

An Investigation of Thai Learners' Needs of English Language Use for Intensive English Course Development

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Abstract

Needs analysis plays an important role in course and curriculum development. Not only is it a necessary step for mandatory courses offered at schools and universities, but it is also crucial for language schools and institutes that offer intensive courses to learners. Assessing the purposes and needs as well as the activities for which the language is needed for the learners can help direct the curriculum as well as lead to successful teaching and learning. The objectives of the study were to study the needs of the learners and the English skills needed by the learners who enrolled in intensive English courses at Chulalongkorn University Language Institute (CULI), and also to investigate the content, teaching methods and length of the courses appropriate for them. The participants were 321 learners who voluntarily took part in the study. The learners were divided into 3 groups based on their occupations and CULI's course management as follows: students, government officials and employees of private organizations. The data were collected from a needs analysis questionnaire and interviews with selected participants. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the data. The results showed that the learners were interested in improving their English in all four language skills. They needed basic language skills such as reading for the main idea, giving information and general conversational skills in order to communicate effectively in everyday life. There were also demands for English for Specific Purposes courses targeting skills related to their occupations. In addition, interesting information useful for course and curriculum development and management was also identified.

Keywords: needs analysis, needs assessment, learners' needs

บทคัดย่อ

การวิเคราะห์ความต้องการ (Needs Analysis) เป็นส่วนสำคัญในการพัฒนารายวิชาและหลักสูตรภาษาอังกฤษ การสำรวจจุดประสงค์ ความต้องการและกิจกรรมที่ใช้ในรายวิชาหรือหลักสูตรหนึ่งๆ จะนำไปสู่ความสำเร็จในการเรียนการสอนได้ ทั้งนี้ การสำรวจความต้องการเพื่อนำไปพัฒนารายวิชานั้นไม่ได้จำกัดอยู่แต่เพียงวิชาบังคับในหลักสูตรของโรงเรียนหรือมหาวิทยาลัยเท่านั้น แต่ยังมี ความสำคัญในการจัดการเรียนการสอนในหลักสูตรภาษาอังกฤษแบบเร่งรัดอีกด้วย งานวิจัยนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาความต้องการการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียน ทักษะภาษาอังกฤษที่ผู้เรียนจำเป็นต้องใช้และข้อมูลอื่นๆที่เป็นประโยชน์กับการจัดการเรียนการสอน เช่น เนื้อหา วิธีการสอน ความยาวของหลักสูตรที่เหมาะสมสำหรับผู้เรียน กลุ่มผู้เข้าร่วมงานวิจัยได้แก่ ผู้ที่สมัครเรียนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษที่สถาบันภาษา จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัยเปิดสอนให้กับบุคคลภายนอก โดยมีผู้เรียนสมัครใจให้ข้อมูลจำนวน 321 คน แบ่งผู้เรียนออกเป็น 3 กลุ่มได้แก่ กลุ่มนักเรียนนิสิตนักศึกษา กลุ่มข้าราชการ และกลุ่มพนักงานจากบริษัทเอกชน ซึ่งเป็นการแบ่งตามกลุ่มอาชีพ และตามวิธีการบริหาร การเรียนการสอนของสถาบันภาษา ผู้วิจัยใช้แบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์ในการเก็บข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้สถิติและการวิเคราะห์แบบเชิงคุณภาพ ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่าผู้เรียนมีความสนใจที่จะพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษในทุกๆ ทักษะ และผู้เรียนต้องการทักษะภาษาอังกฤษที่เป็นพื้นฐานที่สามารถนำไปใช้ได้ในชีวิตประจำวัน เช่น การอ่านจับใจความ การให้ข้อมูล และทักษะการสนทนาทั่วไป นอกจากนี้ผู้เรียนยังสนใจที่จะเพิ่มพูนความรู้ภาษาอังกฤษที่เกี่ยวข้องกับวิชาชีพของตน งานวิจัยยังพบข้อมูลที่น่าสนใจ ซึ่งสามารถเป็นประโยชน์ในการจัดการเรียนการสอนอีกด้วย

Keywords: การวิเคราะห์ความต้องการ, การประเมินความต้องการจำเป็น, ความต้องการของ ผู้เรียน

Background

Up to and following the recent establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), Thailand, especially the Thai government, has been attempting to make the transition as smooth as possible. One key aspect is the improvement of the country's English teaching and learning system with the hope of increasing the English proficiency of Thai citizens. English will play an increasingly important role than in the past since it will be used as a medium of communication for ASEAN country members. However, according to the Ministry of Education's report on its strategic plans during 2006-2010, its goals concerning English language development have not yet been met. Its plans to restructure Thailand's English education system includes making English the Thai student's first foreign language, implementing English courses early in year 1, encouraging schools to open more English Programs as well as supporting the establishment of international schools, funding English teacher development, and, in 2006, adopting the communicative teaching approach. Despite the different types of measures that have been taken, the average scores of grade 6 and grade 9 students' English remained the lowest, compared to those of the other core subjects. Regarding grade 12 students, the average English score on the national test is also not satisfactory (NIETS, 2016). This partially leads to students seeking extra English courses. Like young learners, adults also need greater English training to better equip themselves in a more competitive world. This has contributed to the expansion of private tutoring businesses around the world. They are prevalent especially in North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific (Schlenker, 2012). Examples are clearly evident in Asian countries. In 2012, South Korea accounted for 15% of the global market in the business, which was worth approximately US \$13.9 billion (ICEF, 2012). Thailand is also following this trend with the private tutoring businesses growing at 5.4% each year, and, for high school students alone, the business is worth more than 8 billion baht in value (MGR online, 2013).

With the huge profits generated by the tutoring business has come greater competition. Chulalongkorn University Language Institute (CULI), with its mission to provide English language education not only to university students, but also to the public, therefore, has to actively engage and compete within this

sphere. CULI has been offering intensive English courses to the public for many years. Course and teacher evaluations are always carried out at the end of each course with the purpose of enhancing both teaching and learning. In some classes, teachers also explore students' needs at the beginning of the class. However, in order to ensure that students' needs are met, a systematic method like a needs analysis is required. Knowing what learners need does not only help prepare CULI for competing in the business, but, more importantly, it also leads to achieving its ultimate objectives of providing quality teaching and learning.

