

Assessing Job Application Skills in English for Business: A Study of Fourth-Semester Students at Politeknik Negeri Jember

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Abstract

In the era of globalization, proficiency in English for business purposes is essential for career success and expanding professional opportunities. This study examined the job application skills of fourth-semester students enrolled in the English Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Jember during the 2023/2024 academic year, specifically those participating in an English for Business class. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive research approach, data were collected through a pre-test designed to assess students' knowledge in finding job vacancies, writing cover letters, preparing resumes, and attending job interviews. The pre-test consisted of 41 items categorized into these four areas. The results revealed strong performance among students, with the majority scoring in the high range (80-100), indicating strong proficiency in job application skills. The difficulty index for each section of the pre-test showed that students found the questions generally easy, with job interviews perceived as the easiest and resumes as relatively more challenging. These findings emphasize the importance of English for Business classes in equipping students with essential skills for entering the competitive global job market. The study suggests that practices in job applications and English proficiency improvement can enhance students' readiness for professional careers in an international context.

Keywords: *English for Business, Job application skills, English proficiency, Global job market*

1. Introduction

Globalization era is the era in which economies, societies, cultures, and technologies are interconnected worldwide. In this era, there are cross border flows of people, goods, information, services, and capital. According to Robertson in Mialiawati (2020), globalization refers to the condition where the people worldwide become interconnected and interdependent across various aspect of life, including politics, economics, and culture. This situation causes the integration of the national economy into one global market because there

are no barriers to the movement of goods, services and capital. As a result, the business world can access larger markets across countries. As stated by Mardhiyah (2023) that Economic globalization causes global economic integration and interdependence, which is characterized by increased flows of goods, services and technology.

In today's globalization era, proficiency in English for business purposes is increasingly becoming a fundamental skill for career success. Because businesses operate on an international scale and communicate beyond geographic boundaries, the ability to effectively apply for jobs and navigate professional environments in English is essential. Related to this, Pandey & Pandey (2014) stated that English is the most commonly used language in the business world and English language competency is one of the most important thing in the workplace. In addition, Malokani (2023) found that English language proficiency can be the strongest predictor of career opportunities in employment. It indicates that good communication skills in English will open up employment and international opportunities and improve career prospects. Companies prioritize candidates who have good English competence because they realize the important role English plays in business, science, technology and diplomacy.

Based on the reasons above, therefore, the role of English for Business classes in preparing students to face the challenges of the professional world is very important. English for Business plays an important role in today's global business world. By becoming able to communicate effectively in English, individuals can expand their professional networks, establish relationships with clients and business partners from various countries, and increase opportunities for international careers. English for Business class not only focus on using English in Business area, but also introduce the way of success in getting a job necessary to succeed in a multinational business environment. By strengthening their English skills, professionals can be more confident and effective in facing the challenges and opportunities in global marketplace.

The importance of English language skills in applying for jobs in today's global era cannot be denied. The English for Business class is becoming increasingly important because it equips job candidates with the communication skills necessary to succeed in the competitive recruitment process. The course material includes more than just how to write a resume and a cover letter correctly in English, but also teaches job interview strategies, including how to convey qualifications and experience effectively. In addition, the course may also provide interview simulation exercises and live feedback to help participants feel more confident when facing interviews the real job. Thus, English for Business is not just about mastering the language, but also about increasing your chances of success in a professional career in the global job market.

On the other hand, there are still many students who have limited English proficiency when they are entering the workplace. As stated by Wonacott (2000) that many people are in

the workplace today or preparing to enter it have limited English skills. Although they have completed their formal education, they may have difficulties in communicating fluently in English in the work environment. Furthermore, Arkoudis, et. al. (2009) explained their findings that the employment outcomes of international students especially who have low English Proficiency levels are not very good like their Australian counterparts and they face greater challenges in entering the workplace. This problems occurred because the lack of English proficiency can be an obstacle in expressing ideas, participating in meetings, or even writing business documents as well as when they are applying for a job. As a result, they may feel less confident and limited in pursuing broader career opportunities. Efforts to improve their English skills are important to increase their competitiveness in an increasingly competitive global job market."

