Need Analysis in ESP context: High School graduates in Birjung, Nepal as a Case Study

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Abstract
The study had been conducted to identify learners' key requirement or needs, determine the areas in which they are lacking skills and design ESP course and materials. Against this background, this study was conducted during the academic year 2020 to define the English language needs of high school graduates who wants to pursue further education, an international degree, civil jobs, and others, where good English language ability is a primary requirement. The data of this study was collected from different sources, including a questionnaire circulated online, and a semi-structured interview with both subject-matter teachers or instructors and the administrators at Skill Lab. Results of the data analysis offered significant insights as to the designing and teaching of ESP course. The study revealed that receptive skill (i.e., reading) was mostly focused on English class. It has been also reported that listening, writing along with speaking skills were needed more. The data analysis helped to determine the most important language tasks in the context of high school graduates. Finally, a call was being made by both the organization and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers to enhance the language ability of high school graduates by offering relevant suggestions. Based on these findings, the present study concluded with implications for course designs and recommenation for future studies.

I.   INTRODUCTION

A team from Skill Lab visited some of the high schools/colleges in Birgunj to discuss a partnership project 'CareerPREP' that works to improve the employability outcomes of the high school graduates or university going students. Skill Lab is an outcome of CareerPREP which intends to bridge the gap existing between professional realm and axademic instillation among the students. In this light, they are parternering with Birgunj Public College and National Infotech College, Birgunj to work directly with the university going students and academic institutions with industry at the center.

The stakeholders requested the Skill Lab to design and managed an intervention that includes ESP course for students, as well as volunteer ESP teachers to support them in delivering the content effectively. It was agreed that the Skill Lab would conduct a comprehensive need analysis of English teachers and learners in the parternering institutions which will inform the design and planning of this programme.

The needs analysis was conducted in partnering institutions and encompassed meetings held with key stakeholders from the same institutions from 22-30 November 2020. This report is the outcome of that needs analysis.

Seen as a data collection process (Nunan, 1998), needs analysis can be a vital asset for teachers of English for specific purposes (ESP) to identify learners' key requirements or needs and determine the skills they need to develop. Scholars have been debating on th focus of need analysis.

While Hutchinson and Waters (1987) consider learning needs as what the learners needs to do in order to learn, Benesch (2001: 72) perceives that needs are associated strictly with target situation demands.

Some other researchers such as Taillefer, (2007) and Cowling, (2007) empirical evidence shows that the success of teaching and learning process in ESP depends much on needs analysis.

It is clear thus that needs analysis can help learners adapt to the new learning system when their teachers recognize their needs of the learning process (Carkin, 2005; Chamot, 2007). One obvious advantage of needs analysis is that, by identifying them learners in general, needs analysis will identify the weaknesses and stregnthens of the skills that they use in potential academic or business contexts. Therefore, the current study comes to add the bulk of research on ESP needs analysis. It can be considered a pragmatic and objective attemot to help ELT in Nepal to identify the best methods of teaching that are truly relevant to their learners.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RATIONALE

Although students graduating from high schools are argued to have their own needs, there has been little investigation at the Nepalese local context. Therefore, teaching English for Academic Purposes is far from satisfactory in terms of customizing ESP courses by using the real needs of learners or the language situation at the market as the input to feed ESP courses. One implication of this is that when the specific language needs are not defined based on language use, students may end up being disappointed with the language proficiency level that they achieve once they join the work place. Another implication is that the effort of English teachers would lack focus if the language needs are not identified in terms of language use.

A closer scruntiny of the learning situation at the high schools at Birjung reflects the need for high school graduates to have a good level of proficiency in English since they deal with a large number of courses whose jargons are in English. Futher, English is used extensively in all sectors these days. Hence, this study based on an authentic analysis of learners' present situation needs and target situation ones, aims to provide empirical data about the different needs of high school graduates and the uses of English in the future fields which in return, can be used as an input to feed the larger structure of the local ESP context in further education.

NEED ANALYSIS FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

Need analysis for the present study considers two complementary approaches but will focus more on target situation analysis (TSA) than on present situation analysis (PSA). PSA is about students' level of language and language use and what the students want to develop from TSA. Within this study, PSA is associated with TSA, and they will be carried out together. TSA is not adequate to determine the needs of the targeted students in English without considering their PSA. Therefore, taken together, TSA and PSA may explain which method(s) should be used in order to provide an adequate course design for high school graduates in Birgunj, Nepal.