Needs analysis

Firstly, how can we know that the courses and the course content meet learners' expectations? Munby (1978) suggested that needs analysis or needs assessment is an initial requirement. This is very important for course development as it facilitates the course design process that will be beneficial to all parties: students, teachers and the institutions and organizations involved.

Needs analysis has long been viewed as an initial and important step for curriculum development. Rahman (2015) emphasized that needs analysis is crucial as it is necessary to assess the purposes and needs as well as the activities for which the language is needed. In the early years, needs analysis was predominant in English for Occupational Purposes (EOP); however, the focus later shifted to English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Needs analysis for general English is also included (West, 1994). Dudley-Evans and St. John (2007) defined 'needs analysis' as a process of finding what and how a course should be, and an 'evaluation' as a process of finding if it is effective.

Needs analysis in education is important as it provides useful information for teachers and educators in the following areas (McCawley, 2009, p.3):

- Impact – From needs assessment, we are able to create a positive impact on the students. This helps us know what they need.
- Approaches – We are able to select the most effective teaching approaches which best suit our students.
- Awareness – We are able to see the gaps between the programs we offer, and what we should offer to bridge the gap, which leads to more effective teaching and learning.

- Outcomes – We are able to use the current situation to document outcomes.
- Demand – We are able to know what the potential demand is for our future programs. This is very important especially for those in competitive markets.
- Credibility – We are able to guarantee if the programs serve the target group of learners well, and to show the funding authorities that the programs are effective.

What are needs? Needs are defined in many ways. McCawley (2009) defined a needs analysis as an assessment to ascertain the gap between what the learners possess (i.e., what they know, what skills they have, what they are interested in, what they prefer and what their learning habits are like) and what they need. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, p.125) proposed a theoretical framework of needs analysis, which consists of (1) learners' professional information, (2) learners' personal information, (3) learners' language information about the target situations, (4) learners' lacks, (5) learners' needs from the course, (6) language learning needs, (7) communication information in the target situation, and (8) environmental information. In 2007, Dudley-Evans and St. John provided a precise descriptive summary of needs analysis – as influenced by Brindley (1989: 63-65) and Berwick (1989: 55) – as *objective and subjective, perceived and felt, target situation/ goal-oriented and learning* as well as *process-oriented and product-oriented*. *Objective and perceived* needs are derived from outsiders. These needs can be verified and are based on facts. In contrast, *subjective and felt* needs are derived from insiders and are related to cognitive and affective factors. How learners feel, for example, is considered as falling under the *subjective and felt needs* category. Dudley-Evans and St. John proposed three types of analyses: 1) *target situation analysis*, which includes product-oriented and goal-oriented needs, 2) *learning situation analysis*, which is based on process-oriented needs, and 3) *present situation analysis*, which can be described as lacks.

Munby (1978) proposed the model “Communication Needs Processor” (CNP) in which information about participants is analyzed to get their profiles of needs. His model emphasized the importance of needs analysis and has been

widely adopted. From the 1970s until now, the role of needs analysis remains influential. Macalister and Nation's (2011) model of the curriculum design process shows that needs analysis is one of the essential parts in the curriculum development process. Based on the model, there are three types of needs, namely, necessities, lacks and wants. According to Hutchinson and Waters (2006) these needs are categorized under the bigger term of "target needs". *Necessities* refers to the knowledge learners need to know in order to be able to communicate effectively in a target situation. These needs are based on the demands of the target situation where learners have to use the language. *Lacks* are referred to as a gap between learners' existing knowledge and the target proficiency that they are required to have in order to perform in each particular situation. *Wants* are based on learners' viewpoints. In Nation and Macalister (2010), they are referred to as learners' "subjective needs" since for the same target situation, the necessities of skills one must possess can be objectively explained; however, what learners want in the same target situation may vary from one to another. For example, for two learners who are from the same company and with the same job responsibilities, one might want to learn more about how to write business correspondences, while the other might desire to practice more speaking skills.

Hutchinson and Waters (2006, p.59) proposed a target situation analysis framework that includes the following main areas: the reasons why the language is needed, the way of using the language, the content area of the course, the interlocutor with whom learners will use the language, the situation where the language will be used, and the time when the language will be used. Another framework suggested by Hutchinson and Waters (2006, p. 60) is a learning needs analysis framework, which refers to what learners need to know in order to be able to perform or meet the target situation needs. The questions asked are as follows: the reasons why the learners take the language course, the resources that are available, who the learners are, and where the course will take place.

However, Syssoyev (2014) suggested that to study only the needs of the students might not be enough to develop a successful course or program. A *student analysis* is needed to see what students' interests are. In a student analysis, teachers will be able to see both what their students are like, in terms of their proficiency levels, their motivation, their background, etc. as well as to learn

what their needs are, or what they want to achieve. The student analysis can be conducted after a needs analysis, which serves as a basis for course development, since teachers might not be able to meet the potential students before class.

In addition to needs analysis and student analysis, *means analysis* is also suggested as an additional tool for course development. Means analysis, a method widely used in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), is a means to study the local setting or the environment where the language course will take place. This is to study, for example, the teachers, the students, the teaching methods and the facilities in order to make the course suit each teaching and learning environment (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 2007).

West (1994) suggested three periods in a course when needs analysis should be carried out. Needs analysis can be done in advance of a course so that teachers will have plenty of time to prepare for their syllabus and materials. This is called an offline analysis, and it may need to be reviewed when the teachers meet the learners. The second period to conduct needs analysis is on the first day of the class. This is advantageous because teachers are able to see their students, and also meet and talk to them. They will subsequently acquire a truer picture of their students' needs. However, it is disadvantageous in that the teachers do not have time to prepare for the course in advance. The third is ongoing needs re-analysis. This is to help teachers identify their students' new or short-term needs. West recommended that needs analysis be repeated during the course since students' needs can change. This is supported by Gómez García (2010) suggesting that needs analysis be conducted throughout the course, not only as a pre-stage, but also during a course design period.