Then, for some students, applying for a job is quite a big challenge. They often face difficulties in finding jobs that suit their interests and skills. Besides, lack of work experience is also an obstacle in getting the job they want. During the application process, they often have difficulties in finding job vacancies, writing cover letters, making resumes, and joining job interviews by using English. Moreover, companies' demand for candidates who have good English skills is absolute, especially for global companies. Related to this, Rajprasit et. al. (2014) said that many problems have occurred because there are differences what is taught in university classes including English classes and what is used in workplace communication. Nevertheless, many students are persistent and diligent in preparing themselves to face these challenges in order to achieve success in their careers.

Considering the awareness of the importance of English language competence in the business world, it is necessary to know students' initial knowledge and readiness when applying for jobs in English. Although they have previously studied English at school, they have not been taught about the use of English and cultural understanding necessary for professional contexts. On the other hand, they must have knowledge and skills especially about how to apply for jobs using English. As stated by Hailikari (2009), assessing prior knowledge as part of instructional support shifts focus from the end to the beginning of the learning process, enhancing opportunities for tailored support and potentially improving learning outcomes. So, by knowing about students' background knowledge, perceptions, and competencies related to the job application process, teachers can adapt their teaching approaches to better meet students' needs and expectations and it can provide input for curriculum development and teaching strategies aimed at improving students' proficiency in apply for jobs in English.

Based on the background above, the researcher conducted a study to assess the students' background knowledge of applying for a job in English for Business Class. This study was conducted for curriculum development and teaching strategies to improve students'

ability to apply for jobs in English. Besides, it will encourage the success of the teaching and learning process in English for Business classes in the English Study Program.

2. Methods

This study was conducted at Politeknik Negeri Jember to assess students' background knowledge of applying for jobs among the fourth-semester students at English Study Program for the 2023/2024 Academic Year especially those enrolled in the English for Business Class. The study employed a methodology of research that integrates quantitative and descriptive approach.

Quantitative research, as stated by Neuman (2013), involves precise measurement techniques to capture empirical data in numerical form. In this study, the researcher utilized a pre-test instrument to assess students' existing knowledge of applying for jobs quantitatively. This approach was in line with Neuman in using specific techniques to gather numerical data about social phenomena.

On the other hand, descriptive research aims to provide accurate descriptions of phenomena without manipulating variables, as described by Babbie (2015). Traditionally, descriptive research is related to qualitative methods. In this study, descriptive research was used to categorize and describe students' knowledge levels regarding job application skills based on pre-test scores. Integrating descriptive elements assisted to understand the distribution and categories of students' knowledge levels of applying for jobs.

The primary data source was the pre-test administered to students before they participated the English for Business Class. The pre-test consisted of questions related to finding job vacancies, writing cover letters, preparing resumes, and attending job interviews. The analysis of pre-test results included calculating the difficulty index of test items by using the formula $FV = R/N$, where FV represents the difficulty index, R is the number of correct responses, and N is the number of students who took the test.

Regarding the difficulty index, items were categorized as Difficult (0,00-0,30), Fair (0,31-0,70), or Easy (0,71-1,00). The scores obtained from the pre-test were subsequently categorized into ranges to reflect students' proficiency levels in applying for jobs. Score 80-100 is categorized High and Very Good. Score 75-79 is categorized High and Good. Score 70-74 is categorized Middle and Good. Score 60-69: is categorized Middle and Fair. Score 50-59 is categorized Low and Poor. Score <39-49: is categorized Low and Very Poor.

In conclusion, the study utilized quantitative approach by using the pre-test instrument to gather numerical data about students' background knowledge levels of applying for jobs. Then, descriptive approach were applied to categorize and describe the findings. The integration of this research methodology aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' background knowledge of applying for jobs.