Reasearch Questions

The present study was designed to answer the following research questions:
1. What is the English language proficiency of Birjung high school graduates?
2. What are the language skills and activities much emphasized in English subject class?
3. What English language skills do ESP and Subject teachers perceives as the most important for high school students?
4. How do teachers perceive ESP course at high schools/colleges?
5. What language needs high school graduates want to develop?

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

Participants and Context

Participants in the present study were ESP and subject matter teachers (N= 20; age= 25-45) and second year high school students who are graduating this year from science and management faculty in Birgunj (N=200; age mean = 18). The sample was screened based on a sampling system which gives chance for both students and teachers to take part in this study. The targeted students were exposed to intensive course of English language at their schools and colleges. This indicated that they were likely to be aware of their needs.

The selection of ESP and SM teacher was grounded on the fact that they naturally had direct contact with their students and they could provide useful information about their students' needs better than anyone else. They could give incisive and insightful feedback for course designers to define the goals and specific objectives of any suggested course.

Within the frame of this investigation, a systematic control of variables related to heterogeneity of the subject was not feasible. It was not possible, for example, to control socio-economic variables. The common independent variable here is that they all are from Birgunj.

INSTRUMENTATION AND DATA COLLECTION

To achieve triangulation and thereby reach valid results about the need analysis of English language of high school graudates, the current study used three different yet interrelated types of instruments: a classroom observation protocol, a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview protocol.

Classroom Observation Protocol

The design of classroom observation protocol (see Appendix A) was informed by research design of studies on needs analysis (Javid, 2011). This protocol took a time-sampling format whereby relevant classroom activities carried out by both students and teachers were recorded every minute in an ongoing manner. These activities were Student Reading Time (SRT), Student Listening Time (SLT), Student Writing Time (SWT),

Teacher Speaking Time (TST), Student Speaking Time (SST), and Nepali Speaking Time (NST) both for the teachers and the students.

Structured Questionnaire

Based on the observation protocol results and Basturkmen's (1998) insights, a structured questionnaire comprising 26 items was developed (See Appendix B). The first section of the questionnaire gathered personal information about the subjects. The second elicited their level of competence in English based on a five-likert scale: 1. Excellent, 2. Very Good, 3. Good, 4. Fair, and 5. Poor. In the third section, the targeted students were asked four point Likert-scale questions as to their PSN and TSN.

As far as the questionnaire design and layout were concerned, the optimal length of all the questionnaires was three to four pages and each did not exceed a fifteen-minute completion limit.

**Semi- Structured Interview Protocol**

The third tool was a semi-open ended interview protocol for SM, ESP teachers and the organization. Teachers were asked six open ended questions and two closed ended ones to discover the present situation needs (PSN) and target situation needs (TSN) of the subjects (see Appendix 3). The interview was to support and/or explain the results obtained from the questionnaire. The interview open-ended questions covered the following points: (i) general background information regarding the interviewees' age, gender and subject being taught; (ii) teachers' perception regarding the importance of English for high school students; (iii) the most important skills that students need to carry out their studies; (iv) teachers and administrators comments and suggestions as to design ESP course.

III.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the resultts of the study. Part one presents the quantitative analysis of the first two research instruments, namely, classroom observation protocol and structured questionnaire. Within this part, we deal with three research questions regarding language skills and activities,mostly focused on in English subject classes, students' perception of their proficiency in English language skills and students' linguistic needs at the TS.

Part two is about the qualitative analysis of the third research instrument used. Within this part, we present results about the importance of English for high school graduates as perceived by teachers and administrators, the most salient skills that students need, comments and suggestions for a practical ESP course during/after high schools.

Quantitative Analysis

Distribution of language skills and activities mostly focused on in English classes

