarding the case and descriptive analysis as a design. The researchers used triangulation to get valid data. Questionnaires, interviews, and documents are used in the study. The questionnaires were distributed to 20 students to achieve the data about their attitude in learning the language. Preferable topics toward learning materials and student's lack of difficulties in reading and writing as the focus of the material development to be concerned as the product of need analysis. In terms of the young learners as participants, the questionnaire was structured and administered in practical steps, taking into account basic instructions and questions that the participants could easily understand.

Hence, the questionnaire is divided into several indicators. The questionnaire was adapted from Tzotzou (2014) who conducted the research on students' need analysis, especially in English to young learners. In this time, the questionnaire was formed with close answers. The students only choose 'yes' or 'no' based on their preference. The form of questionnaires was created as simply as possible since the target population is low level students. It was administered for 5th grade students and it previously has been done piloting to colleagues and getting review and feedback. The first indicator concerned the student's motivation to learn English. The participants were required to choose several statements about what makes them willing to learn English instead of their expectation about the language itself. The second is the student's interest in reading English books. They can choose the statement provided, which reveals their interest in reading English books, and they can relate the statement to the textbook they learned at school. The third is students' preference on the worksheet activity in the English book. It is known that there are so many types of worksheets

in English workbooks, and the students can choose their preferable worksheets. The fourth is the topic they like to study in English. There are so many topics provided in the books based on the student's wants. The fifth is the difficulties in reading English text. There were several statements about the challenges in reading English text, and the students can choose the statement based on their experience.

Last but not least is the part about challenges in writing English. Other procedures to validate the data, the students were asked to choose the statements consisting of difficulties in writing English based on their experience. It can be the reflection of their attitude in writing. To support the data, the researchers conducted an interview with an English Teacher in Al Azkar Islamic Elementary school. The open-ended questions were designed to explore more information about the teacher's in teaching English to young learners. Afterward, the researchers coded the entire data by grouping them to some criteria and accounting for each of the categories by carrying out descriptive analysis. Last but not least, the researchers investigated the student's needs by looking at their sample of language learning scores until the midterm of the first semester. It was done to observe student's lack of learning material.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the researchers attempted to present and reveal the result of the investigation while discussing the data. The answers of each item in the questionnaire were analyzed, and thus the frequencies in the parentheses can represent each statement.

Table 1. Student's motivation towards learning English

Indicators	F
To communicate and be confident	10
To go abroad	5
To get high score	3
To write and read in English	4
To exhibit Indonesian culture and learn culture overseas	1
To sing	2

Based on the data in table 1, the researchers can assume that the students expect to be able in every kind of skill in learning the language. The learning objectives involve all skills in the learning process, but the focus of the present study is related to the material dealing with reading and writing. However, the student's motivation which is provided in the questionnaire's items, cannot be ignored in order to know their real expectation in learning English. Then, the researchers can synchronize students' needs and wants to their expectations.

Table 2. Student's interest in reading English books

Indicators	F
Simple and easy	12
Hobby	8
Interesting pictures, comic stories, and stories	3
Experience, favorite food, idol, sports and the colorful book	2

Based on the students' interest presented in Table 2, the researchers can grasp that the way students are willing to read is based on the appearance of the physics and content of the book. As young learners, they need concrete concepts such as pictures as an aid to help them understand the text, and the color of the book can be eye-catching. Then, the content of the book should be relevant to their daily life or their interest. As the characteristic of young

learners is mentioned, students could achieve the meaning of their language learning if they can relate it to their background knowledge and real life. So, the main point is the learning materials' content should be relevant to their real life.

Table 3. Student's interest in the worksheet activity in English workbook

Indicators	F
Yes/no questions and answers	10
Crossword puzzle	8
Arranging letters/words, making a sentence, writing words, filling gaps, multiple choices	7

Based on the student's preference on the type of worksheet, it can be involved as the notion of students' writing wants. The teacher can promote students' writing through the worksheet provided. It is proven when the students in grade 5 preferred to have types of worksheets like answering questions based on their opinion. It can be implemented in writing skills as the starting point to lead them in constructing the ideas. When they can give their opinion using English, it is easier for the teacher to know the student's needs in writing.