3. Results and Discussion

The data of this study was taken from pre-test scores for students before they joined English for Business Class to see the students' background knowledge and proficiency of English in applying for jobs. The questions of the test consisted of 41 items that consist of 4 items about Job Vacancy, 8 items about Cover Letter, 11 items about Resume, and 18 items about Job Interview. This study assessed 44 samples of students, and their scores were gathered from the pre-test.

a. The Difficulty of Pre-Test

The pre-test consisted of 41 questions and it covered various topics related to applying for a job.

The description of data analysis result is as follows:

Table 1. The Index Difficulty of Pre-Test

No.	Description of the Item Test	Number of Item Test	Right Number	Number of Answers	Result	Difficulty Index Category
1.	Item test about Job Vacancy	4	158	176	0,90	Easy
2.	Item test about Cover Letter	8	305	352	0,87	Easy
3.	Item test about Resume	11	395	484	0,82	Easy
4.	Item test about Job Interview	18	770	792	0,97	Easy
	Total	41	1628	1804	0,90	Easy

This table presents the results of a pre-test designed to assess students' background knowledge related to applying for jobs across various components: Job Vacancy, Cover Letter, Resume, and Job Interview. The pre-test consisted of a total of 41 items.

1) Item Test about Job Vacancy

In this section, the number of items were 4 and the number of correct answers were 158 out of 176. The difficulty index the item test about Job Vacancy is 0,90. So, It was categorized easy.

2) Item Test about Cover Letter

In this section, the number of items were 8 and the number of correct answers were 305 out of 352. The difficulty index the item test about Job Vacancy is 0,87. So, It was categorized easy.

3) Item Test about Resume

In this section, the number of items were 11 and the number of correct answers were 395 out of 484. The difficulty index the item test about Job Vacancy is 0,82. So, It was categorized easy.

4) Item Test about Job Interview

In this section, the number of items were 18 and the number of correct answers were 395 out of 484. The difficulty index the item test about Job Vacancy was 0,97. So, It was categorized easy.

The table shows that the total number of the items are 41 and the number of correct answers were 1628 out of 1804. The difficulty index all item test about Applying for a Job was 0,97. So, It was categorized easy. The pre-test on applying for jobs was generally well-performed by the students, with the majority of test sections categorized as easy based on their difficulty indices. Specifically, the Job Interview section had the highest difficulty index (0,97), indicating it was the easiest for students, while the Resume section had the lowest difficulty index (0,82), suggesting it was relatively more challenging compared to the other sections. Overall, the pre-test results highlight that students demonstrated a strong understanding of applying for jobs, particularly in job interview scenarios.

To get more detail information about the result of conducting the Pre-test related to the Index of Difficulty can be seen in the following graphic:

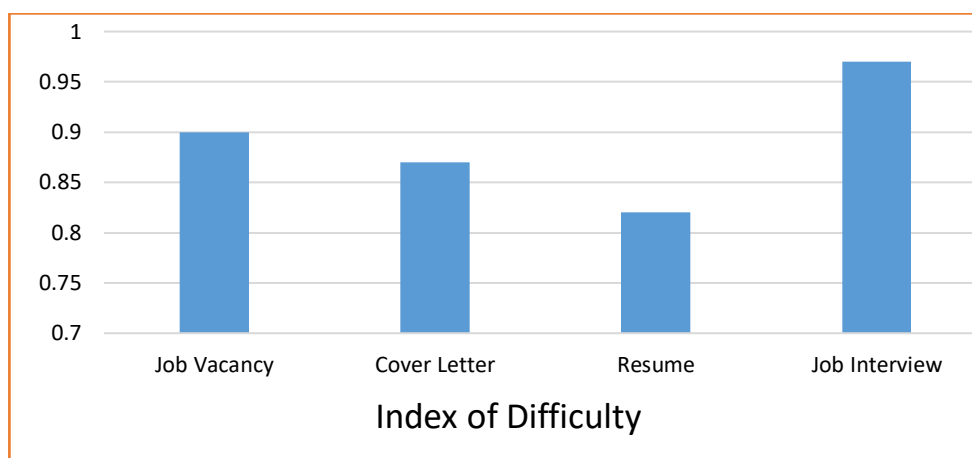


Figure 1. Index of difficulty

b. The Students' Scores of the Pre-Test

The data analysis of students' scores on the pre-test indicated that the majority of students achieved high scores, as more than 75% of the 44 students scored above 75. Specifically, 47 students, accounting for 80% of the total students, attained scores more than 75.

The description of data analysis result is as follows::

Table 2. The Students' Scores of Pre-Test

Score	Number of Students	Percentage (%)	Category	
80-100	32	72,5%	Very Good	High
75-79	4	9,1%	Good	High
70-74	-	0%	Good	Middle
60-69	3	6,8%	Fair	Middle
50-59	3	6,8%	Poor	Low
<39-49	2	4,5%	Very Poor	Low

This table presents the distribution of scores achieved by students on a pre-test designed to assess their background knowledge of applying for jobs. The pre-test included sections covering job vacancy, cover letter, resume, and job interview skills. Related to Score Range, it categorizes students' scores into different ranges to evaluate their proficiency levels. While Number of Students, it indicates how many students achieved scores within each specified range, Then, about Percentage (%), it represents the proportion of students within each score range relative to the total number of students who took the pre-test. Lastly, Category describes the proficiency level associated with each score range.

The table shows there were 32 students scored within the range 80-100, which accounts for 72,5% of the total students. This category is categorized as "Very Good" and represents high proficiency. The were 4 students scored within this range 75-79, accounting for 9,1% of the total students. This category is categorized as "Good" and also represents high proficiency. Then, there was no students scored within the range 70-74, indicating 0% representation in this category. This range is categorized as "Good" and would typically indicate a middle proficiency level. There were 3 students scored within the range 60-69, representing 6,8% of the total students. This category is categorized as "Fair," indicating a middle proficiency level. There were 3 students scored within the range 50-59, also accounting for 6,8% of the total students. This category is categorized as "Poor," indicating a lower proficiency level. Lastly, there were 2 students scored within the range <39-49, representing 4,5% of the total students. This category is categorized as "Very Poor," indicating the lowest proficiency level.

The distribution of scores on the pre-test show the students' readiness in applying for jobs. While a majority of students achieved high to very good scores, it is important to consider these results in relation to previous studies to contextualize their significance. Comparing these results with national or international standards could help in understanding whether students' proficiency levels meet expected competencies for job application skills.

Furthermore, these findings could inform future instructional practices or interventions within the English for Business curriculum. Addressing areas where students scored lower, such as in resume writing or job interview skills, could be prioritized to enhance overall proficiency and better prepare students for the competitive job market. This approach ensures that instructional strategies are aligned with identified areas for improvement, resulting in better outcomes in students' job application readiness.

To get more detail information about the result of conducting the pre-test related to the index of difficulty can be seen in the following diagram:

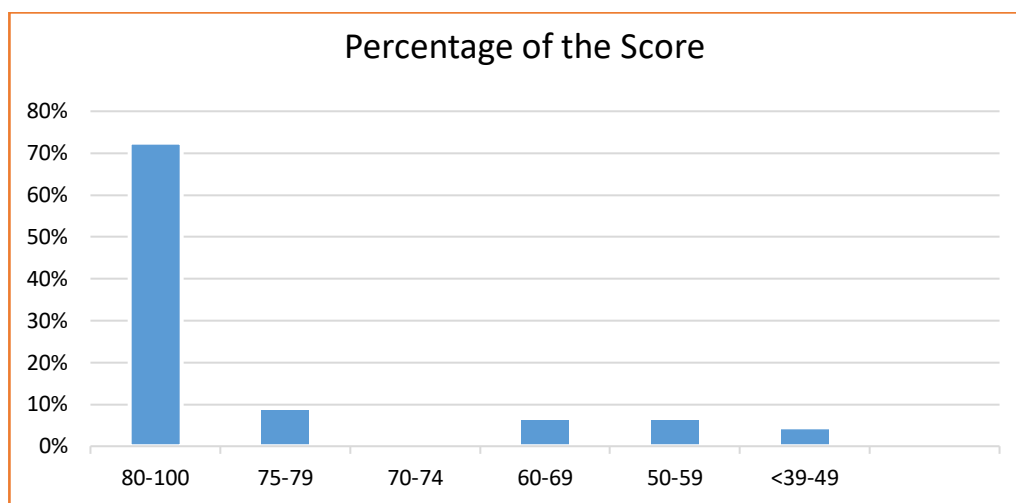


Figure 2. Percentage of score

The findings indicated that the students performed well on the pre-test related to Applying for a Job because the students' scores of the pre-test was categorized as high. Here is a detailed information of their scores for each topic.

The description are as follows:

Table 3. The Students' Scores of the Pre-test about Applying for a Job

No.	Description of the Item Test	Number of correct answers	of Total number of Item Test	Percentage of (%)
1.	Item test about Job Vacancy	158	176	90%
2.	Item test about Cover Letter	305	352	87%

3.	Item test about Resume	395	484	82%
4.	Item test about Job Interview	770	792	97%
	Total	1628	1804	90%

Based on the table above, it was found that the students demonstrated strong background knowledge in various aspects related to Applying for Jobs. Related to Job Vacancy, 90% of students answered questions correctly. For Cover Letter, 87% of students answered questions correctly. Regarding Resume, 82% of students answered questions correctly. Then, about Job Interview, 97% of students answered questions correctly. Overall, these findings indicated that students have high levels of background knowledge related to Applying for Jobs. The pre-test results showed that there were 1628 (90%) correct answers out of 1804 total items, confirming the students' strong understanding about Applying for Jobs.

4. Conclusion

The result of the pre-test assessing students' background knowledge related to applying for jobs indicated a high level of proficiency among the students. Across all sections of Job Vacancy, Cover Letter, Resume, and Job Interview, the majority of students performed well, with scores indicating a solid understanding of the subject matter. Specifically, the Job Interview section was the easiest for students, while the Resume section proved relatively more challenging. From these results, it can be concluded that, generally, the students have a strong background knowledge of Applying for Jobs.

Hopefully, the result of this study can identify specific areas where students scored lower, such as in resume writing or specific aspects of job interviews, and tailor instructional strategies to address these gaps. This targeted approach can help further enhance students' overall proficiency and readiness for the job market. Besides, it can consider integrating more practical exercises or simulations within the English for Business curriculum to simulate real-world job application. It should be done to make better prepare students for actual job application processes and improve their confidence in applying their knowledge. By considering these points, teachers can ensure that students not only maintain their high levels of proficiency but also continue to develop and refine their skills in applying for jobs, ultimately enhancing their prospects in the competitive job market.

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Appendix 1. The Students' Pre-test Scores

No.	Scores
1.	91
2.	98
3.	86
4.	76
5.	86
6.	98
7.	89
8.	100
9.	67
10.	91
11.	89
12.	55
13.	98
14.	100
15.	96
16.	96
17.	98
18.	98
19.	89
20.	99
21.	84
22.	100
23.	100
24.	77
25.	98
26.	100
27.	96
28.	72
29.	94
30.	99
31.	96
32.	69
33.	52
34.	100
35.	96

36..	100
37.	84
38.	48
39.	59
40.	89
41.	43
42.	66
43.	93
44.	76
45.	86
46.	77
47.	77
48.	66
49.	80
50.	83
51.	63
52.	83
53.	86
54.	66
55.	89
56.	60
57.	97
58.	91
59.	80
60.	71
61.	77
62.	74
63..	80
64.	57