SRT SLT SWT TST SST AST
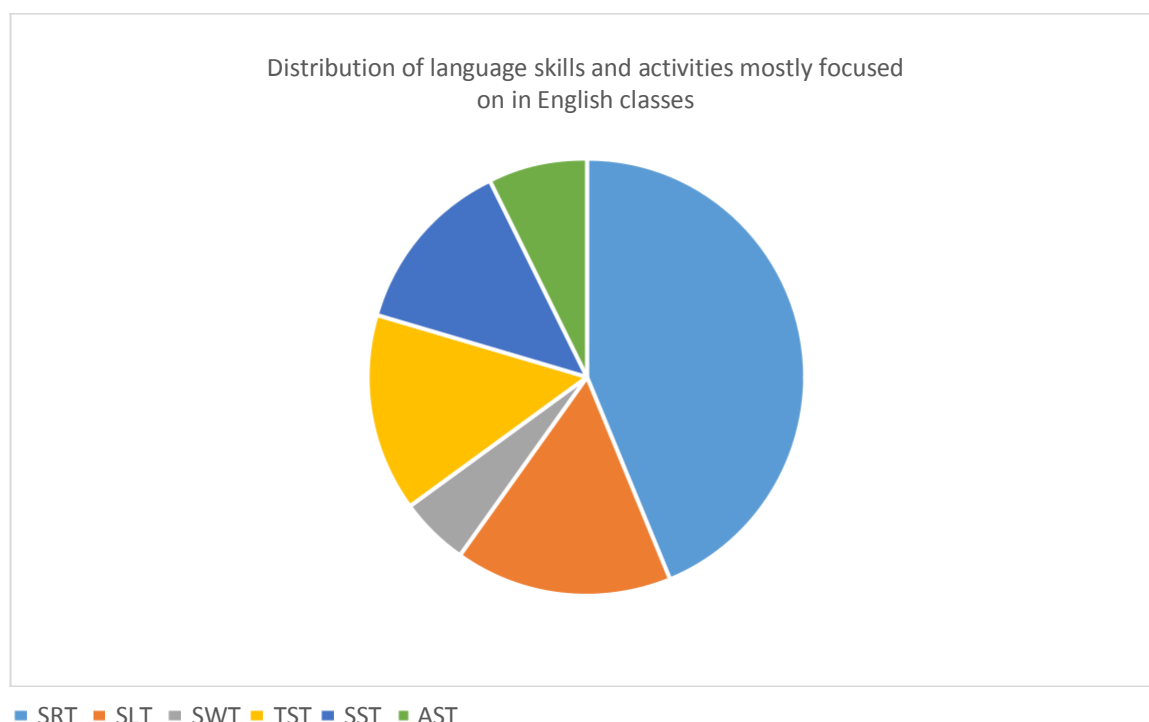
As Figure 1 shows, the differen language skills and classroom activities were found to be as important with more or less slight differences. What was so exciting was the recepive skills were identified to receive much focus in the English class for high school students. Indeed, reading activities took 30 minutes, that is, 60 of the time allocated to classroom tasks, followed by listening skills with 22%, speaking activities were given 11% of the whole time.

The most surprisind finding was that writing activities were the least performed with 7% of the whole time given to classroom activities, that is, 3 mintues only. This indicates that teachers were concerned with developing receptive skills and sub-skills to the neglect of the productive ones.

This conclusion can be supported by the type of classroom interactions which was marked by the dominance of teacher talk (20% of the classroom activities activities time). Student-student interactions took only 18% of the whole time of classroom activities or interactions. Worthy of note was that student talk (especially poor achievers) was featured by the use their native language, Nepali (10%). They use such to elicit teachers' explanation of new some concepts or synonyms.

Overall, the results of the first question refleted that English classes are taught in a traditional way where the classroom is teacher-dominated and not learner-centered. Another crucial point was that writing skill, despite its importance, still receive less focus in the English teaching at high schools. The English classroom reality in the high schools and the less emphasis given to productive skills could be explained by the proficiency level os the targeted high school students. The next part deals with students' self-rating of their proficiency in English language skills.

Students' perception of their proficiency in English language skills
As far as students' proficiency in English language skills was concerned, there was a slight difference in targeted subject self-ratings, as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Students' perception of their proficiency in English language skillls

English Language Skill	Mean	SD
Reading	3.11	1.08
Listening	2.58	1.09
Speaking	2.54	1.19
Writing	2.26	1.04

Table 1 shows reading was ranked first(M = 3.11; SD = 1.08). Listening was ranked the second skill at which the targeted students sound proficient,with a mean value of 2.58 and a SD value of 1.09. Crucial was that engineering students perceived themselves as less proficientin both speaking (M = 2.54. SD = 1.19) and writing (M = 2.26; SD = 1.04) skills.

What transpired from the above results was that the targeted students tend to develop the skills on which much emphasis is given in classroom. That is why, productive skills lagged behind receptive skills. The implication of this is that high school students are likely to encounter communication problems in their undergraduate degree, potential workplace or when conducting research, for they lack much practice in and outside the classroom. These variations in students' English language skills proficiency could be accounted for by the teachers' perception of the importance of English skills to their students' studies or careers.

