

**THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS WHO ARE TAKING GRAMMAR (STRUCTURES)  
IV COURSE AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF *TARBIYAH* FACULTY  
ACADEMIC YEAR OF 2012/2013**

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**ABSTRACT**

The students' needs of English have been a never ending issue for recent years. It is always be an interesting topic to be discussed as well as investigated through a series of research. This following research report is a description of the students' need of taking Grammar IV course at *Tarbiyah* Faculty of IAIN Antasari Banjarmasin. The students were asked to fill in a questionnaire dealing with their needs of taking that course. The result shows that they think that grammar mastery is important for them and they prefer to do much practice on TOEFL exercise (the section of Structures and Written Expression) through this course.

**Key Words:** Needs, Grammar IV

**INTRODUCTION**

IAIN (Institut Agama Islam Negeri = State Institute of Islamic Studies) Antasari Banjarmasin is one of the institutions of higher education under the Department of Religious Affairs; thus, this institution concentrates more on Islamic studies. There are four faculties at IAIN Antasari Banjarmasin; they are Faculty of *Tarbiyah* (Islamic Education), Faculty of *Syariah* (Islamic Law), Faculty of *Dakwah* (Islamic Gospel), and Faculty of *Ushuluddin* (Islamic Theology and Philosophy). Each of these faculties has several departments based on their own disciplines. They also have different curricula and objectives in conducting their teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, in order to prepare the students to face this globalization era, IAIN Antasari, in addition to Islamic majors, also tries to provide other general disciplines like Mathematics as well as English in *Tarbiyah* (Education) Faculty.

The teaching of English in English Department of *Tarbiyah* Faculty has been run since 1997. There are 152 credits (SKS), including 8 credits for Structures or Grammar series, that must be accomplished by the students to get the degree of *Sarjana Pendidikan* in this institution. The

teaching of English structures, which is called as *Grammar* course in 2010 Curriculum of English Department, is taught since the second semester (Grammar I) to fifth semester (Grammar IV). The Grammar IV, which is the last series of Grammar course, is assumed to equip the students with knowledge of theory of English grammar. This course is also designed to prepare the students the capabilities to use grammar either in speaking or writing. There are some topics covered such as adverb clause, conditional sentence, and some grammar trouble spots (The syllabus of Grammar IV, 2010). But what do they actually need? What kinds of topics that are really essential for them? What are their favourite teaching techniques? What kind of assessment system that is appropriate to assess their grammar mastery? These are the questions that willing to be answered through this research.

Motivation is one of the most important factors in language learning, which is why teachers of English as a Foreign Language have always tried to find new approaches or strategies that introduce practical uses of EFL in the classroom. Unfortunately, many students dislike learning English; and although they attend lessons, they are not interested in speaking properly. They only want to pass the compulsory exams. Finding the students' likes and dislikes concerning EFL learning and applying new teaching techniques to improve the command of language use have been major goals of each professional English teacher.

In recent years, course design has become more learner centered, or learning centered, as differentiated by Hutchinson & Waters (1987). Needs analysis has come to be regarded as the starting point of the process of teaching and learning. This is assumed as the first step and seen as being absolutely crucial if a teacher wishes to design a course that will maximally benefit their learners.

According to Iwai *et al.* (1999) in Songhori (2008), formal needs analysis is relatively new to the field of language teaching. However, informal needs analyses have been conducted by teachers in order to assess what language points their students needed to master. In fact, the reason why different approaches were born and then replaced by others is that the teachers have intended to meet the needs of their students during their learning. Based on the above description, this research is conducted to find the needs of the students taking Grammar IV course in the academic year of 2012/2013 which covered the topics selection, the teaching techniques, and assessment system appropriate for them.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Based on the background of the study, the main purpose of this research is to find out the students needs of taking Grammar IV course. Thus, the statement of the problem is: “What are the students’ needs in taking Grammar (Structures) IV course at English Department of *Tarbiyah* Faculty in IAIN Antasari Banjarmasin in the academic year of 2012/2013?”

