ความต้องการของนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี ในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ เพื่อวัตถุประสงค์เฉพาะ สำหรับการประกอบอาชีพในประชาคม เศรษฐกิจอาเซียน

NEEDS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN STUDYING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES FOR WORKING IN ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (AEC)

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาความยากและความต้องการในการเรียนทักษะภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาปริญญาตรี ในระดับมหาวิทยาลัย จำแนกตามกลุ่มคณะ ได้แก่ กลุ่มคณะวิทยาศาสตร์สุขภาพ กลุ่มคณะวิทยาศาสตร์และเทคโนโลยี และกลุ่มคณะสังคมศาสตร์ จำนวน 369 คน โดยใช้การสุ่มกลุ่มตัวอย่างแบบหลายขั้นตอน และสัมภาษณ์นักศึกษาจำนวน 12 โดยการเลือกแบบเจาะจง การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลโดยใช้ แบบสอบถามแสดงความคิดเห็นต่อความยากและความต้องการในการเรียนทักษะภาษาอังกฤษ (α = 0.97) และแบบสัมภาษณ์กึ่งโครงสร้าง ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ความยากในการเรียนไวยากรณ์อยู่ในระดับมาก ส่วนความยากในการเรียนทักษะด้านการฟัง การเขียน คำศัพท์ และการอ่านอยู่ในระดับปานกลาง และความต้องการของนักศึกษา พบว่าทุกทักษะมีระดับความต้องการมากที่สุด โดยการฟังเป็นอันดับ

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หนึ่ง ตามด้วยการพูด คำศัพท์ การอ่าน การเขียนและไวยากรณ์ ผลจากการศึกษาด้วยสถิติ One-way ANOVA และทำการเปรียบเทียบเชิงซ้อนโดยใช้ Scheffé พบว่านักศึกษาในกลุ่มวิทยาศาสตร์และเทคโนโลยีมีระดับความยากในการเรียนไวยากรณ์ คำศัพท์และการอ่านแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับนัยสำคัญ 0.05 ส่วนความต้องการในการเรียนทักษะภาษาอังกฤษ พบว่านักศึกษาทั้ง 3 กลุ่มมีความต้องการในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษทุกทักษะมากที่สุดและไม่แตกต่างกัน ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกเพิ่มเติม พบว่าการเรียนและการพัฒนาทักษะภาษาอังกฤษผ่านการทำกิจกรรมที่เน้นให้ผู้เรียนได้ใช้ทักษะภาษาจริงมีความสำคัญอย่างยิ่งต่อความสำเร็จในการเรียนเพื่อนำไปใช้ในการประกอบอาชีพในประชาคมเศรษฐกิจอาเซียนได้

คำสำคัญ: การวิเคราะห์ความต้องการ, ภาษาอังกฤษสำหรับวัตถุประสงค์เฉพาะ, ประชาคมเศรษฐกิจอาเซียน, นักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี

Abstract

This study investigated the language difficulties and needs in studying English language skills of students classified by three main areas of study: Health Sciences (HS), Sciences and Technology (ST), and Social Sciences (SS). It consisted of 369 undergraduate students selected by multi-stage sampling, and 12 students selected purposively for interview. The questionnaires (α = 0.97), and a semi-structured interview were implemented. The results revealed that English grammar was most difficulty while the difficulties of English speaking, listening, writing, vocabulary, and reading were moderate. The overall needs were ranked as most needs - listening skills as first priority, followed by speaking, vocabulary, reading and writing, and grammar. As analyzed by One-Way ANOVA and Multiple comparisons using the Scheffé Test, the difficulties in studying grammar, vocabulary and reading skills of ST students were responded significantly different at the 0.05 level. Needs was presented as most needs in studying overall English language skills. The results from the semi-structured

interview apart from needs and difficulties informed that learning and improving English language skills through enjoyable activities focusing on using English in various situations is contributed to learning success for working in ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

Keywords: Needs analysis, English for specific purposes, ASEAN Economic Community, Thai undergraduate students

Introduction

These days globalization has been growing rapidly in international trade and networks, science and technology, and economic integration. Johns (2013) informs that the high demand for learning and using English has been increasing sharply. As a result, it can be claimed that English is given to be a crucial status. In many global organizations, as mentioned by Broughton, Brumfit, Flavell, Hill and Pincas (2003), English is nominated as the official language. Additionally, Lazaro and Medalla (2004) mention that English is chosen by 120 countries for communication in United Nations Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation.