Students' perceived English language needs for carrying out their high school studies
The last section of the students' questionnaire was concerned with thoroughly capturing subjects' perceived English language needs for effectively carrying out their engineering studies. The researcher got 200 questionnaires filledin. Table 2 below gives an account of the subjects' responses:

Table 2. Students' perceived English language needs for carrying out their engineering studies

S.N.	Importance of English language skills	Mean	SD
1.	How important is listening skill for your higher education or career?	1.76	0.81
2.	How important is speaking skill for your higher education or career	2.03	0.96
3.	How important reading skill for your higher education or career?	2.48	0.91
4.	How important writing skill for your higher education or career?	3.76	0.56
5.	How important is grammar for your higher education or career?	2.03	0.96

As Table 2 shows, most high school students rated the four English skills as relatively important. Writing was ranked as the most important among the skills where the mean was (M = 3.73), followed by reading skill (M = 2.48 and SD = 0.96), then speaking skill and grammar (M= 2.03 and SD = 0.96). Listening skill ranked as somehow the least important with a mean value of 1.76 and a SD value of 0.81. Results of the above table revealed that there was a lack of much emphasis on productive skills among engineering students, hence the need to work on developing such by either modifying the teaching techniques or course content.

Importance of listening sub-skills as perceived by high school students
Analysis of the items 10 to 13 which investigated subjects' responses about important listening tasks showed various rankings, as illustrated in the following table.

Table 3. Importance of listening sub-skills as perceived by engineering students

Listening skill		Mean	SD
Listening sub-skills	a- How important is listening to lectures?	1.22	0.51
	b- How important is instructions understanding?	1.49	0.69
	c- How important is following question/answer sessions?	1.74	0.74
	d- How important is understanding of power point presentations?	1.46	0.71

Table 3 shows that 'following question/answer sessions' (M = 1.74 and SD = 0.74) was the most listening task performed by students in ESP classes, followed by 'understanding instructions' (M= 1.49 and SD= 0.69) and 'understanding power point presentations' respectively. Although means of listening activities were high, the ESP course seems to not handle different listening genres, which could result in a lack of interaction and problems in speaking.

Importance of speaking sub-skills as perceived by high school students

The next 5 questions (14-18) were about the importance of speaking sub-skills as perceived by students.

Analysis of students' ratings showed a slight variation in the rankings of such sub-skills.

Speaking skill		Mean	SD
Speaking sub-skills	How important is asking questions?	1.37	0.54
	How important is participating in classroom discussions?	1.39	0.60
	How important is answering questions?	1.50	0.66
	How important is giving oral presentations?	1.83	0.81
	How important is interacting with teachers or peers?	1.4	0.62

As shown in Table 4 above, it was found that 'giving oral presentations' (M = 1.83 and SD = 0.81) and 'answering questions' (M = 1.50 and SD = 0.66) were perceived as the most important sub-skills of speaking. Lagged behind were the sub-skills of 'interacting with specialists', 'participating in classroom discussions' and 'asking questions' with no significant difference in their mean values. Considering the

results of the speaking sub-skills at large, it can be concluded that students expressed an urgent need to develop interactional skills of communication.

Importance of reading sub-skills as perceived by high school students

As far as reading tasks were concerned, high mean value of 2.38 was assigned to 'reading instructions for assignments' followed by classroom reading tasks, that is, 'reading handouts given by teachers' and 'reading field-relatedtextbooks'. The lowest mean value (1.25) was calculated for only "reading articles in journals", as shown in Table 5 below.

Reading skill		Mean	SD
Reading sub-skills	How important is reading articles in journals?	1.25	0.47
	How important is reading instructuions for assignments?	2.38	0.79
	How important is reading handouts given by teachers?	1.60	0.69
	How important is reading field-related textbooks?	1.60	0.69

According to the results represented in Table 5, it can be concluded that reading skills were considered important. This might be due to the methods of teaching used in classroom which focus much on reading skills.

Importance of writing sub-skills as perceived by high school students

Analysis of the last four items which investigated subjects' responses about important writing tasks showed various rankings, as illustrated in the following table.