### **Objective of Study**

Based on the above research problem, the objective of this research is to find out the needs of the students who are taking Grammar IV course. It involves finding out the topics selection, the teaching techniques and assessment system appropriate for them in order to facilitate their needs in learning English grammar skills effectively.

### **Significance of Study**

The result of this research is expected to be significant in two important ways. Firstly, it is expected that this research result gives meaningful contributions to the lecturers of Grammar course. A Grammar IV course, which is designed based on the specific needs analysis of the students, hopefully gives valuable guidance for their jobs of teaching grammar, so that the general educational goals can be more successfully achieved. Secondly, the result may be significantly used as a reference in providing standard lesson plans of the grammar IV course itself. Thus, it is expected that an appropriate syllabus as well as specific lesson plans are able to create enjoyable teaching grammar activities in the classroom which motivate the students to learn English, especially the grammar (structures) mastery.

### **Scope and Limitation**

The scope of this research is that it is intended to investigate the needs of the students in taking Grammar IV course in the academic year of 2012/2013. The needs mention here covering the topics selection, the teaching techniques, and the assessment system.

The limitation is that this research is not going to develop complete syllabus, instructional materials, media and evaluation system. The result of this research may be used as a basis for future research dealing with syllabus and material development. In addition, the description of the students’ needs resulted in this research may not be appropriate to any classroom activities in different educational settings (e.g. different discipline or program, teaching objectives, teaching process, etc).

## Definition of Key Terms

There are several terms used in this research that are defined in this following list:

- a. *Needs*; the students' wants, wishes, or necessity in taking a course.
- b. *Grammar IV*; the last series of Grammar course taught in the English Department of Tarbiyah Faculty at IAIN Antasari Banjarmasin.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Needs Analysis

This research conducts a needs analysis in order to obtain the data of what the students really needs in learning English grammar mastery. It is conducted based on an assumption that rather than fitting students to courses, courses should be designed to fit students. Many researchers in this area of study give many definitions of what needs analysis actually is. Nunan (1999:32) defines needs analysis as sets of tools, techniques, and procedures for determining the language content and learning process for specified groups of learners. Moreover, Richards (2001:51) mentions that procedures used to collect information about learners' needs are known as needs analysis.

Needs analysis may take place prior to, during, or after a language program. Richards (2001:36) says that a needs analysis is a starting point in language program design and it was an important factor in the development of current approaches to language curriculum development. Thus, it is better for the English teachers to stick on their mind that rather than developing a course around an analysis of the language, the approach starts instead with an analysis of the learner's needs.

Furthermore, Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998: 122), said that although there are various ways of interpreting 'needs', the concept of 'learner needs' is often interpreted in two ways:

- ✓ as what the learner *wants* to do with the language (*goal-oriented* definition of needs) which relates to terminal objectives or the end of learning; and
- ✓ what the learner *needs* to do to actually acquire the language (a *process-oriented* definition) which relates to transitional/means of learning.

In view of these concerns, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 145) make a list surrounding course design in the form of the following questions:

- Should the course be *intensive* or *extensive*?
- Should the learners' performance be *assessed* or *non-assessed*?
- Should the course deal with *immediate needs* or with *delayed needs*?
- Should the role of the teacher be that of the *provider* of knowledge and activities, or should it be as *facilitator* of activities arising from learners' expressed wants?
- Should the course have a *broad* focus or *narrow* focus?

- Should the course be *pre-study* or *pre-experience* or *run parallel* with the study or experience?
- Should the materials be *common-core* or *specific* to learners' study or work?
- Should the group taking the course be *homogenous* or should it be *heterogeneous*?

In short, by asking these questions prior to planning course design, the teacher who teaches Grammar course can be better prepared, more so if the teacher has to balance out some of these parameters which are linked to institutional and learner expectations (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998).