When Thailand committed to join the AEC in 2015, it was inevitable that English will have an important status in Thailand since it is declared that English must be used for the working language of AEC (Ministry of Education, 2012). According to the readiness and preparation of AEC for higher education among universities, colleges and institutions in Thailand, Lohapan (2015) revealed that most of them have a mutually similar objective to produce qualified graduates to serve the needs in developing the country. Therefore, universities must pay important attention to build manpower and capacity owing to the strong and powerful effects in education services on free trade or globalization. In the ASEAN Charter Article 34, it is acknowledged that the ASEAN

working language shall be English. So, encouraged by the AEC, Thai people should improve English, especially Thai students who are unable to use English fluently due to lack of motivating factors for studying English. Thus, in addition to Kitjaroonchai (2013), English proficiency is needed since it is a fundamental part of the human capital. Compared to other ASEAN countries, namely Malaysia, the Philippines or Singapore, English is used as their official or second language, so Noom-ura (2013) claims that Thai graduates could encounter a major competitiveness in employment. Hence, Rainsbury, Hodges, Burchell and Lay (2002) posit that to develop graduates' skills, cooperative education programs are considered effective. These should be encouraged to enhance and develop graduate students' competencies in the working places.

From the interview of Chaweerat (Interview July 11, 2016), the Director of the Academic Services and Development Department, states that the ASEAN cooperation education project is aimed to provide students the opportunity to attain real work experience. Despite having the improved language skills as a major benefit to the ASEAN cooperative education project, Score's Report of ASEAN+3 Cooperative Education Project (2016) reported that students after taking the pretest and posttest of English (KEPT), half of their English test results were shown that their proficiency of English is at the low-intermediate level. Chatsungnoen (2015) maintains that one of the causes might be the fact that the curricula of English courses or programs have not been updated in over ten years and are currently being taught using commercial textbooks supplied by other universities or international publishers. Coll, Pinyonatthagarn and Pramoolsook (2003) state that language and communication are two of the difficulties for students participating in international cooperative education program. Also, the original programs used to train students for the ASEAN cooperative education project have been developed without the benefits of needs analysis. Since the announcement of 2004 curriculum changes, all

universities have been requested to revise and redesign their ESP courses. According to a survey conducted by Pakir (2010) in South - East Asia's English teaching, the study revealed that out of 337 English teachers' responses, the three most important are related to teaching strategies, English for specific purposes, and the development of educational materials.

In conclusion, this study provided important insights that needs analysis can respond to the demands of English language students for developing ESP courses to prepare them to be ready for working in AEC. Moreover, this study was conducted to examine the undergraduate students' difficulties and needs in learning English language skills classified by the three main areas of study: Health Sciences (HS), Sciences and Technology (ST), and Social Sciences (SS). The findings could help foster policies that will enhance students' English language skills through better preparation relevant to the notion of the "Ready-to-Work of students" for working in AEC.

The Objectives of this Study

1. To investigate and compare the language difficulties in studying English language skills of three main groups of students of HS, ST and SS.

2. To investigate and compare the needs in studying English language skills of three main groups of students of HS, ST and SS.

Literature Review of this Study

The needs of ESP course for working in ASEAN Economic Community refer to the needs of English language skills of university undergraduate students. Target needs is categorized into three types. First, necessities refer to the needs in studying English language skills in terms of listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary. Second, lacks refer to the gaps occurring in the areas of studying English language skills. Finally, wants refer to

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four English skills or English grammar or vocabulary which the students want to study. In addition, learning needs is the importance of studying English language skills. Language difficulties refer the difficulties in studying English listening, speaking, reading, writing as well as English grammar and vocabulary.