Writing skill		Mean	SD
Writing sub-skills	How important is taking notes during lectures?	1.26	0.55
	How important is writing for class quizzes and exams?	1.81	0.79
	How important is writing assignment and homework?	1.66	0.82
	How important is writing field-specific reports?	1.91	0.85

'Writing field-specifireports' was ranked as the most important writing sub-skill students need with mean value of 1.91 and SD value of 0.85. 'Writing for class quizzes and exams' was ranked the second with mean value of 1.81 and SD value of 0.79. "Writing assignment and homework" (M = 1.66 and SD = 0.85) and "taking notes during lectures" (M = 1.26 and SD = 0.55) were identified the least important sub-skills or tasks on this ranking.

The different ranking values can imply that writing skill mainly focused on exams or assignments. Students seem to rarely work on developing the skill of writing for reports, which accounts for its top ranking as an urgent linguistic need.

Comparatively considering the descriptive statistics about the different English skills and sub-skills needed in English classes in Table 2 through Table 6, it can be concluded that high school students needed English primarily for academic purposes (exams, note taking, classroom participation, etc) and then for professional purposes at the TS (giving oral presentations, reading articles and writing specificfield-specific reports, job etc). The results revealed the need for exposure to an integrated skills approach. However, due to lack of any given ESP course, it seems difficultto prioritize the practice provided in each skill.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis of data included all the results elicited from the questions of the semi-structured interview protocol. From the large amount of raw data, interpretation was conducted only on those potentially meaningful to the study. The qualitative data were presented and discussed in such a way as to reinforce and/or compare the results obtained in the quantitative data.

Interview of Targeted Teachers/Adminstrators

Importance of English for high school students

Question one sought their response about how important they thought English was for high school students to carry out their content-subject studies at their college or perform well at workplace. All subjects strongly agreed that it was of vital importance and the following factors have been mentioned in this regard.
a. Their medium of language is English.

b. They need it to read their field-specific textbooks which are most of the time written in English.

c. They need proficiency in English to perform better in their different job requirements.
Teachers' perception regarding the most important language skill for their students

Question two elicited the targeted teachers' perception about the most important language skill for their students to accomplish their engineering studies or to perform well at their potential workplace. Table 7 below gives an account of the distribution of the following four skills.

English Language skills	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation (SD)
Speaking	2.3	2	0.95
Listening	2.7	3	0.95
Reading	3.2	3	1.47
Writing	2.4	2	0.84

As Table 7 shows, according to 60% of the targeted teachers/administrators, the most important English skill needed for students was reading (M = 3.2 and SD = 1.47). Listening skill was ranked as the second important skill for engineering students by 40% of the teachers with a mean value of 2.7 and a SD value of .95. With regard to speaking skill, 40% of the teachers identified it as the third skill of great impor-tance with a mean value of 2.3 and a SD value of .95. With regard to writing skill, subjects' responses showed rather more variation when they were asked to rate its importance. Indeed, a good majority of respondents(40%) identifiedit as very important for students' studies and future job requirements.

The statistics given in the table above indicates that the four English skills seem to play an important role in the high school studies.. All the faculty members unanimously reported that the students need reading skills to read relevant reference material from different sources. Speaking and listening were reported other important skills in this regard.

Comments and Suggestions for a Practical ESP Course at high schools/colleges

All the interviewees were asked to give comments about the status quo of ESP learning/teaching in high schools/ colleges in order to improve English language. On a general level, adminstrators provided comments and suggestions but SM teachers could not express their opinions in understandable English; some used poor English, some used Nepali, and some others mixed Hindi dialect with English. Using poor English or code-switching between Nepali and English gives a clue that their English proficiency was low. Regardless of the quality of English they used, they provided comments on how ESP course could be designed. The immediate task was to synthesize all the answers in such a way as to reveal possible patterns, yet without misrepresenting the data. This procedure was adopted to get a key word analysis, generating categories from the statements made

by the respondents. This resulted in such categories as "what should be included in ESP course", "syllabus design", etc. Such categories were then grouped together according to whether they were referred to as language needs, learning needs or higher education/job-related needs.

To begin with, Subject matter teachers thought that the English course taught to high school students seems irrelevant to either their potential academic growth or workplace since it focused more on reading than writing or speaking skills. This supports the results in Figure 1 and Table 1 above.

They also argued that the English course was introduced in non-supportive teach- ing conditions. In this regard, they suggested that the ESP course should have been designed and prepared by both the ESP and SM teachers. However, in reality, ESP teachers and SM teachers seem to have never met to discuss and share ideas on teaching English for the high school students. Besides, it was recommended that more time should be assigned to English course during/after high school.