### **Grammar**

Grammar is the sound, structure, and meaning system of language. All languages have grammar, and each language has its own grammar. People who speak the same language are able to communicate because they intuitively know the grammar system of the language-that is the rules of making meaning (Chin, 1998).

Grammar can be defined as a set of shared assumptions about how language works (Savignon, 1991). Communication cannot take place in the absence of structure, or grammar. For the development of communicative ability, research findings overwhelmingly support the integration of form-focused exercises with meaning-focused experience.

The lack of these experiences, however, sometimes brings problems, especially for the ESL/EFL students. Those common problems have to be overcome by all students, and the difficulties they find are similar in all parts of the world. All students want to speak, write and read the normal accepted English of today, and this can only be achieved by constant practice of existing forms, with some rational explanations of the grammatical devices employed, wherever this is possible (Allen, 1974).

Grammar IV course which has been taught in this institution for years is the last series of four grammar series. The students who are taking this course are assumed to already have some acquaintance of English grammar knowledge and able to apply some theories of grammar in spoken and written form. Thus, they are prepared for taking ToEFL test as one requirement of passing this English Department major.

### **METHOD OF RESEARCH**

## Population and Sampling

The population of this research is the students taking Grammar IV course in the academic year 2012/2013. There are three classes of Grammar IV course this semester with the number of students is 104 students in total. Thus, the researcher randomly chose 20 students for each class as the representative samples, therefore there are 60 students in total as the participants of this research.

## Techniques of Data Collection

There are two techniques in collecting the data in this research, they are questionnaire and documentary techniques. Thus, Table 3.1 describes the techniques in collecting the data for this research.

**Table 1. Techniques of Data Collection**

No.	Techniques of Data Collection	Data Needed	Research Subjects
1.	Questionnaire	The questions in the questionnaire covering the students' opinions about the teaching and learning process of grammar course in general, the students' motivation and interest in practicing grammar skill, selected topics they need in a grammar class, the students' needs of teaching and learning activities for a grammar class and assessment system they like most.	The students who are taking Grammar IV course in the academic year 2012/2013.
2.	Documentary	The English Grammar skills the students should master in order to pass this Grammar IV course.	The syllabus of Grammar IV course.

According to the techniques of data collection above, the instruments used in this research are questionnaire sheet (which is enclosed in appendix 1) and documentary (which is enclosed in appendix 2). There are 46 items in this semi-closed questionnaire which has been distributed to the respondents on October 23, 2012 for Class A and B and on October 24, 2012 for Class C. The present syllabus of Grammar IV course provided by the English Department staff has been an essential source to find the data of the second technique of collection. Next, this syllabus will be used to compare between the existing syllabus and the findings of this research.

## **FINDINGS**

In this research, the data of the students' needs have been collected using two techniques of data collecting as well as their two instruments; they are questionnaire and documentary. To facilitate reading and discussing the result, tables are used to show descriptive statistics (in the form of percentages) of each item in the questionnaire sheet. In short, the students' response in this questionnaire is used as a fundamental basis for obtaining the data of their needs in attending Grammar IV course.

In this questionnaire, the respondents were asked to give their responses by ticking (√) a box representing their choice. Five different responses were offered to them; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Uncertain (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Sixty students are involved as the respondents of this questionnaire and their responses of the respondents are calculated in the form of percentages, which are described respectively as follows:

### **Part I: Teaching and Learning Process in General**

There are 17 items listed in this part, which are used to obtain data of the current teaching and learning process of Grammar IV course. The percentages of these 17 items are shown in this following table.

