

# Stakeholder needs in English for Legal Purposes (ELP) for Sri Lankan Undergraduates

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**Abstract**— *Studies on needs analysis in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) have focused their attention on identifying contradictory stakeholder needs. This study is aimed at identifying needs of stakeholders with regard to the preferred content of an English for Legal Purposes Course (ELP) for Sri Lankan law undergraduates. Needs of 104 stakeholders in two university English courses (i.e. law undergraduates, law lecturers, English lecturers, Heads of Departments of Law and a Course Coordinator and lawyers) were collected using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Stakeholder needs were identified in terms of necessary language skills required in both learning and target situations. The mean values of the law undergraduates' responses were calculated, and in order to measure whether there is a significant difference in the mean values of the undergraduates of each academic year One Way ANOVA tests were carried out. Further, data collected from open-ended items of the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were analysed qualitatively by grouping related responses and identifying patterns of stakeholders' responses. The results of this stakeholder needs analysis include necessary language skills, preferred activities and non-linguistic needs such as teaching methodology, materials and assessment. This study would provide an empirical basis for curriculum planning for an ELP course and a foundation for tailor-made language course for Sri Lankan law undergraduates.*

**Keywords**—stakeholders, needs analysis, linguistic needs

## I. INTRODUCTION

Needs analysis is a central device in curriculum development in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It consists of the language performance of learners in both productive and receptive skills to set course goals. The views of stakeholders such as students, teachers, heads of departments etc. are considered important in identifying both linguistic and non-linguistic needs of learners. The rapid evolution of needs analyses in the field of ESP has brought new

models which analyze a wide range of social issues that affect a language teaching programme. In that regard, characteristics of the environment in which the courses are conducted and views of stakeholders are considered as important factors in current models of needs analysis. Stakeholders at different levels, their power relations and how they influence teaching and learning have been one of the latest interests in needs analysis of ESP.

Though many Sri Lankan universities have made undergraduate degree programmes more vocationally oriented, there is no required expertise to fulfil the needs of English for Specific Purposes (Wickramasingha, 2009). Legal study programmes have been conducted by many higher educational institutions and universities in Sri Lanka since 1980s. However, English for Legal Purposes (ELP) has not been studied extensively by researchers in the Sri Lankan context. In addition, there is a need to develop teaching materials in ELP that fulfil both learning and target needs of Sri Lankan law undergraduates. Further, there are no published studies on identifying stakeholder needs of ELP in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study aimed at identifying specific English language requirements of law undergraduates, perceived as important by different stakeholders.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies on needs analysis needs i.e. Jass-Aguilar (1999); Long, (2005); Cheng (2011); Belcher & Lukkarila (2011); Paltridge & Starfield (2013) have focused their attention on critically-aware quantitative research that encourages awareness of a need for a critically pragmatic ESP which discusses contradictory stakeholder. Huhta, Vogt & Ulkki (2013) argue that "a needs analysis for ESP should be evidence-based where the evidence is supported by 'a thick description' of the professional workplace or training institution or one which attempts to unpack the multiple factors that collectively determine a more accurate understanding of the context". Benesch's right analysis (2001) is a radical departure from

conventional needs analysis which claims that each academic institution offers its own opportunities for negotiation and the reconciliation of different stakeholder needs for a better language programme.

Byleen and Altman (2007) consider stakeholder needs analysis as “the collective experience and wisdom” (cited in Rice, 2007). Similarly, Rawley and Romer (2007) consider the importance of collaboration of different perspectives of stakeholders. Johns and Makalela (2012) describe tensions and conflicts that occurred in the needs analysis process carried out in a university of South Africa as there were mismatch between the needs of teachers and learners (cited in Carter-Thomas, 2012). Similarly, Cumararatne (1988) collected data from multiple stakeholders with the use of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, field study, informal interviews and participant observation in order to design a learner-centered course that caters to Sri Lankan domestic aids in West Asia (cited in Jasso- Aguilar 1999). The results include the language used in the job, problems and pressures faced by domestic aids in their job. Amongst few researchers on stakeholder needs analysis for English for Legal Purposes, Ahmad (2009) studied the perception of judges in Pakistan with reference to the linguistic adequacy of fresh law graduates and their deficiencies of Legal English.

#### A Hypothesis

It is important to identify needs of stakeholders with regard to a preferred content of an ELP course that includes both learning and target needs of law undergraduates.

#### B Research Problem

What learning and target needs do stakeholders perceive as important when designing English for Legal Purposes course for law undergraduates?

