



Key Knowledge Generation

Publication details, including instructions for author and
Subscription information:

<http://kkgpublications.com/social-sciences/>

Needs Analysis of Sophomore-Year Students in a Technology University in Taiwan

Wang, Hui-ya (Anny)

Minghsin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan

Published online: 15 August 2015

To cite this article: Wang, H. Y. (2015). Needs Analysis of Sophomore-Year Students in a Technology University in Taiwan
International Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, 1(2), 101-107.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.20469/ijhss.20007-2>

To link to this article: <http://kkgpublications.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/IJHSS-20007-2.pdf>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

KKG Publications makes every effort to ascertain the precision of all the information (the “Content”) contained in the publications on our platform. However, KKG Publications, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the content. All opinions and views stated in this publication are not endorsed by KKG Publications. These are purely the opinions and views of authors. The accuracy of the content should not be relied upon and primary sources of information should be considered for any verification. KKG Publications shall not be liable for any costs, expenses, proceedings, loss, actions, demands, damages, expenses and other liabilities directly or indirectly caused in connection with given content.

This article may be utilized for research, edifying, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly verboten.

Needs Analysis of Sophomore-Year Students in a Technology University in Taiwan

Wang, Hui-ya (Anny)*

Minghsin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan

Keywords:

ESP
Learner Motivation
Learning Styles
Specialized English

Abstract. This study is aimed at investigating the English learning needs of the 229 surveyed Sophomore-year Non-English major students in a Technology University in Taiwan through gathering their opinions or attitudes toward English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The instrument used for the survey is a questionnaire based on literature review. The results of this study has revealed that: (1) the ESP instruction at issue should focus on communication skills; (2) ESP instructors should enhance their English-teaching competency and subject content knowledge; (3) Increasing learning motivation is also one of the crucial factors that contribute to the success of an ESP course; (4) ESP instructors have to remain flexible and always engage themselves in continuing professional ESP teaching developments in; (5) ESP instructors had better work in cooperation with the experts or professional from the related ESP fields.

Received: 5 May 2015

Accepted: 20 June 2015

Published: 15 August 2015

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the Taiwanese government has also begun encouraging ESP teaching, in contrast of the long-existing practice of general-purpose English teaching, especially as the recent low birth rate leads to the declining school enrollment that is faced with by many universities and colleges as a potential crisis. Ministry of Education Taiwan since 1995 has been promoting practical and vocational education in measured, thoughtful response to the demand for English for Specific purposes as well as in vocational and professional contexts detached from English for General purpose, with equal importance placed on English for academic purpose.

As English learning is an inevitably global trend to communicate ideas and message, to exchange information, and to do business in the international world. English for Specific Purposes is being increasingly promoted and regarded as the strategic teaching target to enhance and ensure students' being internationally employable.

The marked increase in vocational training programs throughout the world, the current English language teaching has becomes more and more practical, user-friendly and career-building and development-oriented. Generally speaking, needs analysis is the starting point for the ESP course design. Once the questionnaire used to obtain the information of what the students' needs are and do the follow-up survey and analysis, the ESP teachers can accordingly start to work on the particular or specified needs of

the surveyed students' future career planning and developing as well, thus greatly assisting the university--level teachers can thus address the specific needs of the students, and then adjust their teaching strategies, methodologies and course design and contents to adapt to the specific situation and keep up with the future demands of the students from various departments as well as their other occupational and professional needs in their respective areas of specialization.

Course design and contents which are based on the findings of pre-course needs analysis will most likely meet the needs of both current language learners and their future employers. Such a student-centered process of teaching would greatly help teachers explore more properly and deeply the methodologies and strategies that most suit, honor or comply with different types of learning styles and thus set more realistic or pragmatic teaching goals that help those students achieve their learning goals and succeed in their main field of study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

By raising awareness of learning styles and strategies, not only will one become more prepared for learning, but also more analytical in the process (Reid, 1999). This will help a second language learner to become more aware of one's strategies in order to improve one's learning. Also, to maintain one's language abilities by constantly examine one's learning process in order to

*Corresponding author: Wang, Hui-ya (Anny)
E-mail: annywang@must.edu.tw

keep oneself in an efficient language learning environment.

Learning styles refer to a person's general approach to learning and problem-solving (Reid, 1995). There are visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic learning styles. It is subconscious, and it is generally relating to one's personality. Research has shown that many successful learners are aware of their preferences for learning styles, which are the ones, that they found to be the most comfortable and easy to use (Oxford, Ehrman & Lavine, 1991). Also, those successful learners often have varied preferences. It is suggested that learning styles could be changed with experimentation and practice (Reid, 1998).