Table 2. Teachers' Activities in Opening the Lesson

Number of Items	Statements	Percentage (%)				
		SA	A	U	D	SD
1	State the objectives clearly	20	35	7	22	16
2	Ask warming-up questions	32	55	0	11	2
3	Do review of previous lesson	32	46	18	4	0
4	Prepare the lesson well	64	28	6	2	0
5	Answer questions clearly	88	12	0	0	0
6	Give clear explanation of the lesson	50	46	1	3	0
7	Give clear instruction of any students' task	79	19	0	2	0
8	Give clear directions of students' assignments and tests	46	36	10	8	0
9	Give assignments regularly	52	38	6	4	0
10	Treat the students' equally	32	66	0	2	0
11	Give feedback to the students	44	36	2	18	0
12	Use various teaching methods	10	20	6	54	10
13	Use teaching aids	7	12	3	60	18
14	Use English most of the time	32	55	1	11	1
15	Give handouts	32	34	2	26	6
16	Motivate the students	36	36	10	18	0
17	Give rewards	34	32	0	28	6

Part II: Students' Motivation and Interest in Attending Grammar IV Course

There are 8 items concerning this second part. It is aimed to obtain the data of the students' personal motivation as well as interest in attending the Grammar IV course.

Table 3. Students' Motivation and Interest in Attending Grammar IV Course

Number of Items	Statements	Percentage (%)				
		SA	A	U	D	SD
18	Have a higher interest to study grammar compared with the other English skills and components	34	38	12	12	2
19	Do not feel nervous to write a grammatically correct sentences in front of the classroom	18	38	6	38	0
20	Prefer to study grammar at home	46	36	10	8	0
21	Have positive opinions that mastering grammar is important	54	40	2	4	0
22	Show agreement that the proportion of grammar meeting is adequate to practice grammar mastery	78	14	8	0	0
23	Have positive response that grammar mastery is important to get a job	44	48	8	0	0
24	Have a high interest to share English grammar knowledge with friends and family at home.	22	76	2	0	0
25	Have no difficulty in studying English grammar, especially Grammar IV course	28	28	0	38	6
Number of Items	Topics	Percentage (%)				
		SA	A	U	D	SD
26	Tenses	86	14	0	0	0
27	Pronoun	12	7	2	56	23

Part III: Topic Selection of the Grammar IV course

There are 9 questions used to obtain the data of the students' needs for various topics that must be taught in the Grammar IV course.

Table 4. Students' Topic Selection of the Speaking Class

(Item numbers 41 to 50)

28	Modals	36	6	2	56	0
29	Comparison	12	14	4	46	24
30	Passive voice	14	84	2	0	0
31	Noun clause	34	32	8	20	6
32	Adjective clause	36	14	0	26	24
33	Adverb clause	36	36	2	20	0
34	Conditional sentence and wishes	74	14	12	0	0

#### Part IV: Teaching and Learning Activities of Grammar IV Course

Item numbers 36 to 41 in the questionnaires sheet are aimed to obtain the data of teaching and learning activities that the students prefer to be applied in the Grammar IV course. The calculation of the percentages of these items is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Students' Favourite Teaching and Learning Activities of Speaking Class (Item numbers 31 to 39)

Number of Items	Statements	Percentage (%)				
		SA	A	U	D	SD
36.	Conventional lecturing	22	12	4	54	8
37.	Group discussion	86	10	2	2	0
38.	Group presentation	28	70	2	0	0
39.	Individual presentation	24	10	2	56	8
40.	Working a lot on grammar exercise of ToEFL (Structures and Written Expression Section)	73	25	2	0	0

## Part V: Assessment System

Question numbers 42 to 44 in the questionnaire sheet are aimed to obtain the data of assessment types that the students' think appropriate in assessing their grammar mastery.

Table 6. Students' Choice of Assessment System (Item numbers 42 to 44)

Number of Items	Questions	Percentage (%)				
		SA	A	U	D	SD
42	Observing students' daily performance (process approach).	60	34	6	0	0
43	Conducting middle and final test orally.	12	10	4	51	23
44	Conducting written middle and final test.	26	70	4	0	0

## DISCUSSION

Based on the data gathered through the questionnaire, it can be concluded that the students' needs in attending the Grammar IV course in the academic year of 2012/2013 are mostly similar one to another. The results show the teacher of Grammar IV course are well-prepared in teaching grammar and always give clear explanation of the lesson and clear instruction of any students' task. Moreover, more than 80 percents of the respondents stated that the teacher uses English most of the time and providing a grammar handout during the class. The negative responses given by the respondents are that their teacher did not use various teaching methods in teaching grammar and never use realia (real object) as well.