### III. METHODOLOGY

This survey research is based on obtaining the needs of stakeholders who have a direct and indirect influence of the selected two English language programmes in two Sri Lankan universities. A major difference of the two English programmes include the fact that the English programme in University A focuses on enhancing learners’ all four skills of English as well as vocabulary and grammar whereas the programme

in University B does not include activities to improve speaking and listening skills. Unlike the programme in University A, the programme in University B is one credit course that offers a certificate.

#### A. Sample Population of Stakeholders:

This study includes a sample of 104 stakeholders who have a direct and indirect influence on the selected English language teaching programmes: 2 Heads of Departments of law, 1 course coordinator at the Department of Languages of University B, 12 law lecturers from both universities, 10 English lecturers and instructors from both universities, 75 law undergraduates (35 from each university), and four lawyers. Purposive sampling technique was used to select stakeholders who were typical, suitable and convenient to select. In order to have the comprehensiveness of the sample, insiders from two leading universities were selected.

#### B. Research Instruments:

A questionnaire and semi- structured interviews were used to elicit factual, behavioural and attitudinal data of the stakeholders. The questionnaire was used with law undergraduates and it included a range of topics such as necessities, learning and target needs. The questionnaire for law undergraduates was administered to an assembled group of undergraduates. The response rate of the questionnaire was high as it was group administered face-to-face. Apart from that, semi-structured interviews were conducted with law lecturers, English instructors, the Heads, Departments of Law, course Coordinators of English language programme in University B, and the lawyers.

#### C. Methods of Data Analysis

The mean values of the law undergraduates’ responses collected from questionnaires were calculated and analyzed using the following decision criteria.

**Table 1: Decision Criteria**

Mean Value	Decision
Between 1-2.33	Low degree of preference
Between 2.34- 3.66	Moderate degree of preference
Between 3.67-5	High degree of preference

In order to measure whether there is a significant difference in the mean values of the undergraduates of each academic year One Way ANOVA tests were carried out. Further, data collected from open-ended items of the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were analysed quantitatively as well as qualitatively by grouping related responses and identifying patterns of stakeholders' responses.

#### D. Reliability Statistics of the Data

Cronbach's Alpha was computed in terms of the average correlation among the scale items to measure how well the items of the questionnaires measure stakeholder needs. Internal consistency above 0.70 was achieved for all items of the three types of questionnaires and the levels of reliability was sufficient.

### IV. RESULTS

#### i. Law Undergraduates' Needs

The Likert scale item of the the questionnaire for law undergraduates included 14 items on listening, reading, writing, speaking, grammar and vocabulary. Law undergraduates rated each of the items on the degree to which they perceive the items important. Response choices ranged from 1 (totally unimportant) to 5 (very important).

**Table 2: Law Undergraduates' Perception of the Importance of Needs**

Needs	First Year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year
Listening to court proceedings	2.93	3.3	3.23	3.5
Listening and note taking	1.79	3.0	2.77	3.0
Debates	2.70	3.35	2.51	3.17
Group discussions	2.5	2.85	1.94	2.5
Dialogues	1.93	2.7	2.34	2.17
Reading to identify specific information	3.43	3.45	3.0	3.67
Reading and note taking	3.43	3.65	3.09	3.67
Summarizing	3.79	4.55	4.06	4.0
Legal letter writing	3.93	4.05	3.77	4.0
Report writing	3.79	3.75	3.77	4.0
Completing a grammar work book	3.71	3.35	3.06	3.17
Engaging in grammar practice	3.86	4.05	4.09	4.0

activities				
Learning legal vocabulary	3.57	4.45	4.03	3.0
Using a glossary in the English class	3.93	3.06	3.77	4.33

According to *Table 2* the first year undergraduates consider listening and note taking and conducting dialogues with a low preference as the mean values are 1.79 and 1.93 respectively. Further, the third year undergraduates consider conducting group discussions less important with a low mean value 1.94. In terms of reading skills, the fourth year undergraduates had a high preference with the mean value 3.67 for both reading and identifying specific information and for reading and note taking. All the groups consider summarizing, legal letter writing, report writing, completing a grammar workbook and using a glossary in the class as very important activities with mean values that fall in the high level of the decision criteria.

In order to measure whether there is a significant difference in the mean values of the undergraduates of each academic year One Way ANOVA tests were conducted. According to the results, there is a statistically significant difference in the mean values of the importance perceived by the undergraduates of each academic year only on the following needs.