Table 4. Student's preferable topic in learning English

Indicators	F
Family/friends	9
Nature/environment, food/dishes, and hobby	7
Adventure, festival, experience, music, famous people, movie, entertainment, and the story of our prophets	6
Culture, technology, jobs, internet, health, history, science, fable, and sports	3

Based on the topics preferred as shown in table 3, it can be summed that the students have a lot of expectations to know more in the learning language process. It can be involved in conducting material development to put more concern on the topics chosen. By doing so, the students will be enthusiastic about learning a language, and they can enhance their vocabulary to support their curiosity about the topic discussed.

Table 5. Student's difficulties in reading

Indicators	F
Lack of vocabulary mastery	15
No picture	6
The topic affects students' reading skills	4

As can be seen from table 5, based on the cause of students' difficulties in reading, it can be inferred that the main problem in reading for young learners is lack of vocabulary. They do not know the meaning of the words, and they have no idea how to understand the text. In this part, the teacher can use this information as the basis to create the reading text by considering the student's vocabulary knowledge and can add the picture to be a visual aid for the students in understanding the text or passage. Then, the topics of the passage should be common in student's real life, so that they can use their background knowledge to interpret the meaning of the text.

Table 6. Student's difficulties in writing

Indicators	F
Words spelling	9
Anxious in writing	6
Prefer to speak	7
No idea in writing	3

Based on the students' lack of writing, it can be implied that the teacher can improve students' vocabulary knowledge in order to avoid misspelling in writing. Otherwise, the teacher can engage the student's interest topics to construct their ideas in writing, so the teacher can give the opportunity to the students to explore more about their interest in writing. It can promote the students to be confident in writing. Therefore, in conducting material development to improve students' writing skills, the teacher should consider student's needs, wants, and lack in reading and writing.

Furthermore, the data information is also supported by the teacher's interview. Since the interview is open-ended questions, the researchers can gain more information regarding the students' needs by considering their wants and lacks. In this term, the teacher mentioned that her aim in teaching English for grade 5 is to improve English skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Then, she added vocabulary and grammar knowledge are taught based on their age or level. For the strategy in teaching, the teacher will use the various strategies based on the needs of every skill. It is applied to achieve the learning goals and avoid boredom. Moreover, the teacher tends to improve student's vocabulary competence because, according to her, at this level, vocabulary competence is essential. By having vocabulary competence, the students can read and write well. Hence, the students should also be triggered in order to motivate them to learn English. They are provided with topics that can enhance their enthusiasm. The topics should be relevant to their own daily life. In doing so, the students can relate to their background knowledge and new information from the teacher.

The notion of reading in elementary school should be based on students' preferences. In this term, they like to read a storybook which can amuse them in reading. Then, the teacher also gives a few minutes to do literacy by reading their preferable book. It is conducted to enrich their vocabulary and critical thinking. Suganda (2015) mentioned that young learners were strongly motivated in learning language especially in reading. It can be revealed that many teachers attempted to find an effective way to teach reading to young learners because reading is important to support the learning process. It can be useful for students to gain many new vocabularies from the reading.

Furthermore, the teacher expects that the learning process can benefit students in many aspects. One of them is that the students can write very well. Despite the students being at a low level, they should have the ability to write at least one sentence. That is why by having vocabulary knowledge, the students are expected to be able to write in English easier. The teacher also provides several topics that can motivate students to write. Meanwhile, the students' difficulties such as confusion or inability to decide a topic that they want to write make them have no idea how to start writing. Kusumawardhani & Nurhayati (2019) added that the students need inspiration to construct their ideas in writing. So, the teacher can provide the strategy by asking the students to make a framework such as brainstorming or mind mapping to help them in writing. As Scoot & Ytreberg (1993) mentioned that reading and writing had the same tendency for students in growing their language awareness, but it took time and patience to learn. It can be seen that the teachers should consider the students' need to help them in providing an effective way to teach reading and writing.

