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Needs Analysis for an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Course for Thai Undergraduates in a Food Science and Technology Programme

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to explore the English language needs of students and relevant stakeholders for an English for specific purposes (ESP) programme for food science and technology students at Agriculture University in Thailand. The research was conducted using Dudley-Evans and St. John's (1998) needs analysis as a research framework, and multiple sources of data collection were used. The study investigated the English language skills needed in academic and occupational contexts in the area of food science and technology. The participants in this research included 45 third-year students, six former students, three subject teachers in the food science and technology programme, two ESP teachers, and six employers.

The study showed that the students had low levels of English proficiency. Their low levels of English then affected their study in the academic context and their work during the internship programme in the occupational context. Reading and translation were the most needed skills in their academic context, whereas speaking and listening were considered the most needed skills in the occupational context. The study also revealed a mismatch of the perceptions of the students' needs between the ESP teachers and other stakeholders in both academic and occupational contexts. The changes across two ESP courses in the students' needs depended on three main factors: learners, professional information, and environmental situations.

This thesis contributes to knowledge of the ESP branches required for food science and technology at Agriculture University and using a needs analysis as an on-going process within the overall process of course development. It proposes a redesigned needs analysis model which could be used for future ESP needs analyses at Agriculture University in different disciplines and possibly also be adapted for use in wider Thai and international contexts.

Recommendations for supporting the ESP programme at Agriculture University and implications for future research are also provided.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..... **III**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **V**

TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... **VII**

LIST OF FIGURES ..... **XVI**

LIST OF TABLES ..... **XVII**

LIST OF APPENDICES ..... **XX**

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1 Rationale and Significance of the Study 1

1.2 Background and Context to the Research 3

1.2.1 The role and significance of English in Thailand 3

1.2.2 English language teaching at universities in Thailand 5

1.2.3 Background and programmes at Agriculture University 6

1.2.4 The importance of the food science and technology programme 7

1.2.5 English language teaching in food science and technology programme 7

1.3 An Analysis and Overview of the Current Problems 9

1.4 Outline of the Research and Research Questions 10

1.5 Overview of the Thesis 11

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW **13**

2.1 Introduction 13

2.2 An Overview of English for Specific Purposes 13

2.2.1 Definitions and classifications of ESP 13

2.2.2 Background and development of ESP 19
2.2.3 Teaching approaches to English for specific purposes 22
2.2.3.1 Traditional English language approaches 24
2.3 Needs Analysis in ESP Contexts 43
2.3.1 Definition of needs analysis 43
2.3.2 Needs analysis in ESP course development 45
2.3.2.1 On-going needs analysis 46
2.3.2.2 Course evaluation 48
2.3.3 Definition of needs analysis in this study 50
2.3.4 Needs analysis approaches and models 51
2.3.5 Needs analysis model for this study 63
2.3.6 Needs analysis and English for specific purposes at university level in Thai contexts 64
2.4 Chapter Summary 65
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 67
3.1 Introduction 67
3.2 Research Questions 67
3.3 Research Paradigm 68
3.4 Research Approaches 69
3.4.1 A mixed methods approach 69
3.4.2 A case study approach 71
3.5 Needs Analysis Model 73
3.6 Research Participants 75
3.6.1 Students 77
3.6.2 ESP teachers 78

3.6.3 Subject teachers 78
3.6.4 Former students 79
3.6.5 Employers 80
3.7 Data Collection 81
3.7.1 Research instruments 85
3.7.1.1 English proficiency tests 85
3.7.1.2 Questionnaires 90
3.7.1.3 Interviews 97
3.8 Data Analysis 101
3.8.1 The two English proficiency tests 101
3.8.2 Questionnaires 102
3.8.3 Interviews 103
3.8.4 Data assessment 103
3.8.4.1 Trustworthiness 103
3.8.4.2 Dependability 105
3.9 Ethical Considerations 105
3.9.1 Gaining access 106
3.9.2 Informed consent 107
3.9.3 Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity 107
3.9.4 Researcher's roles 108
3.10 Chapter Summary 108
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS FROM THE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TESTS 111
4.1 Introduction 111
4.2 Findings from the Two English Proficiency Tests 112
4.2.1 Findings from the TOEIC 113