Listening and note taking:	0.006 < 0.05
Debates:	0.019 < 0.05
Group discussions:	0.017 < 0.05
Summarizing:	0.020 < 0.05
Learning legal vocabulary:	0.010 < 0.05

The significance level of the above skills were below 0.05 and it indicates the preference of those activities differ by the academic year of the undergraduates.

The undergraduates' responses for the open-ended items of the questionnaire revealed that the majority of third year undergraduates in University B prefer listening skills to be taught and assessed at the final exam. According to a third year undergraduate in University B, undergraduates who follow the LLB in Sinhala medium need more exposure to listening activities in the English classroom. They complained that teaching listening skills is neglected by the English instructors as more

attention is paid on teaching reading and writing. In addition, the majority of law undergraduates in both universities mentioned that there is no adequate audio-visual equipment to practice listening skills. According to some undergraduates in University A, the language laboratory could be effectively used in specific time slots allocated for listening.

Few undergraduates needed exposure to different accents of English used in other countries. "I suggest including more activities to improve listening skills specially to understand the accents used by foreigners" (A second year female undergraduate, University A). "Provide exposure to English outside Sri Lanka" (A second year male undergraduate, University A). The undergraduates' responses for the open-ended items of the questionnaire included that the fourth year undergraduates prefer classroom practices and assessments not restricted to reading and writing. They preferred speaking skills to be assessed. "It must not be a reading and writing skill class. It must be a practical class". Also, the majority of law undergraduates in both universities need a separate time slot for speaking activities. According to the study conducted by Evans and Morrisons (2010), the 28 first year undergraduates of their study lacked confidence in their ability to communicate clearly, fluently and accurately in English. Similar to their study, the findings of this study depicted that few of the first year undergraduates dislike speaking activities due to the nervousness they feel in public speaking.

"I am afraid of going in front of the class and perform" (A first year female undergraduate in University A).

"I am already a graduate. But still English is very stranger for me. I hesitate to speak English among friends. But I like very much speak English. I want to be a very good knowledgeable person and talented person by using English. Please get two hours class in every weekend."(A third year male undergraduate in University B).

The majority of law undergraduates in University B mentioned that the speaking activities are inadequate. It is identified that all undergraduates did not mention any negative criticism on reading activities in responses to questionnaire. Some undergraduates in University A preferred if they had

activities on reading legal cases and writing analyses.

The undergraduates' responses to questionnaires depicted that some of them wish if they were given model documents of legal genres for writing activities. The majority of the third year undergraduates in University B liked the legal letter writing activities of their programme. Some second year undergraduates of University A requested more grammar practice activities.

"Though we practice grammar exercise from little age, it is not that much familiar to us. Always there will be some sort of grammar errors. So I prefer to have a better way to learn grammar in class" (A second year male undergraduate of University B).

In response to the open-ended questions, the majority of undergraduates in University A mentioned that they lack a sound knowledge of legal vocabulary and it prevented them comprehending legal text fully.

"I need to improve my legal vocabulary to perform well in legal studies. It will help me in future to perform legal documentation well."

#### ii. Other Stakeholders' Views on Needs

According to the Course Coordinator of the English Programme in University B, the teaching materials of the Program were designed many years ago by the senior personnel consulting professors, and the revisions to the curriculum had not been done in the recent years. The course coordinator casually informs the instructors about new activities to be incorporated in to the existing curriculum. It is also mentioned that listening and speaking skills are not taught or evaluated in the Programme as it is based on English for Academic Purposes.

"I would like to incorporate audio visual materials into our programme, and revise the reading materials".

Further, according to the Course Coordinator of University B, some teachers use a glossary of legal vocabulary though it is not a prescribed book for the course.

According to some law lecturers in University B were critical of the teaching methodology used in the English programme.

“The common complaint that undergraduates make is that English lecturers are old and inactive in teaching, so law undergraduates disliked attending the classes”.

Similarly, some law lecturers in University A wanted English instructors to make teaching effective and interesting. According to the Head, Department of Law in University B, the instructors in the English programme have been unable to attract the law undergraduates to the program as most of the teachers in the programme are old instructors and mostly retired school teachers. According to him, undergraduates expect new audio-visual devices to learn English as used in countries like Japan. New technologies such as language laboratories should be used by the instructors. According to the responses of the lawyers the way lessons are presented to ‘young’ undergraduates is a major weakness of the English language programmes. In that regard, new methodologies in teaching English should have to be used by the instructors to facilitate learning. Extra resources should be included in the English language programme to prepare undergraduates for a career in law.