Approaches to Needs Analysis

Needs analysis is a complicated process, involving interpretations of a large amount of data. McCawley (2009, p.4) proposed six steps in conducting a needs assessment for an effective educational program development as follows:

- 1) writing the objectives of the needs assessment
- 2) selecting the target informants
- 3) sampling the informants who represent the needs of the whole population
- 4) choosing instruments to collect data

- 5) analyzing the data
- 6) making a decision or assessing needs based on the collected data

To ensure the reliability and validity of a needs analysis study, Cowling (2007) and Long (2005) recommended triangulating different sources. According to Long, triangulated sources should be done “to increase the credibility of the interpretation of the data...” (p.28).

Different data collection procedures include those such as logs, interviews, observations, questionnaires and testing (Long, 2005 and Nation and Macalister, 2010). Gómez García (2010) also recommended needs analysis through various types of methods. Hutchinson and Waters (2006, p.58) and Palacios Martínez (1994, p.143), quoted in Gómez García, suggested different methods through which information about learners’ needs can be gathered. These are surveys, questionnaires, interviews, attitude scales, job analyses, content analyses, statistical analyses, observations, data collection, and formal consultation with sponsors, learners and other relevant parties. Jordan (1997) recommended the same methods for needs analysis, namely observations, surveys or questionnaires, and structured interviews. Other methods he suggested include diagnostic tests, learner diaries, case studies or a thorough investigation of the needs and difficulties the students have, evaluation and feedback, and previous research, which can serve as a valuable source of information for the teachers or course developers. In research by Brown (2002), surveys, questionnaires, interviews and observations are also suggested. Other methods are those such as tests, personal reviews and performance appraisals.

To gain substantial information, not only should methods of data collection be considered, but the sources of information are also important. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (2007), the main sources of information can be both the people involved and the documents. They can be learners, people who work or study in the field, students who used to take part in the course, relevant documents, clients, employers, colleagues, and relevant research studies. Kaewpet (2009) suggested inviting multiple perspectives from all stakeholders. If the whole population cannot be included, it is necessary to carefully select the

informants. This is to ensure that they truly represent the whole population (McCawley, 2009).

Studies on Needs Analysis

A number of research studies have used needs analysis as a tool for curriculum development, improvement and evaluation, especially in ESP. For example, Gómez García (2010) explored the needs of different European enterprises for an online language course and material development. Kaewpet (2009) studied and proposed a framework for investigating the ESP needs of engineering students in an EFL context, and Srisueb (2009) studied the needs and attitudes of students from a private Islamic school in Narathiwat province. In this context, English is taught as a third language.

Numerous studies have also addressed students' needs in English training. They strongly prove that students consider English an important tool of communication. Some studies found the oral and aural skills the most important and, therefore, needed. For example, Wiriyaichitra (2003, cited in Somdee and Suppasetseree, 2013), found that English listening and speaking in the workplace are more essential than reading and writing skills as they are used more. Panpreuk and Mahapontong (2007) investigated the needs and interests of studying English of post-graduate students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology North Bangkok. The study revealed that the students highly value the importance of English. Their needs regarding English training are for listening, speaking, writing and reading respectively. According to the study, the students have problems in giving presentations and answering questions related to their presentations. They also lack everyday conversational skills. Similarly, Dueraman (2013) revealed that Thai adult learners of English see the importance of English in various aspects such as education, everyday communication and in their careers. They reported that speaking skills are needed the most. These subjects said that with the advent of the AEC, these skills are highly important for communication especially for the tourism industry. Also, these are the skills in which Thai people lack confidence; therefore, speaking skills, alongside listening skills, need to be enhanced.

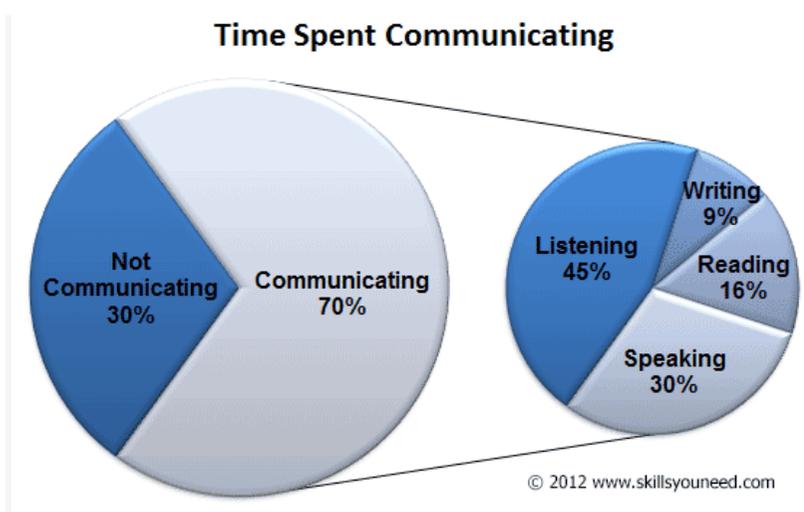
In the study conducted by Unkaew (2010), the needs and problems of employees at a company were explored. The employees revealed that they have problems with speaking skills the most, followed by listening, writing and reading, respectively. Their needs for English training courses reflected what they found the most difficult. Unkaew (2010) concluded that the employees' needs for training courses are parallel to the skills they lack. She also suggested that the four skills be taught altogether to enhance the effectiveness of teaching.

Another study conducted with non-Thai students also supported the students' view of English as valuable, and the oral and aural skills as being of paramount importance. Litticharoenporn (2014) studied the oral and aural English language needs of students at an international school in Bangkok as perceived by teachers, parents and students. During the first phase of her study, the target group was Japanese students only. According to the findings, general listening comprehension skills (besides formal lectures), effective participation in class or group discussion, project or study group, and communication with teachers in and out of class were ranked as the top three most important skills – although not in the same order – by the three groups. The ability to give presentations, take notes and to follow the pronunciation/intonation/stress patterns of American English were considered important, but not to the same degree.