In addition, this study focuses on studying both needs of English skills relevant to developing English for a specific purposes course for working in ASEAN Economic Community, and the language difficulties in studying English skills of undergraduate students based on the three main areas of study. This study is based on the studies of Hutchinson and Waters (1987), West (1997), Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) for the frameworks to study both language difficulties and needs in studying English skills relevant to developing ESP course for working in AEC. In terms of the process of needs analysis, the steps in needs analysis of Jordan's approach (Jordan, 1997) was considered to be employed for this study. Therefore, this study was proposed to definitely study language difficulties and needs of English skills relevant to developing of an ESP course for working in AEC in the future. Then the data were collected and analyzed systematically to answer the research questions.

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this mixed methods study. The sample was 369 undergraduate students. The Multi-Stage Sampling was used to draw the sample, and 12 students were selected for the semi-structured interview. The questionnaire (α = 0.97) was employed for quantitative data about students' difficulties and needs in studying English language skills. For qualitative data, the semi-structured interview form was implemented to inquire further information apart from needs and difficulties.

Data Collection

A consent was gained to gather data from participants. Then, copies of questionnaire were distributed to ask the samples, and then were collected. 12 undergraduate students were requested for an interview appointment. After that all replies were collected for analyzing in the next step. All data were administered and then interpreted for the results of the findings.

Data Analysis

Demographic information was analyzed by descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage using SPSS. Difficulties and needs in studying English skills were analyzed by mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (S.D.). One-Way ANOVA and Multiple comparisons using the Scheffé Test were used to compare the difficulties and needs. The semi-structured interview data was descriptively analyzed by computer software called ATLAS.ti.

Results

Results of The Difficulties in Studying English Language Skills of Students Classified by Three Main Areas of Study

Table 1 Difficulties in Studying English Language Skills Classified by Three Main Areas of Study

| Difficulties in studying English language skills | Three Main Areas of Study | | | | | | F | Sig |
| | Health Sciences (n= 46) | | Sciences & Technology (n= 147) | | Social Sciences (n= 176) | | | |
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.		
1. English grammar	3.30	0.94	3.80	0.95	3.66	0.97	4.64*	0.01*
2. English speaking	3.52	1.01	3.52	0.91	3.43	0.85	0.48	0.62
3. English listening	3.41	0.78	3.44	0.92	3.27	0.92	1.52	0.22
4. English writing	3.33	0.97	3.38	0.92	3.21	0.89	1.43	0.24
5. English vocabulary	3.17	0.79	3.47	0.94	3.12	0.89	6.35*	0.00*
6. English reading	2.63	0.80	2.93	0.90	2.66	0.91	3.96*	0.02*
Overall Difficulties	3.24	0.88	3.42	0.92	3.22	0.91	2.06	0.12

*$p \le .05$

Table 1 showed that it was statistically significant difference of the language difficulties based upon three main areas of study at the .05 level. The results revealed that most difficulty in studying English language skills is studying English grammar responded by ST faculties' students followed by SS faculties' students while it was at the moderate difficulty responded by HS faculties' students. Most difficulties included studying English speaking of HS faculties' students responding similarly to ST faculties' students while it was the moderate difficulty replied by SS faculties' students.

As further examined by Multiple comparisons using the Scheffé Test, the difficulties in studying English language skills were revealed significantly different at the .05 level. This indicated which pairs of the groups contributed to the overall language difficulties. The results were shown in Tables 2 - 4.

Table 2 Multiple Comparisons of the Language Difficulties in Studying English Grammar Classified by Three Main Areas of Study

Three Main Areas of Study	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Health Sciences 3.30	Sciences & Technology 3.80	Social Sciences 3.66
Health Sciences (HS)	3.30	-	0.01*	0.08
Sciences & Technology (ST)	3.80	-	-	0.10
Social Sciences (SS)	3.66	-	-	-

*$p \leq .05$

Table 2 indicates that the difficulty of students from Sciences and Technology faculties in studying English grammar were significantly different at the .05 level.