According to the Course Coordinator of the English programme in University B, the instructors are not trained to teach Legal English. There are no workshops conducted, and they are casually instructed on how to teach. Since most instructors have been trained to teach General English, there is a teacher training programme conducted by the Department. Any new teacher is trained at the beginning in a legal writing workshop in which they are informed on how to teach, nature of materials and assessment criteria. On the other hand, data collected from majority of English instructors showed that they need specific training to teach Legal English, provided by universities.

**A. Learning Environment and Learners’ Motivation:** According to the Course Coordinator of English in University B, since the English classes are held in a school away from the university, the undergraduates are reluctant to attend the classes. “Most of the elder undergraduates such as attorneys-at-law, officers of the Tri-Services and the Parliament do not attend the English classes held at a school outside the University premises”. One undergraduate mentioned that “We don’t mind studying in a shed within the university itself, we don’t like to go to a school to study English.”

Undergraduates’ attendance in the English programme in University B is very poor since attending the English classes is not compulsory. Though obtaining the certificate is a must, undergraduates do not consider the programme seriously. Therefore, many undergraduates do not get the certificate. As the lecturer comments “What I suggest to solve this problem is that at the orientation programme law undergraduates should be properly informed about the value of obtaining the certificate.” The certificate is recognized by the Law College of Sri Lanka when graduates are enlisted for the final examination, which is a requirement of all the graduates if they want to be a law practitioner. However, many undergraduates in University B do not read and understand the course guide book, which is in English. Thus, law undergraduates should be thoroughly instructed by the relevant administrative staff members of the university at the orientation itself.

#### C. Lack of Stakeholder Collaboration:

Though the idea of stakeholder collaboration in ESP situations emerged in Western countries many decades ago, still there is no collaboration in most of ESP settings in the Sri Lankan universities. It has made a negative impact on both teaching and learning in the two universities.

The lack of cooperation and attentive listening to each others’ requirements hampers teaching and learning in the universities. Though both parties are aware of the responsibilities of developing undergraduates’ skills, no one seems interested in minimizing the prevailing problems in the English language teaching programmes in both universities.

In analyzing the contacts between the departments selected in this study, it is noted that there are no formal contacts of law lecturers with English instructors in the Departments of Languages of both universities to discuss matters pertaining to English language skills of law undergraduates. There were few instances when lecturers casually asked what sort of topics that they would select when preparing materials for reading comprehension. Sometimes, they wanted to know the exact meaning of legal jargons. There were no other forms of official meetings held by the members of the two departments.

According to the Head, Department of Legal Studies, he meets the Course Coordinator of the English programme occasionally- “only at the

examination centre". Also, both departments do not have official contacts and meetings to discuss matters related to English language needs of law undergraduates. The only mode of communication is when teaching materials are prepared, law lecturers have been contacted casually to get clarifications of the difficult areas of the legal texts. There should be cooperation between the Departments of Law and the Departments of Languages. The Head of the Department, University B suggested that there should be cooperation between the three main stakeholders: undergraduates, lecturers in law and English instructors. The English language programme should not be isolated from the legal studies programmes. It is important to link law degrees with English language programme.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The results of this study are of two types. First, stakeholder needs are seen in terms of language that the law undergraduates have to use in a particular communication situation. And the second is a wide range of affective and cognitive variables such as learners' attitudes, motivation, awareness, personality, wants, expectations and learning styles which affect learning. The needs collected are presented as skills, activities, methods, materials used, assessment, time allocation, classroom environment, equipment needed and stakeholder collaboration. The results showed that majority of stakeholders in this study perceived that law undergraduates' do not have proficiency in basic English language skills. Therefore, it is utmost important to uplift their standards with tailored fit instructions in Legal English.

This study presents some controversial issues in teaching English for Specific Purposes such as collaboration of stakeholders in Sri Lanka. Besides, this study provides insights into the possibilities of stakeholder collaboration in Legal English programmes at university level. The results of this study show what needs to be included in the ELP curriculum to meet the specific linguistic and pragmatic needs of law undergraduates. The English instructors should work in collaboration with subject specialists in order to provide opportunities for learners to engage in relevant communicative activities which are authentic.

The data collection was limited only to the stakeholders in two universities. However

generalizing the results of this survey is not limited as it included a large number of stakeholders and law undergraduates of two leading universities of Sri Lanka. The future stakeholder needs analyses should identify behaviour, interests, interactions, influence and resources that each stakeholder brings in order to design successful ELP courses in Sri Lankan universities.

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