In the same way, Kittidhaworn's (2001) research study showed that listening skills, particularly listening to classroom lectures, are necessary for Thai undergraduate students. The study explored the needs of 182 Thai undergraduate engineering students' English language learning in language structures, rhetorical categories, language functions and language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing). It revealed that despite their demographic variables, there was no significant difference in their needs. It also showed that grammatical structures, especially those related to their target language use (TLU) such as structures used in scientific discourse, are needed. Moreover, she revealed that all language skills are perceived as important for the students with "listening to classroom lectures", "reading scientific/engineering texts for comprehension", "reading for particular purposes (e.g. main ideas, skimming, etc.)", "asking and answering questions during the group or class discussion", and stating opinions

or ideas about different topics during classroom discussion” on the top ten list. Regarding the skills that they perceive as being the least proficient in, speaking skills were ranked first, followed by listening. The students reported themselves as being most proficient in reading skills.

It is definitely unsurprising to learn that listening and speaking skills are in need the most. As can be seen in the following chart (skillsyouneed.com, 2012, citing Adler et al., 2004), people spend 70% of their time on communication, and such communication is mainly oral communication (listening 45% and speaking 30%).



Despite the fact that listening and speaking skills are used the most in everyday life, students have little opportunity to practice them in English. Biyaem (1997, cited in Noom-Ura, 2013), revealed that there have been many obstacles for Thai students to master English speaking. One of the obstacles is their lack of opportunity to use the language in everyday life.

Regarding the other two skills, i.e. reading and writing, there have also been studies supporting the significance of their roles, and underlining the need for training in these skills. Although some studies revealed that Thai students perceive their reading skills as being their strongest of all the four language skills, other studies have highlighted the problems they encounter in reading. Chawwang (2008) studied the English reading problems of Thai grade 12

students and found that they have problems in sentence structure, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Also, when the two majors of science and arts were compared, the results showed no significant difference in the reading problems of the two groups. Phakiti and Li (2011) explored the reading and writing difficulties of post graduate students in TESOL. They reported that the students have difficulties in the academic vocabulary related to TESOL and that they also find synthesizing information difficult. As for writing skills, academic writing skills are specifically what they need. In Pawapatcharandom (2007), it was found that Mahidol University students viewed writing skills as the most problematic for them. Their concern is that of writing an essay within a time limit. Therefore, courses on writing are necessary for them. Naphon (2008) investigated the needs and problems of auditors at the Big Four in using English at work. The results showed that, for audit work, they need English writing skills the most, followed by reading skills. The speaking and listening skills are used less at work. However, the most difficult skill for them is speaking, with the difficulty lying in the selection of appropriate words to speak. Moreover, the study also revealed the auditors' preference for foreign teachers, who they perceive as more fun and relaxed. They also think integrated skills should be taught through a wide selection of teaching materials, the context of which should be business-related. The appropriate length of a course should be 3 months with 2-hour-classes offered once a week on a weekend morning.

It can be concluded from the previous studies that students view it as important to learn English. However, the skills they need the most vary according to the contexts or the situations in which they use the language. Morrison et al (2011) emphasized the importance of context analysis. They posited that context is highly influential on learning experience. Bracaj (2014) also supported this view, reporting that there have been an increasing number of ESP courses, which is a result of the attempts to meet learners' future career needs. The incorporation of the contexts for English teaching provides real world examples and scenarios for students. This is why needs analysis is an important part of curriculum development, especially in ESP. As Rahman (2015) pointed out for ESP courses, language teaching should reflect real world needs. Students will benefit more if the curriculum serves learners' needs, as found by Souriyavongsa et al (2013) and

their findings that Lao students perceive their low proficiency of English as resulting from the curriculum. They think it is ineffective and unable to help them improve their English proficiency. Douglas (2000) also stressed the importance of target language use (TLU) analysis in ESP, and pointed out that the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing should not be viewed as separate components; however, they should be considered as the ability that one needs to possess to be effectively engaged in a TLU situation.

In addition to curriculum development, some studies also looked at how information obtained can be used for curriculum review and evaluation. Balint (2005) investigated students' perceived English language needs so that the information would be used for his curriculum review. He also validated the perceived English language needs that the students initially reported by comparing them to students' later selection of courses. In another study, Vasavakul (2006) surveyed learners' needs to develop oral business English communication courses and to assess if the existing courses were effective. A study conducted by Boshier and Smalkoski (2002) aimed at evaluating why ESL students who enrolled in the Associate of Science degree nursing program did not successfully achieve their academic goals. The sources of information were derived from primary interviews, observations and questionnaires. A mixed method of target situation analysis and present situation analysis was used.

Research Methodology

Context

Chulalongkorn University Language Institute's (CULI) Academic Services Department consists of three centers: CULI's State Personnel Development Center, Academic Services Center, and Test Development Center. The first two centers are in charge of course management for the public and serve different groups of learners. Learners who are government officials have to enroll in courses offered by the State Personnel Development Center while students and those who work in private organizations have to enroll in courses run by the Academic Services Center. The courses are taught in the evenings on weekdays and throughout the day on weekends. They target various skills ranging from

general language skills such as effective communication and grammar to specific skills for particular contexts such as writing in the workplace and academic writing. Needs analysis, in this situation, is important even though some courses are for general English. It is believed that needs analysis is not only limited to English for specific purposes, but should also be conducted in general English courses (Seedhouse, 1995).