Table 3 Multiple Comparisons of the Language Difficulties in Studying English Vocabulary Classified by Three Main Areas of Study

Three Main Areas of Study	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Health Sciences 3.17	Sciences & Technology 3.47	Social Sciences 3.12
Health Sciences (HS)	3.17	-	0.15	0.93
Sciences & Technology (ST)	3.47	-	-	0.00*
Social Sciences (SS)	3.12	-	-	-

*$p \leq .05$

Table 3 indicates that the language difficulty of students from Sciences and Technology faculties in studying English vocabulary were significantly different at the .05 level.

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Table 4 Multiple Comparisons of the Language Difficulties in Studying English Reading Skills Classified by Three Main Areas of Study

Three Main Areas of Study	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Health Sciences 2.63	Sciences & Technology 2.93	Social Sciences 2.66
Health Sciences (HS)	2.63	-	0.15	0.97
Sciences & Technology (ST)	2.93	-	-	0.03*
Social Sciences (SS)	2.66	-	-	-

*$p \leq .05$

Table 4 indicates that the language difficulty of students from Sciences and Technology faculties in studying English reading skills were significantly different at the .05 level.

In short, according to the Table 2-4, the results from analyzing data from the questionnaire revealed that the students from Sciences and Technology faculties responded that their language difficulties in learning English grammar, vocabulary and reading skills were statistically significantly different at the 0.05 level.

Results of Studies on Needs in Studying English Language Skills of the Undergraduate Students

The analysis of needs in studying English language skills was analyzed based upon the classification variable of three main areas.

Table 7 The Needs in Studying English Language Skills of Students Classified by Three Main Areas of Study

Needs in studying general English language skills	Three Main Areas of Study						F	Sig
	Health Sciences (n= 46)		Sciences & Technology (n= 147)		Social Sciences (n= 176)			
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.		
1. English listening	4.48	0.72	4.43	0.68	4.45	0.66	0.10	0.90
2. English vocabulary	4.46	0.75	4.32	0.73	4.45	0.68	1.49	0.22
3. English speaking	4.39	0.74	4.39	0.71	4.48	0.65	0.66	0.51
4. English reading	4.30	0.94	4.29	0.78	4.35	0.73	0.30	0.74
5. English writing	4.20	0.85	4.27	0.79	4.35	0.74	0.82	0.43
6. English grammar	4.09	0.83	4.18	0.86	4.16	0.80	0.20	0.81
Overall Needs	4.32	0.81	4.31	0.76	4.37	0.71	0.28	0.75

$*p \leq 0.05$

According to the Table 7, the results can be inferred that most needs of studying English language skills appeared to be listening skills as the first priority, followed by English speaking skills along with English vocabulary. Also, most needs of English reading skills showed the similarity to the needs of English writing. As perceived by the students, the needs of English grammar were needed most for students from all three main areas of study.

Consequently, Multiple comparisons using the Scheffé Test was used to indicate which pairs of the groups contributed to the overall students' needs. The results revealed that the variation of the students' needs in studying English language skills relevant to developing English for a specific purposes course was not significantly different at the .05 level.

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The Data from a Semi-structured Interview of Undergraduate Students

A semi-structured interview is implemented to inquire for further information apart from needs and difficulties in studying English language skills. Thus, the in-depth data is consisted of three aspects as follows.

1. Attitudes with English skills and the importance of English for specific purposes for undergraduate students

Learning and improving English language skills is important for working and communicating including for the success of learning a language. English for specific purposes is important as there are many specific terms in specific contexts that are needed to learn and understand the meaning in the specific context. Besides, it focuses on the specific context that students need to learn in order to use in a specific context. Moreover, it is one of the factors that affect the work in the future.

2. Language information about undergraduate learners' perception

English speaking and grammar are at the low level because they cannot remember the rules of grammar and the knowledge of vocabulary was inadequate. In terms of ESP, the English for specific field is needed to learn about the vocabulary and specific and authentic contexts. Individual and group work activities using technology should be included in the ESP course which would be helpful for students.

3. Environmental situations in teaching and learning

Enjoyable activities that give opportunities for students to use the language to communicate by focusing on student centered approach is important. The students stated that the university's policy of English language learning is appropriate, but some courses such as English for public health, English for professional working should be more specific to the field of the faculty and be taught by the teacher in that faculty. Additionally, every faculty

should be in the same standard of English subject credits and should be taught with the same standard.