On the whole, all these interviewees' comments corresponded to what Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) consider as effective ways of learning needs of students, namely, the skills they might need to develop as well as the lacks that should be dealt with. The given comments also showed that an urgent policy-intervention should be undertaken. Put differently, English teachers, administrators and syllabus designers have to join efforts and find solutions that meet the students' needs including language needs, learning needs and field-specific needs, among many other.

IV. DISCUSSION

The results generated by the three instruments: classroom observation, close-ended questionnaire, and semi-structured interview protocol identified that reading skill was the most important skills for high school graduates. This finding echoes the conclusions of many studies focuses mainly on reading skills. Writing skills, where students were reported to have low level probably out of the scant attention given to it, were perceived by students as one of the most important targeted needs. The questionnaire data indicated that listening was the least important skill for students whereas teachers perceived it as the second important skill as shown in the interview results. The implication of this was that students seemed to under-estimate the importance of different language skills without considering their specific academic or professional needs. Hence, this fact should be taken into account when designing an ESP course for high school graduates.

The variations in the results about the importance of language skills can be accounted for by the type of the ESP course which tends to be language-based where much focus was put on grammar and vocabulary. Such a course cannot be responsive to all students' needs. Students may at best attain a 'textbook' type of knowledge of ESP or English, but may not be able to use English in the professional world.

On the basis of the results, a number of recommendations were offered to upgrade the ESP course for high school graduates. A highly tailored ESP course for pursuing higher education or job, integrating academic skills with subject or field-specifi skills, derived directly from the learners' discipline should be framed. Such a course, if based on a pervasive and comprehensive 'needs analysis', is expected to facilitate the process of mastering both academic and subject-matter specific aspects of the target language as well as motivate students to become actively involved in the process of learning.

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APPENDIX A

Classroom Observation Protocol

1. Subject:
2. Date:
3. Time:
4. Name of the Teacher:
5. Time for different activities:

o	Activity	Time (minutes)	No	Activity	Time (minutes)
1	SRT		4	TST	
2	SLT		5	SST	
3	SWT		6	F/AST	

6. Any other observations:

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

Students' structured Questionnaire

I- Background
Name:……………………

Age:……………………..
Field of study …………….

Email:……………………

*   **What level of proficiency do you think you have in the following language skills or components?**
1= Excellent 2= very good 3= good 4= fair 5= poor

1.   Listening ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

2.   Speaking ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

3.   Reading ____ ____ ____ ____ ____
4.   Writing ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

II- Language Needs
*   **Rank the following according to their importance. Circle the most appropriate choice.**
1 = very important 2 = important 3 = not important 4 = not applicable

5.   How important is listening skill? 1 2 3 4
6.   How important is speaking skill? 1 2 3 4

7.   How important is reading skill? 1 2 3 4

8.   How important is writing skill? 1 2 3 4
9.   How important is grammar? 1 2 3 4

Listening

10. Listening to lectures 1 2 3 4
11. Understanding instructions 1 2 3 4

12. Following question/answer sessions 1 2 3 4

13. Understanding power point presentations 1 2 3 4

Speaking

14. Asking questions 1 2 3 4
15. Participating in discussions 1 2 3 4

16. Answering the questions 1 2 3 4

17. Giving oral presentations 1 2 3 4

18. Interacting with specialists in your field of stud 1 2 3 4

Reading

19. Field –related textbooks 1 2 3 4

20. Articles in journals 1 2 3 4
21. Handouts given by teachers 1 2 3 4

22. Instructions for assignments 1 2 3 4

23. Taking notes in lectures 1 2 3 4

24. Class quizzes and exams 1 2 3 4

25. Assignments and homework 1 2 3 4

26. Field-specific report 1 2 3 4

APPENDIX C

Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Part I

Background Information

1. Name:……….

2. Gender:………
3. Age:………….

4. What subject(s) do you teach?………………

Part II

Questions to be answered by the learners

a- To what extent do you think English is important for their studies or to perform well at the workplace?

b- What are their immediate expectations from the course?

Questions to be answered by the instructors

a- What knowledge and skills do they need to develop?

b-   How do you evaluate the teaching of English course? What can you suggest to design the ESP course?

Questions to be answered by the administrators

a-   What is your general view of English and ESP (English for Specific Purpose)?

b-   How do you want to implement this ESP course?

Rabu Ranjit. "Need Analysis in ESP context: High School graduates in Birjung, Nepal as a Case Study."*IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 26(06), 2021, pp. 45-56.