Learning strategies, in contrast to learning styles, are specific techniques used to facilitate one's learning. A student who has strongly visual learning style tends to use the strategies of taking notes and outlining, whereas an auditory learner tends to use the strategies of recording lectures and listening to them after class ends. Learners who have an analytic learning style often like to use strategies that involve breaking material down into small pieces, whereas global learners prefer strategies that help them grasp the main idea quickly without attending to details (Oxford, Nam, 1998).

When the learner consciously chooses strategies that fit his or her learning style, these strategies become conscious and purposeful for learning. Learning strategies can also enable students to become more independent, autonomous, life long learners (All Wright 1990, Little 1991). Skilled teachers could help students identify an awareness of learning strategies which allows them to extend skills by using a higher range of appropriate strategies.

Likewise, a student who has not identified one's learning strategies could affect one's learning abilities. Wenden (1985) suggests that ineffective learners are inactive learners and that their apparent inability to learn is, in fact; due to their not having an appropriate repertoire of learning strategies". Oxford said that strategies that fulfill the following three conditions make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations. Those three conditions are:

(a) The strategy relates well to the L2 tasks at hand; (b) the strategy fits the particular students' learning style preferences to one degree or another; (c) the students employ the strategy effectively and link it with other relevant strategies". (Oxford, 1990 p.8).

Despite many potential barriers to implementing knowledge of individual learning styles in the general classroom setting, raising student awareness of learning styles and strategies has proven to enlighten learning. By identifying one's learning styles and strategies, students could comprehend how learning processes occur, what choices they have in these processes, and how they can identify their learning strengths and weaknesses (Reid, 1998).

On ESP Curricula

"ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner", "it makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline

it serves and it is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities." (Dudley-Evans and St John.1998. *Developments in ESP, CUP*). Harding (2007) suggests that, in all definitions of ESP, two elements are axiomatic: the sense of purpose and the sense of vocation." "In ESP, the practical application and use of language overrides other aspects of language learning." "General English variety can present the teacher with challenges", "ESP is a comprehensive term and it includes English for Business and English for Academic purposes." "It's not just the politician, the business leader, and the academic professor who need to speak to international colleagues and clients: it's also the hotel receptionist, the nurse, and the site foreman." Harding (2007). Carter (1983) suggested that three features of ESP curricula should include authentic materials, purpose-related orientation, and self-direction. A simple clarification of purpose-related orientation was offered by Carter (1983), who suggested that "student's simulation of a conference, involves the preparation of papers, reading, note taking, and writing."

On the Role of ESP Teachers and Learners

A good ESP teacher should be adept at gathering, digesting, and applying ESP teaching materials to facilitate students' learning, including multiple vocabularies and structure modifications. In addition to textbooks, ESP teachers must employ additional journals or magazines, newspapers, and popular columns or pertinent articles or essays as supplementary teaching materials. "Does the ESP teacher need to be an expert in the vocational area where their students are aimed at or working in?" According to Harding (2007), the answer is "You don't need to be an expert, but you need to have some understanding of the subject area." Robinson (1991) suggested that curricula developers should be conscious of the fact that ESP learners have high degrees of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. They engage in active learning, are aware of their learning progress, effectively improve their learning motivations, participate fully in classroom activities, and closely monitor their learning progress.

The aim of ESP is to teach students of different subjects or disciplines through two or more teachers working together, as a team, in order to help such students of diverse disciplines and careers in their respective studies. A Technology University professor suggested that collaborative teaching is among the most successful and effective ways for students to learn and master their targeted skills and knowledge in the respective ESP field. As ESP teachers cannot fully understand subject knowledge in the manner required, they must work together with subject or content teachers or relevant professionals. Therefore, such a work team teaching pair or practice would be the ideal model for achieving the most satisfactory ESP teaching goals.

The Research

This research is done by surveying the 229 Sophomore Year students enrolled in the Business English and Technology English

courses plus one evening class by using questionnaire as the major instrument for collecting the needed data first-hand. Highly structured questionnaires with mostly closed questions have been adopted, together with open-ended questions, and classroom observation. This questionnaire was conducted during the second year of General English classes during the month of September, 2015. Out of the 350 university students surveyed, 229 validated questionnaires have been collected. Therefore, their responses could reflect to some extent the needs of average sophomore students as well as average learners in their night freshmen year class.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data from the student questionnaire (Appendix I) done by the polled undergraduate students in the sophomore year technology university in September in 2015 shows or revealed that the majority of students think their English ability is average (54%) with the numbers of vocabulary they have learned ranged from 500 to 999 and the time the students spend in studying English is almost none or zero.