4.2.1.1 The students' total score in phase one and phase two 114

4.2.1.2 The findings on the listening part from phase one and phase two 114

4.2.1.3 The findings on the reading part in phase one and phase two..... 124

4.2.2 Findings from the Scientific English Grammatical Structures Test..... 132

4.2.2.1 The total score and the *t*-test for the Scientific English Grammatical Structures Test..... 132

4.2.2.2 The scores of the students for the three main scientific grammatical structures 133

4.2.2.3 The strengths and weaknesses of scientific grammar structures of the students..... 134

4.2.3 Summary of the findings for the Scientific English Grammatical Structures Test 137

4.3 Summary of the Findings from the Two English Proficiency Tests 137

CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES 141

5.1 Findings from the Questionnaire on Language Difficulties..... 142

5.1.1 Findings on the background information 142

5.1.1.1 General information about the students..... 142

5.1.1.2 Prior learning experiences with other English language courses..... 143

5.1.1.3 Frequency of using English language outside the English classroom144

5.1.1.4 Attitude towards the English language and the ESP programme..... 144

5.1.1.5 Self-evaluation of the English language skills 145

5.1.2 Findings on difficulties regarding general English language skills 146

5.1.3 Findings on the students' difficulties with English tasks..... 148

5.1.3.1 Listening..... 148

5.1.3.2 Speaking..... 150

5.1.3.3 Reading 151
5.1.3.4 Writing 153
5.1.3.5 Vocabulary 154
5.1.3.6 Grammar 155
5.1.3.7 Language functions 156
5.1.4 Summary of the findings from the Questionnaires on Language Difficulties .. 157
5.2 Findings from the English Language Needs Questionnaire 158
5.2.1 Findings regarding the needs for general English language skills 159
5.2.2 Findings regarding the needs for English language tasks 160
5.2.2.1 Listening 161
5.2.2.2 Speaking 162
5.2.2.3 Reading 163
5.2.2.4 Writing 165
5.2.2.5 Vocabulary 166
5.2.2.6 Grammar 167
5.2.2.7 Language functions 168
5.2.3 Summary of the findings from the English Language Needs Questionnaire ... 170
CHAPTER 6 FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS 173
6.1 Introduction 173
6.2 Personal Information on the 23 Stakeholders 174
6.2.1 The sampled students 174
6.2.1.1 Interests and attitudes towards the ESP programme 175
6.2.1.2 Experience in learning the English language 176
6.2.2 The former students 177
6.2.3 The two ESP teachers 178

6.2.4 The three subject teachers 179
6.2.5 The six employers 179
6.2.6 Conclusion of personal information of the 23 stakeholders 179
6.3 Language Information about the Activities and Tasks in the Academic and Occupational Contexts 181
6.3.1 Activities and tasks in the ESP programme 181
6.3.1.1 Vocabulary 181
6.3.1.2 Listening 182
6.3.1.3 Speaking 184
6.3.1.4 Reading 185
6.3.1.5 Writing 186
6.3.1.6 Grammar and language functions 188
6.3.2 Activities and tasks in the food science and technology programme 190
6.3.2.1 Vocabulary 190
6.3.2.2 Reading 192
6.3.2.3 Listening 194
6.3.2.4 Writing skills integrated with grammar and language functions 194
6.3.3 Activities and tasks in food industry 195
6.3.3.1 Vocabulary 196
6.3.3.2 Integrated language skills 198
6.3.3.3 Reading 199
6.3.3.4 Writing integrated with grammar and language functions 200
6.3.4 Conclusion of language information about the activities and tasks in the academic and occupational contexts 201
6.4 Language Information about the Students in the Academic and Occupational Contexts 204