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate the needs of learners who take intensive English courses at CULI as there have been problems in making decisions concerning what courses should be offered and how they should be managed. The aim is that the findings will suggest whether the courses offered need improvement or adjustment in response to the needs of potential clients or learners. Since the key problem is to serve the needs of a heterogeneous group of learners, this research aims to explore the initial needs in English of these learners, as suggested by Levy (2008) who states that pre-assessment on what the students know, what they want to know and what they have learned is necessary for a class with students of different abilities, experiences, and backgrounds. However, to minimize the diversity of learners' backgrounds, and to maximize the benefits for CULI from the findings, the learners were grouped based on their occupations: students, government officials and employees of private organizations, in accordance with the institute's course administration as explained above.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the needs of the English language use of students, government officials and employees of private organizations
2. To study the English skills that students, government officials and employees of private organizations are required to master
3. To investigate the content, teaching methods and length of English training suitable for setting up intensive English courses for students, government officials and employees of private organizations

Population

The population comprised learners enrolling in the intensive English courses run by the State Personnel Development Center and the Academic Development and Services Center at CULI from the second to the last quarter of 2014. The estimated total number was 700. According to Yamane's formula of sample size (1967), an acceptable number for a population of 700, with a confidence level of 95%, is 255. In this study, 321 participants voluntarily provided information and returned the questionnaire.

The participants were divided into 3 main groups: 1) students (i.e. high school, undergraduate and graduate students) (n = 132), 2) government officials (n = 138), and 3) employees working in private organizations (n = 51). They were grouped according to their occupations and CULI's administration of the intensive courses as mentioned. From each sample group, participants were interviewed on a voluntary basis to give more in-depth information. In total, 46 participants volunteered to give more information via the interviews. Of this number, 20, 14, and 12 participants represented students, government officials and employees in private organizations, respectively.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the participants in the study were women. They accounted for 69.78 % (n = 224) of the total number of participants. The age of the majority (n = 137 or 42.68%) ranged from 15-25 years old. Most of the participants (n = 176 or 54.83 %) held a bachelor's degree.

Table 1

		Occupation						Total	
		Student		Public		Private			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender	male	58	18.10	22	6.90	17	5.30	97	30.22
	female	74	23.10	116	36.10	34	10.60	224	69.78
Age	Under 15 yrs	0	0.00	1	0.50	0	0.00	1	0.30
	15-25yrs	122	38.00	6	3.20	9	4.80	137	42.68
	26-35yrs	10	3.10	55	29.10	31	16.40	96	29.91
	36-50yrs	0	0.00	62	32.80	9	4.80	71	22.12
	Over 51yrs	0	0.00	14	7.40	2	1.10	16	4.98
Education	Secondary	35	10.90	1	0.31	0	0.00	36	11.21
	Bachelor's	76	23.68	65	20.25	35	10.90	176	54.83
	Master's	17	5.30	65	20.25	14	4.36	96	29.91
	Doctorate	3	0.93	4	1.25	2	0.62	9	2.83
	Others	1	0.31	3	0.93	0	0.00	4	1.25

Research Instruments

1. Needs analysis questionnaire – The questionnaire was created based on needs analysis frameworks and theories, related previous studies, and English needs surveys from other institutions and organizations. The questions were adopted from the needs analysis questionnaire used by SEAMEO Regional Language Center, Singapore as SEMEO RELC and CULI share some similarities in terms of the courses they offer. The two institutes teach both regular and customized English courses, including those targeting general language skills, test preparation skills and English for Specific Purposes courses. The skills included in the study were basic language skills and were related to the content of the courses. Experts were consulted to ensure the content validity and revisions were made before a trial with a comparable group of 78 participants. The questionnaire consisted of 2 parts: 1) Informants' background information and their needs concerning the time, the length, the method of

teaching and the teacher they prefer, and 2) their needs for each language skill. As for the teaching methods, three types of course management namely e-learning, blended learning and teacher presence in class were the focus as CULI would like to explore learners' opinions towards classroom management to see if the use of technology would attract them to take courses at CULI, and because the institute has developed several e-learning courses, investigating learners' views would be of great benefit. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.9671 confirmed the reliability of the questionnaire.

2. Interviews – Interviews were given to learners. The interview was given to 46 participants who volunteered to give more information. There were 20, 14, and 12 participants representing the students, the government officials and the employees in private organizations, respectively.

Data Collection

1. To obtain the information regarding the participants' needs and English language use, the questionnaire was distributed to the participants in class. The interview was conducted with participants from each focus group who expressed interest in taking part.
2. Information about the skills required to master was investigated from participants' responses in the questionnaire and the interview.
3. Information concerning the content of the course, the teaching methods and the length of the course that the learners found appropriate was obtained from the questionnaire and the interviews provided to the learners.

Data Analyses

1. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data gained from the questionnaire concerning the needs regarding English use of the three groups of participants.
2. Regarding the specific English skills that they are required to master, descriptive statistics was also used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire. The information from the interviews with the students was analyzed qualitatively.

3. To investigate the content, the teaching methods and the length of English training appropriate for the learners, the data from the questionnaire and the interviews were analyzed qualitatively.

Results of the Study

To identify the learners' needs, the results are discussed based on the research objectives as follows.

1. To study the needs of the English language use of students, government officials and employees of private organizations

The needs of English skills in this study were divided into three main categories: conversational skills (listening and speaking), reading skills, and writing skills. They were subdivided into three types according to different language domains, i.e. for general usage, for work and for studies.

Based on the data shown in Tables 2-4, the participants expressed the need for all skills as can be seen from the high mean scores in each category. Regarding the student group, the results showed that their need for general conversational skills was at the highest level (mean = 4.48). As the need for reading and writing skills, they ranked reading for higher studies and writing for higher studies as their top priority (mean = 4.50 and 4.59, respectively).

As for the government officials, the participants viewed conversation skills, reading skills and writing skills for work as the most important, compared to those for other contexts. The averages were 4.45, 4.43 and 4.50, respectively.

The results gained from the learners who worked for private organizations followed the same direction as the government officials. They reported that they needed all of the language skills for the working context the most (mean = 4.48, 4.55 and 4.45, respectively).