Most people are placed in the level B class (A represents the highest achievement) (53%). As the purpose of using English, it shows the reason is due to its being a required subject (66%) for graduation. Most students consider their listening skill is bad or poor (28%).

The students think their English learning ability in reading is in average (52%), so is their writing skill being mostly shown in average (53%). Most students have a common interest, sharing a nice or great feeling about studying English in being willing to take the initiative to be watching English films (58%) to enhance English abilities. The skills the students want to gain from this course are: First: To communicate with foreigners in English (58%) and, Second: To learn to memorize more English vocabulary (46%). Lastly, for most of the surveyed students, their learning attitude is normal or typical (64%) and most of them want to follow the teacher's lecture or instruction (38%).

DISCUSSION

On Motivation

According to Question No. 12, the skills the students want to gain from this course: (a) can communicate with foreigners in English (59%); (b) to memorize more English vocabularies (46%); (c) can comprehend the conversations in the textbook (29%); (d) ...can study more articles (21%); (e) can read and understand more articles (21%); (f) can write English letters (7%); (g) carry out product marketing plans by using English presentations (6%). However, due to some practical or pragmatic reasons, it lacks the analysis on the needs from other sources, such as teachers, experts, administrators, employers, institutions, and national statistics, whose needs may also have a bearing on the language teaching and learning situation (Brown, 2001, p. 20).

Tasks to Increase literacy

According to Appendix I, the students will be more engaging to learn when the teacher is more friendly, shares one's first-hand life experience in English-speaking countries especially in the U.S, teaches in a much more patient attitude than peers to explain everything in details, uses relatively vivid styles of teaching, being more fun and is more open-minded – all these factors will encourage students to be learning more effectively and self-motivated, thus achieving greater effectiveness and more desired results.

Due to the graduation threshold implemented in English testing requires all the students to take the English proficiency tests, so some students suggest if the teacher can teach English for certificate earning purposes, introducing and adding more vocabularies, grammatical usage and structures and reading skills enhancement materials to help students learn with a test-preparing focus, to strengthen practicing such key tests as the GEPT or TOEIC exams. Teacher evaluation can not only be focused on the students' test results, but also focused on their interests and needs. Lower level students need to get more guidance on the basics, such as pronunciation drills and grammatical knowledge and practice on structures and usage. The teacher should play a role as a facilitator to help student learn more effectively, make the learning process more enjoyable and easier to learn, and to improve and enhance their motivation, so as to achieve their goals of learning at the same time.

On the Effectiveness of ESP Practice

In addition to learners' needs, students' motivation and learning capacity could also determine the success of an ESP curriculum design and teaching course. One important question that ESP instructors must ask themselves would be: Are the course objectives attainable with the students' current language levels? Therefore, how to design a course based on a more realistic needs analysis so that the course can match students' English ability and thus arouses their interests is another tough challenge for ESP instructors to face and tackle.

CONCLUSION

Technology major students need to have a satisfactory groundwork or foundation in mastering basic English skills and knowledge before can they advance to the level of ESP learning and the ESP instruction should focus on the communication skills while integrating terminology and subject content into the ESP course whose instructors should work hard to enhance their English-teaching competency and subject+ content based knowledge in order to make the class more successful. Students' learning motivation is also one of the crucial factors that contribute to the success of an ESP course. On this point, Anthony (2007) proposed the "teacher as student" approach, by which he meant a typical ESP instructor, acting like a student of the target field, can learn a lot by listening to the views of students and can also engage, participate in, and contribute to

discussions by using his vast knowledge of English. The ESP instructor does not have to be an expert in the target professional field, but just has to remain flexible and always engage himself in the professional development in ESP teaching.

Teachers could encourage students to general strengthen their motivation to learn the English language. By creating a pleasant and highly positive atmosphere, developing good interactions and relationships among the students, making the classes interesting, and encouraging them to develop and formulate their own learning strategies more proactive and effective, and the teaching of the English language would become more effective and productive.