6.4.1 In the academic contexts 205
6.4.1.1 Perceptions of the sampled students and former students 205
6.4.1.2 Perceptions of the two ESP teachers 212
6.4.1.3 Perceptions of the three subject teachers 213
6.4.1.4 Language learning information 215
6.4.2 In the occupational contexts 219
6.4.2.1 Listening and speaking 220
6.4.2.2 Reading 220
6.4.2.3 Writing 221
6.4.2.4 Vocabulary 221
6.4.3 Conclusion of language information about the students in the academic and occupational contexts 222
6.5 Needs for the ESP Programme 223
6.5.1 Speaking and listening 224
6.5.2 Reading 226
6.5.3 Writing 227
6.5.4 Vocabulary 229
6.5.5 Grammar and language functions 230
6.5.6 Reasons for the students' needs changing 231
6.5.6.1 Awareness of the importance of the use of English in real world contexts 231
6.5.6.2 Opportunities to use English language skills 233
6.5.6.3 Distractions from other courses 233
6.5.6.4 The internship programme 234
6.5.7 Conclusions regarding the needs for the ESP programme 235

6.6 Environmental Situations 237

6.6.1 Perceptions of the sampled students and the former students 237

6.6.2 Perceptions of the two ESP teachers 240

6.6.3 Perceptions of the three subject teachers 240

6.6.4 Conclusion regarding the environmental situations 241

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION 243

7.1 Introduction 243

7.1.1 Overview of the discussion chapter 245

7.2 What Are the Students' English Language Difficulties? 247

7.2.1 Overview of difficulties 248

7.2.2 Speaking and listening 249

7.2.3 Reading 252

7.2.4 Writing 254

7.2.5 Vocabulary 256

7.2.6 Grammar and language functions 257

7.3 What Are the Students' English Language Needs and How Did Their Needs Change? 261

7.3.1 The most needed English language skills in the academic context 262

7.3.2 The most needed English language skills in the occupational context 264

7.3.3 Needs for the environmental situations of the ESP programme 266

7.3.4 Discrepancies in the participants' perceptions of the students' needs 267

7.3.5 How the students changed their perceptions of their needs 269

7.3.6 The discrepancy between students' needs and their difficulties 274

7.4 Chapter Summary 276

CHAPTER 8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 281

8.1 Introduction 281
8.2 Summary of the Study 281
8.3 Research Contributions 284
8.3.1 Knowledge of the ESP branches required for food science and technology at Agriculture University 286
8.3.2 Knowledge of needs analysis as an on-going process within course development 289
8.3.3 Knowledge of using and adapting a needs analysis model 290
8.3.4 Knowledge of the importance of multiple stakeholders and data sources for needs analysis 294
8.4 Recommendations from the Study 295
8.4.1 Recommendations for supporting the ESP programme at Agriculture University 295
8.4.1.1 Recommendations for teaching the ESP programme 296
8.4.1.2 Recommendations for supporting the ESP teachers 308
8.4.2 Recommendations and implications for future research 309
8.4.2.1 Future research at Agriculture University 310
8.4.2.2 Future research regarding other ESP contexts 310
8.5 Limitations of the Study 311
8.6 Chapter Summary 312
REFERENCES 315
APPENDICES 355

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 The tree model of English for specific purposes. 14

Figure 2.2 Continuum of ELT course types 17

Figure 2.3 Stages in the ESP process: reality 46

Figure 2.4 What needs analysis establishes..... 60

Figure 3.1 Needs analysis model of this study. 74

Figure 3.2 Participants in the academic and occupational contexts of this case study 75

Figure 3.3 Data collection procedure and research instruments. 83

Figure 4.1 The two sets of the English proficiency tests at the beginning of the both phases 113

Figure 4.2 The distribution of the listening proficiency of the 45 students based on their scores in phase one and phase two 116

Figure 4.3 The distribution of the reading proficiency of the 45 students based on their reading scores in phase one and phase two 126

Figure 7.1 Needs analysis model used in this study.. 245

Figure 7.2 Framework for the discussion. 246

Figure 8.1 ESP branches of English for students in food science and technology 287