Table 2: Students' needs for specific skills

Needs	Mean	S.D.
1. Need for Conversational Skills (Listening and Speaking)		
1.1 Conversation for general usage	4.48	0.82
1.2 Conversation for work	4.45	0.73
1.3 Conversation for studies	4.40	0.75
2. Need for Reading Skills		
2.1 Reading for general usage	4.39	0.79
2.2 Reading for work	4.47	0.73
2.3 Reading for higher studies	4.50	0.78
3. Need for Writing Skills		
3.1 Writing for general usage	4.54	0.67
3.2 Writing for work	4.47	0.72
3.3 Writing for higher studies	4.59	0.66

Table 3: Government officials' needs for specific skills

Needs	Mean	S.D.
1. Need for Conversational Skills (Listening and Speaking)		
1.1 Conversation for general usage	4.47	0.82
1.2 Conversation for work	4.45	0.73
1.3 Conversation for studies	4.07	0.93
2. Need for Reading Skills		
2.1 Reading for general usage	4.33	0.78
2.2 Reading for work	4.43	0.75
2.3 Reading for higher studies	4.20	0.96
3. Need for Writing Skills		
3.1 Writing for general usage	4.33	0.81
3.2 Writing for work	4.50	0.68
3.3 Writing for higher studies	4.20	0.96

Table 4: Employees of private organizations’ needs for specific skills

Needs	Mean	S.D.
1. Need for Conversational Skills (Listening and Speaking)		
1.1 Conversation for general usage	4.33	0.87
1.2 Conversation for work	4.48	0.71
1.3 Conversation for studies	4.14	0.93
2. Need for Reading Skills		
2.1 Reading for general usage	4.26	0.79
2.2 Reading for work	4.55	0.68
2.3 Reading for higher studies	4.29	0.84
3. Need for Writing Skills		
3.1 Writing for general usage	4.31	0.75
3.2 Writing for work	4.45	0.80
3.3 Writing for higher studies	4.22	0.94

2. To study the English skills that students, government officials and employees from private organizations are required to master

Tables 5-8 show the purposes for the needs for each specific skill. The student group ranked listening for the main idea/summarizing and listening for conversational purposes as the top two (mean = 4.60 and 4.50 respectively). Regarding speaking skills, the students needed the skills that they could use to give information (mean = 4.58) and carry on conversation (mean = 4.57) the most. For reading skills, they needed the skills of capturing the main idea (mean = 4.52) and understanding a topic (mean= 4.50). As for writing skills, giving reasons/explanations was the most required skill (mean = 4.58), followed by descriptive writing (mean = 4.55) and writing to give information (mean = 4.55)

The public sector group gave similar responses concerning the listening skills to those of the student group. They viewed listening for the main idea/summarizing and for conversational purposes as the most needed listening skills (mean = 4.59 and 4.58 respectively). The speaking skills that they needed were

giving information (mean = 4.56) and conversation skills (mean = 4.51). Regarding reading skills, they needed skills that could help them to identify the main idea and summarize a text (mean = 4.59) and to understand a topic (mean = 4.49). The writing skills that were necessary for their work were skills that could be used for giving information (mean = 4.50), writing reports (mean = 4.36) and giving reasons/explanations (mean = 4.36).

The listening skills that the private sector group considered the most important and that they have to master were listening for the main idea/summarizing (mean = 4.66) and for conversational purposes (mean = 4.66). Speaking skills for conversational usage were what they sought the most (mean = 4.57). Giving information and giving opinions were also two of the most important skills for them (mean = 4.41). Concerning reading skills, similar to the first two groups, they said that they required reading skills that could help them capture the main idea/ summarize the most (mean = 4.60), followed by reading and understanding a topic (mean = 4.47). As for writing skills, the top two skills needed were giving information (mean = 4.4) and giving reasons/ explanations (mean = 4.4). Giving opinions through writing was also viewed as most needed (mean = 4.33).

Table 5: Needs for listening skills

1. Purposes for the Needs of Specific Listening Skills	Occupation					
	Student		Public		Private	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
1.1 Understanding a topic	4.45	0.68	4.36	0.77	4.48	0.63
1.2 Capturing main idea/ summarizing	4.60	0.63	4.59	0.61	4.66	0.48
1.3 Making an interpretation	4.47	0.68	4.37	0.71	4.41	0.75
1.4 Understanding attitudes	4.30	0.73	4.16	0.82	4.26	0.83
1.5 Conversational purposes	4.50	0.73	4.58	0.62	4.66	0.66
1.6 Using information/detail for a report/ presentation	4.30	0.76	4.28	0.83	4.16	1.06
1.7 Pleasure	3.90	0.97	3.87	0.99	3.76	0.96

Table 6: Needs for speaking skills

2. Purposes for the Needs of Specific Speaking Skills	Occupation					
	Student		Public		Private	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
2.1 Meeting	4.30	0.86	4.29	0.83	4.21	0.87
2.2 Negotiation	4.37	0.83	3.91	1.03	4.14	0.99
2.3 Giving information	4.58	0.69	4.56	0.67	4.41	0.82
2.4 Conversation	4.57	0.70	4.51	0.73	4.57	0.65
2.5 Telephoning	4.30	0.84	4.28	0.86	4.36	0.81
2.6 Giving opinions	4.53	0.68	4.45	0.73	4.41	0.65
2.7 Persuasion	4.11	0.91	3.77	0.92	3.79	0.87
2.8 Using appropriate gestures	4.32	0.75	4.13	0.84	4.21	0.79
2.9 Presentation	4.53	0.66	4.33	0.75	4.38	0.75

Table 7: Needs for reading skills

3. Purposes for the Needs of Specific Reading Skills	Occupation					
	Student		Public		Private	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
3.1 Understanding a topic	4.50	0.77	4.49	0.67	4.47	0.60
3.2 Capturing main idea/ summarizing	4.52	0.77	4.59	0.63	4.60	0.56
3.3 Obtaining information for further discussion/ sharing	4.45	0.74	4.47	0.68	4.43	0.70
3.4 Using information/ detail for a report/ presentation	4.39	0.74	4.31	0.78	4.22	0.86
3.5 Pleasure	4.09	0.88	3.88	0.88	3.78	0.94
3.6 Making an interpretation/ an analysis	4.44	0.77	4.19	0.92	4.17	0.88