Discussions

The discussions of the findings including both needs and difficulties in studying English language skills were discussed as follows:

Students' language difficulties in studying English language skills of the undergraduate students based on three main areas of study

Among the six aspects of language difficulties in studying English language skills determined by mean scores, the undergraduate students perceived the difficulties in studying English grammar as most difficulty. This was not relevant to the data received from the "Demographic information" section of respondents' self-determination of English language skills. Most students evaluated themselves as performing the skill of English grammar as moderate but the result from the mean score indicated that they found it most difficult to study English grammar. As level of importance of studying English language skills mentioned, the findings indicated that the students of Sciences and Technology faculties were revealed significantly different at the 0.05 level of the difficulties in studying English grammar. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) emphasized on identifying the grammatical forms and produced materials that took the forms of grammar as their syllabus. Also, according to Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998), they mentioned that one of the absolute characteristics of ESP is that it is focused upon the language (lexis, grammar, and register), skills, both genres and discourses suitable to the activities and methodology underlying a discipline it uses.

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The comparisons of the language difficulties in studying English language skills of students classified by three main areas of study

The results revealed that most difficulty in studying English language skills is studying English grammar as responded by Sciences and Technology faculties' students, followed by Social Sciences faculties' students while it was at the moderate difficulty replied by Health Sciences faculties' students. The result of this study is in line with the previous study of Chatsungnoen (2015). The study was aimed to explore the English language needs of students and relevant stakeholders for English for specific purposes (ESP) program for food science and technology students at Agriculture University in Thailand. In terms of English grammar difficulties, the majority of the students perceived that grammar was their weakest skill. In fact, the ratings of the 44 students varied from "the most serious difficulty" to "do not have difficulty." The mean values showed that in both phases the students thought that they had more difficulty with the "grammar structures frequently used in scientific discourse" than "grammatical structures for general communication." Thus, the results of previous study occur with the current study that the undergraduate students considered that their difficulties in studying English with both grammar tasks remained the same throughout the period.

The students' needs in studying English language skills relevant to developing of English for a specific purposes course for students

The results showed that the overall needs of studying English language skills were ranked as most needs. The students responded that their need to study English listening followed closely by English speaking, English vocabulary, English reading and writing, and English grammar, respectively. As noticed, students' needs in studying English listening skills was responded as first priority. In fact, it can be inferred that most needs appeared to be English listening skills as the first priority, followed by English speaking skills along with English

vocabulary. Also, most needs of English reading skills showed the similarity to the needs of English writing. Moreover, the needs of English grammar were needed most for students among three main areas of study. These results agree with the study of Kaewpet (2012) investigating engineers' needs for professional English which then determined the English course content for engineering students. The findings suggested that English instruction for engineering should place more emphasis on speaking practice. Results showed that speaking skill is the most important for working.

The comparisons of needs of English language skills for undergraduate students classified by three main areas of study

The results of the current study might not be in line with many studies which identified some English language skills that are needed for the learners. The findings of a previous study conducted by Techapun (2014), reported that students and academic staff stated that all English skills were necessary; however, English speaking skills, especially oral presentation, were the most important. Similarly, Kaewpet (2012) investigated engineers' needs for professional English and determined the English course content for engineering students. The findings suggested that English instruction for engineering should place more emphasizing on speaking practice. As mentioned earlier the results of previous studies conducted in Thai context which are similar to the current study, showed the distinguishing English language skill that student needed to study or use. The current study illustrates that university undergraduate students' responses based on three main areas of study, is that all English language skills including English grammar and vocabulary are necessary for them as most needs among the students of Health Sciences, Sciences and Technology and Social Sciences.

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Recommendations

      1. English grammar appeared to be the most significant problems. Therefore, curriculums and lecturers should implement the knowledge of English grammar to integrate with other English language skills.

      2. The needs of English listening skills followed by speaking skills with vocabulary, reading and writing skills including grammar should be an important focus of the lecturers of English subject.

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