Talking about the students' motivation and interest in learning grammar, they felt that the grammar mastery is very crucial for them since they think that sufficient grammar mastery is important in this globalization era. Meanwhile, one- third of the respondent still have some difficulties in mastering English grammar well. They said that they need the various teaching media to increase their interest in it. As a matter of fact, it is necessary for the teachers of Grammar, especially Grammar IV, to use more interesting teaching media to attract the students' interest in learning grammar.

The respondents are offered nine topics of English grammar covering the topics discussed in Grammar IV course. Based on the questionnaire distributed to them, they stated that they still need tenses of English to be discussed in this course as the enrichment for their knowledge of it. They also mentioned that passive voice and conditional sentences were needed for them in this course. In contrast, they stated that they do not need the materials of pronoun, modals, and comparison since they have already finished and understood about it the previous grammar series.

Regarding with the teaching and learning activities that the students want in their Grammar IV class, it is understandable that they want to have various learning activities and even methods in teaching. They said that they prefer group discussion and presentation as the teaching and learning activities in the classroom and do not prefer much on conventional lecturing and individual presentation. Moreover, they seriously need more practice on ToEFL exercise on the section of structures and written expression since they have to take a ToEFL test as one requirement of finishing their study in this English Department.

Observing students' daily performance is chosen by 20 students (60%) as a type of assessment they prefer much. Still, it is shown in Table 6 that the respondents conventionally agree to conduct written middle and final tests instead of the oral one since they assumed that the grammar mastery can be assessed better through written test type.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

This research is conducted based on a needs analysis result of the students taking Grammar IV course in the academic year of 2012/2013. The findings show that they feel mastering grammar well is significantly important for them. They also state that they need more practice on TOEFL exercise through this course; the second section of TOEFL (Structures and Written Expression). Furthermore, they mention that they want the teacher of Grammar IV course uses more attractive teaching aids to attract their motivation in mastering grammar. Consequently, it is strongly suggested for the teacher of Grammar IV course to give more exercise on TOEFL since an adequate TOEFL score is required for them for finishing their studies in this English Department. The last but not least, it is also demanded for the students to use more various and interesting teaching aids in order to create an enjoyable teaching and learning activities of Grammar IV course in the English Department of *Tarbiyah* Faculty IAIN *Antasari* Banjarmasin.

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## **Appendix 1: The Questionnaire for the students of Grammar IV course**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### Introduction

Dear students,

This questionnaire was developed to investigate your needs in studying Grammar, especially in Grammar IV course. Therefore, the items in this questionnaire are designed to find out your needs in mastering English grammar. It consists of 46 items regarding the teaching of English grammar in your classroom as well as the way you feel about the instruction. Please help as well as participate in this research by answering these questions as accurately as possible. Your honest answers are very helpful to this research. This is not a test so there is no “right” or “wrong” answers since I am only interested in your personal opinions. You do not have to write your name and **it will not influence your score** in this course. Moreover, your answers will be confidentially kept. Please give your answers sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of this research. I do appreciate your participation in this effort in order to improve the teaching of English grammar in our beloved English Department. Thanks!

#### **Respondent identity:**

Sex : Male / Female (Please give a circle to your choice)

Age :

#### **Directions :**

For each statement, please give your responses by ticking (√) a box representing your choice. The following list is the description of the responses:

1. Strongly Agree (SA) : means that the statement completely expresses your opinion.
2. Agree (A) : means that the statement somewhat expresses your opinion.
3. Uncertain (U) : means that you are not sure about your opinion.
4. Disagree (D) : means that the statement does not express your opinion.
5. Strongly Disagree (SD) : means that the statement is totally opposite to your opinion.