Understanding one's learning styles could facilitate learning. Employ strategies that are suitable to one's learning styles could make one's learning results more positive, favorable and satisfactory. Project work focuses on content-based learning rather than on specific language skill-building or honing targets. Real-life world topics of interests that are close to students' daily life and major study can be made central or priority to the topics for teaching and learning. Those tasks lead to the integration and actual use of the four skills and processing of information drawn from their real-life experiences to design the learning tasks or projects. The value of the project, however, lies not just in the final product but in the process of working towards the end. Besides, due to the combination of different evaluation systems, teachers should not impose any single discipline on students who could be made to have experienced a different system of multiple evaluations to prevent students from any disappointments and

frustrations. These students should be evaluated based on a different scale or standard or system until they could have been well adjusted to them. Teachers should keep close contacts with such students and their parents to afford a good student-teacher communication and collaboration in-between that could dramatically facilitate the transition process of these students into new environments and transformation into higher achiever students at a higher level of English proficiency.

In conclusion, needs analysis must be administered before the start of the English classes so that it can be effectively referenced and employed to define or determine learners' actual language needs and learning level changes throughout their entire English courses at different or various stages.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited in terms of its unique situation or various conditions. The subjects of this study are limited to a number of students in one university of technology as selected in Taiwan; therefore, its results may not be generalized well to apply to other educational settings or other populations with different backgrounds. Besides, the list of questions in the questionnaire of this study is by no means complete because they are still a tentative or sketchy plan which should be subject to further confirmation and modification through the use of making more investigations and experimentations. Future research efforts and projects are suggested to involve learners of different backgrounds in different educational settings in order to further validate the findings of this study.

REFERENCE

- Armstrong, T. (1984). *Multiple intelligences in the classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Anthony, L. (2007). The teacher as student in ESP course design. In *Proceedings of 2007 International Symposium on ESP & Its Application in Nursing & Medical English Education*, Fooyin University, Kaohsiung, Taiwan.
- Brice, A. (2001). Choice of languages in instruction. One language or two. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 33(4), 10-16.
- Burnaby, B., & Sun, Y. (1989). Chinese teachers' views of Western language teaching: Context informs paradigms. *Tesol Quarterly*, 23(2), 219-238.
- Carter, D. (1983). Some propositions about. *The ESP Journal*, 2, 131-137.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2003). *Teaching english as a second or foreign language*. Heinle & Heinle.
- Cutler, M. S. (1999). *Does culture affect learning style?* Falls church high school Fairfax county (VA) Public schools.
- Dudley-Evans, T. (2001). English for specific purposes. In R. Carlier & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Teaching english to speakers of other languages: A cambridge guide* (pp.131-136). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. (1998). *Developments in english for specific purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Guardado, M. (2002). Loss and maintenance of first language skills: Case studies of Hispanic families in Vancouver. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 58(3), 341-363.
- Hülsem, M., De Bot, K., & Weltens, B. (2002). 'Between two worlds': Social networks, language shift, and language processing in three generations of Dutch migrants in New Zealand. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 153, 27-52.
- Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for specific purposes: A learning-centered approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Kang, S. (1999). *Learning styles, forum*.
- Kennedy, P. (2002). Learning cultures and learning styles: Myth-understandings about adult (Hong Kong) Chinese learners. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 21(5), 430-445.
- Oster, J. (1989). Seeing with different eyes: Another view of literature in the ESL class. *TESOL Quarterly*, 23(1)85-103.
- Ramirez, A. G., & Stromquist, N. P. (1979). ESL methodology and student language learning in bilingual elementary schools. *TESOL Quarterly*, 13(2), 145-158.
- Ramírez, A. G., & Politzer, R. L. (1975). The acquisition of English and the maintenance of Spanish in a bilingual education program. *Tesol Quarterly*, 9(2), 113-124.
- Reid, J. M. (Ed.). (1998). *Understanding learning styles in the second language classroom*. Prentice Hall Regents.
- Robinson, P. (1980). *ESP (English for Specific Purposes)*. New York: Pergamon.
- Robinson, P. (1991). *ESP Today: A practitioner's guide*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Samovar, L., & Porter, R., (2003). *Intercultural communication* (10th ed.). Thomson.
- Searfoss, L. W., Smith, C. C., & Bean, T. W. (1981). An integrated language strategy for second language learners. *TESOL Quarterly*, 15(4) 383-389.
- Taylor, B. P. (1975). Adult language learning strategies and their pedagogical implications. *TESOL quarterly*, 391-399.
- Vann, R. J., & Abraham, R. G. (1990). Strategies of unsuccessful language learners. *Tesol Quarterly*, 24(2), 177-198.
- Wharton, G. (2000). Language learning strategy use of bilingual foreign language learners in Singapore. *Language learning*, 50(2), 203-243.