Table 8: Needs for writing skills

4. Purposes for the Needs of Specific Writing Skills	Occupation					
	Student		Public		Private	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
4.1 Persuasive writing	4.21	0.78	3.95	0.85	3.81	0.85
4.2 Descriptive writing	4.55	0.62	4.35	0.76	4.26	0.76
4.3 Narrative writing	4.42	0.70	4.31	0.78	4.14	0.78
4.4 Giving information	4.55	0.65	4.50	0.65	4.40	0.67
4.5 Report writing	4.48	0.65	4.36	0.72	4.29	0.73
4.6 Comparative writing	4.43	0.72	4.23	0.81	4.14	0.85
4.7 Giving reasons/ explanations	4.58	0.59	4.36	0.79	4.40	0.72
4.8 Giving opinions	4.48	0.74	4.30	0.82	4.33	0.80
4.9 Argumentative writing	4.45	0.72	4.03	0.90	4.05	0.89

3. To investigate the content, teaching methods and length of English training suitable for setting up intensive English courses for students, government officials and employees of private organizations

As concerns the course content, the previous results shown in Tables 2 to 8 illustrate that the learners who enrolled in the intensive English courses were interested in courses focusing on all language skills. This will be discussed further in the discussion part. Table 9 below shows participants' views towards the teaching method, length of a course and other details relevant to course management. In this part, participants were allowed to answer, not to answer, or even choose more than one answer that reflected their opinions. The percentage was calculated against the total number of participants in each group, i.e. students (n = 132), government officials (n = 138) and employees from private organizations (n = 51). According to the data presented in Table 9, participants from all groups would like to attend classes in which integrated skills are taught (students = 84.85%, public = 78.99% and private 88.24%). Their interest in other courses lies mostly in teaching methodology (students = 34.85%, public = 46.38% and private 33.33%). Other courses they suggested were mostly English

for Specific Purposes or Occupational Purposes courses such as English for Engineering, English for Health Care, English for Teachers, English for Flight Attendants, English for Business and English for Work. Some would like to target specific skills such as presentation techniques, public speaking and business negotiations. With regard to the length of the courses, the learners (students = 50.76%, public = 43.48% and private 64.71%) agreed on 30 hours being the ideal.

As for the methods of teaching, a large number of students supported the use of blended learning and e-learning (93.18% and 68.94%). The government official group also had positive attitudes towards the use of e-learning and blended learning teaching methods (71.74% and 89.13%). The employees from private organizations did not show much interest in e-learning programs (49.01%) as compared to blended learning (94.12%). The results also showed that all groups of students preferred teacher presence in class (student = 89.39%, public = 74.64% and private = 96.08%). As regards the teachers, the participants reported a preference for English native speaker teachers (student = 67.42%, public = 61.59% and private = 70.59%) over Thai teachers (student = 25%, public = 23.91% and private = 25.49%).

Table 9

		Occupation					
		Student		Public		Private	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Skills	Individual skills	19	14.39	27	19.57	6	11.76
	Integrated skills	112	84.85	109	78.99	45	88.24
Other courses	Teaching methodology	46	34.85	64	46.38	17	33.33
	Classroom research	25	18.94	21	15.22	10	19.61
	English test development	28	21.21	26	18.84	9	17.65
	English media development	34	25.76	53	38.41	10	19.61
	Others	7	5.30	23	16.67	8	15.67

		Occupation					
		Student		Public		Private	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Length of intensive courses	Less than 15 hours	3	2.27	13	9.42	0	0.00
	15 hours	8	6.06	13	9.42	1	1.96
	20 hours	15	11.36	20	14.49	2	3.92
	25 hours	3	2.27	2	1.45	2	3.92
	30 hours	67	50.76	60	43.48	33	64.71
	More than 30 hours	40	30.30	32	23.19	13	25.49
Teaching methods	E-learning	91	68.94	99	71.74	25	49.01
	Blended learning	123	93.18	123	89.13	48	94.12
	Teacher presence in class	118	89.39	103	74.64	49	96.08
Teachers	Native speaker teachers	89	67.42	85	61.59	36	70.59
	Teachers of other nationalities	0	0.00	2	1.45	1	1.96
	Thai teachers	33	25.00	33	23.91	13	25.49
	Others	10	7.58	18	13.04	1	1.96

The Results from Interviews with Learners

Interviews were given to volunteer participants representing each group. A total of 46 participants volunteered to give more information. There were 20, 14 and 12 participants representing the student, public sector and private sector groups, respectively. According to the responses from the interviews with the students, their aim for taking intensive English courses was to brush up and to improve their English (65%, n = 13). They also needed to prepare themselves for a proficiency exam for their higher education (30%, n = 6), and for their career (5%, n = 1). The reasons influencing their choice of Chulalongkorn University Language Institute (CULI) included suggestions from others (35%, n = 7), reasonable course fees (15%, n = 3), convenience (15%, n = 3), their trust in CULI (10%, n = 2), familiarity with CULI (10%, n = 2) and others (15%, n = 3). Other responses were, for example, native speaker teachers (this could be traded for qualified and experienced non-native teachers) and small class size. The courses that this group of participants would like to take were exam preparation

courses, i.e. CU-TEP, TOEIC, TOEFL and IELTS, and speaking and writing courses. They suggested CULI place students based on their level of proficiency if possible, and use more effective methods to advertise courses.

For the second group, government officials, their goals for taking intensive English courses were to prepare for a proficiency test for their studies (57.14%, n = 8) and to improve their language skills (42.86%, n = 6). The criteria behind their choice of CULI were the quality of instructors (50%, n = 7), familiarity with CULI (28.57%, n = 4), reasonable course fees (14.29%, n = 2), and convenience (7.14%, n = 1). The courses that they were interested in taking were thesis writing, academic writing, basic language skills, effective communication and other exam preparation courses, i.e. CU-TEP, IELTS, and TOEFL.

The last group, learners from private organizations, shared similar goals towards language learning. They needed to improve their English to meet job requirements (83.33%, n = 10) and to further their studies (16.67%, n = 2). The factors that influenced their selection of CULI were their trust in CULI's instructors and CULI itself (33.33%, n = 4), convenience (33.33%, n = 4), reasonable course fees (16.67%, n = 2), and suggestions from friends (16.67%, n = 2). The courses that they would like to take were grammar, basic language skills and exam preparation courses, i.e. CU-TEP, IELTS and TOEFL.