Figure 8.2 The redesigned needs analysis model for an ESP programme 291

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Academic plan for the English language study of the students in the food science and technology programme 8

Table 2.1 Main sources and data collection methods of needs analysis and course evaluation 49

Table 3.1 Fifteen English grammatical structures 89

Table 3.2 Time schedule for interviewing the participants in phase one and phase two 101

Table 4.1 The differences between the mean values of the total score for the 45 students in phase one and phase two 114

Table 4.2 The differences between the mean scores for the listening part of the 45 students in phase one and phase two 115

Table 4.3 Mean per cent of the correct responses in the four listening sections of the 45 students in phase one and phase two (%) 118

Table 4.4 The differences between the mean scores for the reading part for the 45 students in phase one and phase two 125

Table 4.5 Mean per cent of the correct responses in the four reading sections for the 45 students in phase one and phase two (%) 127

Table 4.6 The differences between the mean scores of the total score of the 45 students in phase one and phase two 133

Table 4.7 Mean per cent correct for the three main scientific English grammatical structures of the 45 students in phase one and phase two 133

Table 4.8 Percentages of correct responses in the fifteen English grammatical structures of the 45 students 135

Table 5.1 Distribution of grades from the English language courses of the 44 students in the two phases (%) 143

Table 5.2-a The ratings on English language skill ability by the 44 students in the two 145

Table 5.2-b:The ranking of the abilities in English language skills of the 44 students (%)….146

Table 5.3-a Distribution of the ratings on difficulties with general English language skills of the 44 students in phase one and phase two (%) 147

Table 5.3-b Descriptive analysis of the difficulties with English language skills of the 44 students in the two phases..……..…….……148

Table 5.4 Descriptive analysis of the difficulties with listening tasks of the 44 students in both phases 149

Table 5.5 Descriptive analysis of the difficulties with speaking tasks of the 44 students in both phases 150

Table 5.6 Descriptive analysis of the difficulties with reading tasks of the 44 students in both phases 152

Table 5.7 Descriptive analysis of the difficulties with writing tasks of the 44 students in both phases 154

Table 5.8 Descriptive analysis of the difficulties with vocabulary tasks of the 44 students in both phases 155

Table 5.9 Descriptive analysis of the difficulties with grammar tasks of the 44 students in both phases 155

Table 5.10 Descriptive analysis of the difficulties with language functions of the 44 students in both phases 157

Table 5.11 Distributions of the needs for English language skills of the 44 students from both phases 160

Table 5.12 Descriptive analysis of the need for listening tasks of the 44 students in both phases 161
Table 5.13 Descriptive analysis of the need for speaking tasks of the 44 students in both phases 163
Table 5.14 Descriptive analysis of the need for reading tasks of the 44 students in both phases 164
Table 5.15 Descriptive analysis of the need for writing tasks of the 44 students in both phases 166
Table 5.16 Descriptive analysis of the need for vocabulary tasks of the 44 students 167
Table 5.17 Descriptive analysis of the needs for grammar tasks of the 44 students in both phases 168
Table 5.18 Distribution of the needs for language function tasks of the 44 students in phase one (%) 169
Table 5.19 Distribution of the ranking of the needs for the language function tasks of the 44 students in phase two (%)..... 170
Table 7.1 The students' English language difficulties 260
Table 7.2 Summary of the main English language skills needed by stakeholders in the academic and occupational contexts..... 273
Table 8.1 Current ESP teaching and recommended ESP teaching based on the needs analysis 297

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Administration of the TOEIC Test: English Translation……355

Appendix 2 Administration of the Scientific English Grammatical Structures Test: English Translation ……...……...356

Appendix 3 Questionnaire on Language Difficulties in Phase Two……..357

Appendix 4 The English Language Needs Questionnaire in Phase Two……..365

Appendix 5 Samples Interview Schedule and Interview Questions……...372

Appendix 6 Documents Related to Ethical Requirements…….375

Appendix 7 Descriptions of the TOEIC……382