**Example:**

No	Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
1.	English is the most popular foreign language spoken in Indonesia.		√			

**Part I: Teaching and Learning Process of Grammar IV Course in General**

No	Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
1.	My teachers state the objectives of any teaching activities before they start the grammar lesson.					
2.	My teachers open the grammar class by asking some warming up questions (e.g. the students' daily activities).					
3.	My teachers do review of previous grammar lessons in starting the learning activities.					
4.	My teachers are well-prepared in teaching grammar.					
5.	My teachers are willing to answer questions regarding with the lessons.					
6.	My teachers give clear explanation of the lesson.					
7.	My teachers give clear instruction of any students' task.					
8.	My teachers give clear directions of students' assignments and tests of grammar.					
9.	My teachers give grammar assignments regularly.					
10.	My teachers are fair in the grading and treat the students equally in grammar class.					

11.	I get feedback on my test in a short time.					
12.	My teachers use various teaching methods in teaching grammar.					
13.	My teachers use teaching aids in teaching grammar (e.g. pictures, flash cards, tape recorder, realia/ real objects, etc.)					
14.	My teachers use English most of the time in teaching grammar.					
15.	There is a students' handout or book of grammar class.					
16.	My teachers encourage the students to participate in grammar class actively.					
17.	My teachers appreciate the well-done student's work (e.g. by giving praise, rewards, etc.)					

**Part II: Students' Motivation and Interest in Attending Grammar IV Course**

No	Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
18.	I like grammar a lot more than the other English skills and components.					
19.	I do not feel nervous when I have to write a grammatically correct sentence in front of my classmates.					
20.	I like to study grammar at home.					
No	Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
21.	I think sufficient grammar mastery is important in this globalization era.					
22.	I think the meeting proportion of Grammar IV course in this English Department is adequate to boost the students' grammar mastery.					
23.	I think grammar mastery is important for me					

	to get a job after graduating from IAIN Antasari.					
24.	I like to share my knowledge of English grammar with my friends and family at home.					
25.	I do not have any difficulty in studying English grammar, especially in Grammar IV course.					

**Part III: Topic Selection of the Grammar IV course**

Question: What kind of topics that must be taught in the Grammar IV course?

Give your responses by ticking (√) a box representing your choice.

No	Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
26.	Tenses					
27.	Pronoun					
28.	Modals					
29.	Comparison					
30.	Passive voice					
31.	Noun clause					
32.	Adjective clause					
33.	Adverb clause					
34.	Conditional sentence and wishes					

For questions number 35, please add your own favorite topics to be discussed in a Grammar IV course:

35. My other favorite topics are:

1. ....

2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

**Part IV: Teaching and Learning Activities of Grammar IV Course**

Question: What kind of teaching and learning activities that you prefer to be applied in your Grammar IV course?

Give your responses by ticking (√) a box representing your choice.

No	Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
36.	Conventional lecturing.					
37.	Group discussion.					
38.	Group presentation.					
39.	Individual presentation.					
40.	Working a lot on grammar exercise of ToEFL (Structures and Written Expression).					

For questions number 41, please add your own favorite activities in a Grammar IV course:

41. My other favorite grammar classroom activities are:

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

**Part V: Assessment System**

Question: What kind of assessment that you think appropriate in assessing students' grammar mastery?

Give your responses by ticking (√) a box representing your choice.

No	Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
42.	Observing students' daily performance.					
43.	Conducting middle and final test orally.					
44.	Conducting written middle and final test.					

For questions number 45, please add your own favorite assessment system in your Grammar IV course:

45. My other favorite grammar classroom assessments are:

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

**Part VI: General Comments**

46. Please give any general comments or suggestions you may have concerning any aspects of Grammar IV instruction in English Department at IAIN Antasari Banjarmasin (e.g. materials, methodologies, teacher's performance, teaching and learning facilities, etc.).

Answer:

.....  
 .....

☺ Thank you ☺

Note: This questionnaire sheet is adapted from various sources including Kasbolah (1988) and Fahmi (2008), with some modifications.