Moreover, the learning language objective for English is at a low level, the outcomes are still in the basic step. They are only asked to do simple writing by involving their opinion or provided topic. It is very simple writing, and we tend to focus on vocabulary knowledge rather than grammatical structure. However, the grammatical structure has been taught since

elementary; it is still finding the context. Copland et al. (2014) mentioned that teaching grammar for young learners is very challenging because it should explain the different categories such as when the students can use present tense or past tense and how to make it clear dealing with the real context. Ibrahim (2016) argued that teaching grammar for young learners is related to thematic and it should be taught in different ways. The teacher can use the real context and clear illustration to make it more understandable. So, it cannot be avoided that young learners should learn grammar even with the simple way.

Last but not least, the researchers reveal the student's needs based on the sample language learning score, which is sorted by the tasks during the middle of the first semester. The tasks involved reading and writing skills. For reading, they are asked to read the passage and are given several questions. It is employed to know a student's reading comprehension or comprehension. Then, in the tasks related to writing skills, students are asked to write 2-3 paragraphs about the topic provided. In this term, the teacher and researchers can see how far students' writing skills and difficulties are. Then, it can be the basis of information to develop material related to help student's difficulties and gain student's needs both in reading and writing. By knowing the students' necessities, difficulties, desires in the real context, the teacher can provide effective language teaching by considering the characteristics of young learners and being more selective in choosing and conveying the materials based on students' need.

CONCLUSION

Need analysis is essential in the educational field. It is very useful in the teaching and learning process. In this study, the researchers attempted to investigate students' needs at the elementary level, especially in reading and writing skills. It is conducted to create appropriate learning material by adapting the provided material at school. Hence, the findings reveal that the students expected to be able to improve their language skills so that they can be more confident in communicating with other people. Furthermore, they also have several preferable topics to be discussed in the learning process, such as family and friends, foods or meals, hobbies, entertainment, etc. They prefer to have topics that can relate to their daily life and their background knowledge. Since several textbooks provide the topics, but the topics are not very relevant to their daily life, the learning outcomes are far from the expectation.

Moreover, the findings from the study reveal that there are several factors that can create students' obstacles in reading and writing. The provided topics which are not relevant to their daily life and interest, lack of vocabulary knowledge, and anxiety in writing make them hard to read and write.

REFERENCES

- Brown, H.D. (2008). *The Principles in Learning and Teaching Language*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Copland, F., Garton, S., & Burns, A. (2014). Challenges in teaching English to young learners: global perspectives and local realities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48(4), 738–762
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching*. Harlow: Pearson Longman.
- Hutchinson, T and Waters, A. (1991). *English for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ibrahim, N. (2016). Games for teaching grammar to young learners. *Indonesian Journal of Integrated English Language Teaching*, 2(1), 49–63.

- Kusumawardhani, P., & Nurhayati, N. (2019). The analysis of teaching writing to English young learners (EYL) through a movie: an Ict perspective. *Wanastra: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 11(1), 25–36.
- Nation, I. S. P., & Macalister, J. (2010). *Language Curriculum Design*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Richards, J.C (2001). *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge.
- Sakir, G., Dollah, S., Arsyad, S., & Ahmad, J. (2021). Need analysis for developing writing skill materials using facebook for english undergraduate students. *International Journal of Language Education*, 5(1), 542–551. <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v5i1.14856>
- Scott, W. A & Ytreberg, L. H. (1993). *Teaching English to Children*. New York: Longman.
- Suganda, L. (2015). Teaching reading for young learners in EFL context. *Journal of English Literacy Education*, 2(2), 116–125.
- Sulistiyani, U. N. L. (2018). The Importance of Needs Analysis in a Language Curriculum Development: An Evaluation to 2013 Curriculum. In *UICELL Conference Proceeding* (No. 2, pp. 143-152).
- Sunengsih, N., & Fahrurrozi, A. (2016). Learners' language needs analysis of English subject in azkia integrated Islamic primary school. *IJEE (Indonesian Journal of English Education)*, 2(1), 86-100.
- Surtikanti, M. W. (2019). Developing video-based English textbook for elementary school students. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Islamic Integration (JELTII)*, 2(01), 101-112.
- Tzotzou, M. (2014). Designing and administering a needs analysis survey to primary school learners about EFL learning: A case study. *Preschool and Primary Education*, 2(1), 59-82.
- West, R. (1994). Needs analysis in language teaching. *Language Teaching*, 27(1), 1–19.