Appendix I
A Survey of Need Analysis for Sophomore-Year Students in ESP English Study

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1 I think the level of my English is A. Very good B. good C. Normal D. poor E. very poor	1%	6%	48%	32%	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2 The number of vocabulary I learned A.0~499 B.500~999 C.1000~1999 C.2000~2999 D.3000~3999 E.4000	38%	31%	24%	5%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
3 The time in a week to learn English A. 0-2.9hr B.3-5.9hr C.6-8.9hr D.9hr	90%	8%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4 After my placement test, the class I was assigned is A. level-A B. level-B C.level-C	28%	57%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
5 My purpose of using English is A. compulsory subjects B graduation threshold C for future work needs D. interest E. likes to learn a language to	66%	48%	39%	9%	30%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
6 My ability in learning English: Listening aspect A. Very good B. good C. Normal D. poor E. very poor	1%	15%	44%	32%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
7 My ability in learning English: Speaking aspect A. Very good B. good C. Normal D. poor E. very poor	1%	9%	42%	36%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
8 My ability in learning English: Reading aspect A. Very good B. good C. Normal D. poor E. very poor	2%	16%	50%	22%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
9 My ability in learning English: Writing aspect A. Very good B. good C. Normal D. poor E. very poor	1%	7%	48%	28%	16%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
10 I like learning English A.like very much B. like C. Normal D. do not like E.do not like very much	3%	21%	59%	14%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
11 I will seek the following ways to enhance English abilities A Listen to English radio programs B surf English websites C to watch the English version	10%	13%	54%	11%	5%	6%	10%	12%	8%	0%	0%
12 I would like to learn the skills from the course A. I hope I can remember some of the more English words B. I hope I can communicate with foreigners in English	47%	55%	7%	21%	8%	34%	20%	2%	20%	1%	1%
13 My learning attitude is A. Very good B. good C. Normal D. E. poor F. very poor	3%	23%	63%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
14 I like the way of delivering the class A. I hope to follow the teacher's way of teaching B in accordance with the teacher I hope to practice more dialogues C. I	36%	11%	12%	9%	4%	5%	17%	12%	15%	5%	6%

Please Make Suggestion to Your Teacher of Your Most Favorite Ways of Planning Your ESP Course

....Focusing on basic GEPT or TOEIC tests (including Listening and reading sections), translating, understanding the meaning, following the way of teaching, learning from the teacher, watching movies, playing or screening more English films, with subtitle in English, teaching all the basics or essentials of language, practicing doing grammar exercises, teaching while speaking

Being more active and practical in practicing conversational English, like listening to the teacher's life stories and learn from them, teaching by identifying the main points, following the step-by-step procedure, being more active and proactive, and more communicative, explaining the grammatical structure or patterns by using those easily confused grammatical changes, practicing grammar exercise while reading, taking it easy with more dialogues, alright, in a more relaxing way of the teaching environment and doing a dialogue, watching the films thought to be a more interesting, and effective approach to teaching more slangs and idioms or colloquial expression, sharing more life experiences, stories in more interactive ways, watching English movies, listening to English songs, reciting their lyrics to give more listening and speaking training, followed and guided by the teacher's teaching methods; we hope the teacher can speak louder in a slower pace. It would be much better to be teaching how to build vocabulary power, and practicing taking more English tests

Learning by playing it, practicing starting or having more dialogues, using specific terminology, honing more reading and speaking skills, storytelling skill, creating an all-English environment classroom, becoming more interactive with students, introducing more outside reading texts or articles or textbooks, opening diversified courses, enhancing more listening and speaking skills, following the way the teacher chooses to as they see fit., practicing using more vocabularies, English news reading, including more of the serious, interactive materials, songs, films, and articles

Followed by her way, more active way of teaching, more outside-the-class activities, more interesting and fun time on watching select films, performances, more interaction among students and the teacher, more translating practice, utilizing technology to become accessible to learning and listening resources; I want to be in level-C, so as to be engaged in more English dialogues

No special ideas, following by the teacher, taking it easy

Using more interesting way, English film

No idea, suggest organizing some interesting activities sometimes, watching more movies which should be more interesting, of much better quality or content or story, getting more interactive and natural or active while practicing more English conversations, facilitate and improve communication, remaining the same, studying to hone more listening and speaking skills, discussing in groups, practicing integrated four skills including: listening, speaking, reading and writing, and finally adding more current events or new reports to study and increase the vocabulary