Discussion

Based on the framework of needs analysis proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (2006), the necessities, lacks and wants of learners in language should be explored. According to the findings, the learners' needs did not focus on one language domain. They expressed their needs or wants for English skills in all areas. As mentioned earlier, they value the importance of English (Kittidhaworn, 2001; Panpreuk and Mahapootong, 2007 and Dueraman, 2013). In this study, despite their heterogeneous backgrounds, the findings revealed that the skills the participants needed the most were the same – identifying the main idea for the two receptive skills (listening and reading), giving information and explaining reasons for the writing skills, and carrying on in conversations (conversational skills) for the speaking skills. However, the skills that they needed were for different contexts relating to their occupations or backgrounds; for example, the

student group expressed the need for English skills that help them with their studies. On the other hand, learners who work in public and private organizations desired to improve their language skills for work. The courses that a language institute offers should, therefore, cover a wide range of English skills and should be made appropriate for each group of participants. This can be achieved by further analysis of TLU (Hutchinson and Waters, 2006). Contexts where language is used should further be analyzed to enhance the teaching and learning (Bracaj, 2014 and Morrison et al, 2011).

Further investigation of the participants' needs in each specific English skill revealed that listening for the main idea and for communication ranked top, as supported by studies conducted by Kittidhaworn (2001), Panpreuk and Mahapontong (2007), Wiriyaichitra (2003) and Litticharoenporn (2014). This can be explained by taking a look at the percentages of the skills that people find themselves involved in every day. Listening skills account for the largest proportion (skillsyouneed.com, 2012). Also, the need to improve these listening skills may arise from the fact that English is not greatly used in Thailand (Biyaem, 1997 cited in Noom-Ura, 2013), resulting in the lack of ability among Thais and, consequently, their need for improvement. As for reading skills, although in many studies these skills were not chosen as those first in need of training, further investigation has shown that the students still lack important reading skills. According to the findings of this study, the reading skills that the participants needed the most were reading for the main idea and making a summary. Khittidhaworn (2001) revealed similar findings indicating that the students expressed a need for reading for comprehension, i.e., reading for the main idea. This also corresponds with the results gained from the study conducted by Chawwang (2008) who posited that students needed to have their reading comprehension skills enhanced.

Similar to the listening skills, as for the speaking skills, the participants considered giving information and conversational skills as important needs. These are basic skills that can be used both in classrooms and at work. Other more advanced skills such as meetings, negotiations, telephoning, presentations and especially persuasion are more specific to particular types of tasks, so their need to master these skills was not as great as general speaking skills.

Litticharoenporn (2014) also found that all of the stakeholders' needs in her study were greater for general speaking skills such as effective discussion in class, group discussion and study groups in which they had to exchange ideas, as well as for communication with teachers in and out of class, which are general conversational skills. As for writing skills, the needs for giving information through writing outweighed those for others. Communication across borders is now exceptionally common, and exchanging information through writing such as email is, therefore, unavoidable. However, as the characteristics of writing vary from one context to another, more analysis on students' needs as regards the genre of writing, e.g. writing an academic essay, business report or email correspondence, needs to be further conducted.

Interestingly, as found in this study, the needs of using all English skills for pleasure, e.g. reading for pleasure and listening for pleasure, gained the lowest mean scores compared to others. This underlines the assertion that Thai people do not use English in everyday life (Biyaem,1997 cited in Noom-Ura, 2013).

With regard to the overall administration, it can be concluded from the findings that CULI should consider offering intensive English courses of at least 30 hours in length. Longer courses might be appropriate for exam preparation, e.g. TOEFL, IELTS, etc. The use of technology to enhance teaching and learning should be taken into account. Various course schedules should also be arranged for students' convenience. Moreover, students expect to learn with native speakers of English, or with competent and experienced Thai teachers. Courses that include integrated skills are more preferable than those focusing on one skill (Unkaew, 2010). The results in this part are similar to what Naphon (2008) reported in terms of the length, course schedules, teachers, and skills that are taught in class. In addition, the findings revealed a difference in the reasons behind the participants' selection of the language institute. The participants who have jobs made a decision based mainly on the credibility of the language institute and its teachers, while course fees were considered an important factor for the student group.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the courses that learners who sought intensive English courses needed cover all English language skills, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. All groups needed the same language skills, but in different contexts (studies or work). Their needs were mainly based on their intention to improve their English either for work or higher studies, and on the requirements for them to gain proficiency test scores. The content of each course should cover the skills that learners can use in everyday life such as giving information, reading for the main idea, and conversational skills. The courses offered do not have to be for a single skill. Integrated skills, for example, listening and speaking, can be taught in a conversation course.

Recommendations for a language institute are to offer courses that focus on English skills for academic purposes and for work, and to run examination preparation courses. The skills to be taught should include listening for the main idea and for conversational purposes, reading for the main idea and summary, speaking for conversational purposes and giving information, and writing for giving information. Choosing experienced and knowledgeable English native speaker teachers or Thai teachers should be taken into account as qualified teachers are an important criterion prospective participants use when enrolling in a language program. Other criteria include course fees and convenience (time and location). As for the length of courses, 30 hours is an acceptable standard. More hours can be added to such courses as TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, etc. that require more time for practice. In this case, technology can be used to support teaching and learning. Moreover, to attract more learners, a language institute might incorporate the use of technology in teaching.

Since this study aims to investigate learners' needs of English skills to arrange courses that respond to the needs of the public, further studies conducted on each particular group of learners and the skills they lack are suggested. As mentioned earlier, students will benefit more if the course meets their needs. Means analysis, context analysis or TLU analysis should be considered. Many researchers (West, 1994 and Gómez García, 2010) also recommended that needs assessment be conducted more than one time so that clearer pictures of learners, in terms of their needs, wants and lacks, can be fully elicited. Moreover, if a

course is to be developed for a particular group of learners, it is necessary to include all stakeholders like their supervisors, administrators and teachers in the process of needs assessment (Kaewpet, 2009).

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