

Needs of Teaching Speaking for Non-English Specialization Students in MUFL

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Abstract

English has been taught as a compulsory subject to non-English specialization foreign language learning students in Mandalay University of Foreign Languages. The current study is conducted to investigate whether the contents in teaching speaking skills are able to fulfill the needs of the students. The data were collected from 100 Non-English Specialization students through the self-administered questionnaire based on the speaking contents over 4 Straightforward course books. The required data were analyzed, and interpreted quantitatively. The findings reveal that a huge gap can be found between the prescribed contents and their desired ones. It is concluded that several teaching related practices are needed to be done in the current structure of the course and contents in order to provide for the speaking needs of students in a particular academic context (e.g. English for students learning foreign languages) learning English language speaking.

Keywords: speaking skills, needs, particular academic context

Introduction

Although English is not the most important language to learn around the world, it has been taking the central role in the Education sector as one of the international languages, a second language or language of science, media, and technology. However, that does not mean learners have to learn each and every part of English in order to communicate via using it. It is vital to learn according to the needs of the learners.

Myanmar is a country in which learning English is compulsory for all students in basic and higher education. English is a subject to pass for almost every exam even for the promotion of higher official and PhD entrance exam. There are many academic and professional settings relying on English.

Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) mentioned “Needs Analysis is an essential tool that should conduct pre, while, and after designing any English course”. In general, the method of data collection employed for serving as a source for developing a syllabus or a curriculum to meet the specific needs of students studying or working in a specific field is Need Analysis. English as a Academic Purpose, a type of English as a Specific Purpose Approach, indicates specific instructions that are provided by the students’ needs to accomplish communicative practices or tasks depending on the demands of a certain academic discipline context. Those demands change from one subject to the other or through time which results in any English as an Academic Purpose course which should be designed based on needs analysis which reveals the students’ needs and discipline’s requirements. Needs Analysis is the tool which English as a Specific Purpose (ESP)/ English as an Academic Purpose (EAP) practitioners deploy to identify the students’ needs in particular disciplines.

In English as a Specific Purpose’s literature, Need Analysis has been defined variously. Richards & Weber (1985) states Need Analysis is “a mechanism for collecting a wider range of input into the content, design and implementation of a language program through involving people such as learners, teachers, administration and employees in the planning process”. Thus, it is certain for the learners to acquire whatever their academic or working discipline requires through English language use in the situation of paralleling between the findings

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provided by the Need Analysis and objectives and learning outcomes of the particular course. (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998). Stojković (2015) upholds that “need analysis should be an ongoing process, repeated yearly and both at the beginning and during the course.”

Need Analysis is not the only one approach, there are different approaches: Target-Situation Analysis, Present-Situation Analysis, and Learning Situation Analysis. Target-Situation Analysis centers on “pointing the learners’ language needs to organize them to successfully join their academic programs and future careers as it tries to approach the necessities, lacks and wants” (West, 1994). “ Present-Situation Analysis focuses on strengths and weaknesses in language, skills, and learning experiences, while Learning-Situation Analysis includes subjective, felt, and process directed needs” (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

Venkatraman and Prema (2007) did a research to reveal English language needs of Indian students majoring in engineering at a particular university. It was also aimed to identify their perceptions towards English language teachers. The questionnaire was administered to 254 students. The results revealed that listening and speaking skills were ranked as the most vital for them. The students were willing their teachers to suit with particular competencies in the subject they were teaching other than that of regular teachers teaching General English. Hence, it was suggested an English language curriculum and syllabus that weighs on English and communication skills for the engineering students. For the English language teacher, it was proposed a training based on teacher competency should be conducted for them to offer more students oriented instructions for the target group of engineering students.

Rahman (2012) investigated the undergraduate Malaysia Putra University students’ English language needs, especially reading skill. The subjects were 50 students in the undergraduate program of Computer Science. Though there are three fundamental components of Need Analysis namely, Target Situation Analysis, Present Situation Analysis, and Learning Situation Analysis. The focus of the study was to discover the difficulties which the students found in reading in English for academic purposes, that is, Target Situation Analysis. The findings pointed out that the students are mainly difficult in skimming for gist, scanning, and decoding meaning. Depending on the results, it was suggested that English for Computer Science course should be ensembled the target needs of the undergraduate students to improve their reading skills in their specialized discipline.

This research aims to investigate whether the contents in teaching speaking skills are able to fulfill the needs of the students. In order to fulfill the aim, the following research questions are set up.

- 1) What are the English language needs for speaking skill of non-English specialization students?
- 2) How do they think on the current contents under teaching speaking skill?

Materials and Method

Participants

The respondents consisted of 100 second year non- English specialization students in Mandalay University of Foreign Languages. 28 participants are male.

Instrument

In this research, a 95-item closed ended questionnaire created based on the speaking contents over 4 Straightforward course book was used as a medium to obtain the required data.

It is a Likert Scale questionnaire in which the respondents have to choose between “Very Useful”, “Useful”, and “Not Very Useful”. The average time, for completion of the survey was 25–30 minutes.

Data Collection and Analysis

A convenience sampling technique was used to collect the required data. The survey was administered manually to 100 students. The closed survey data was analysed to obtain Descriptive statistics (e.g. percentage, distributions, and frequencies).

Table (1): Respondents’ needs for speaking contents in A2 course book

No	Contents	Very Useful	Useful	Not Very Useful
1.	1	20	70	10
2.	2	43	16	41
3.	3	78	17	5
4.	4	7	43	50
5.	5	33	33	34
6.	6	9	10	81
7.	7	10	7	83
8.	8	65	17	18
9.	9	23	34	43
10.	10	21	54	25
11.	11	7	3	90
12.	12	34	21	45
13.	13	32	59	9
14.	14	7	21	72
15.	15	22	55	23
16.	16	29	61	10
17.	17	10	12	78
18.	18	64	22	14
19.	19	56	20	24
20.	20	12	28	60
21.	21	8	5	87
22.	22	12	15	73
23.	23	35	33	32
24.	24	56	16	28

The table above shows the respondents’ needs of Straightforward A2 Course book. (9) contents are ranked as under the category of “Not Very Useful” (>60). Over half of the respondents survey (5) contents as the “Useful”. Moreover, (5) contents are regarded as “Very Useful” with ranging from 56 to 78.

Table (2): Respondents’ needs for speaking contents in A2+ course books

No	Contents	Very Useful	Useful	Not Useful
25.	25	23	63	14
26.	26	15	63	22
27.	27	18	45	37
28.	28	12	34	54
29.	29	37	29	44
30.	30	12	23	65
31.	31	10	11	79

No	Contents	Very Useful	Useful	Not Useful
32.	32	3	10	87
33.	33	5	5	90
34.	34	11	10	79
35.	35	10	6	84
36.	36	5	6	89
37.	37	10	15	75
38.	38	10	21	69
39.	39	8	21	71
40.	40	15	17	68
41.	41	46	24	30
42.	42	43	29	28
43.	43	10	19	71
44.	44	45	21	34
45.	45	34	49	17
46.	46	0	4	96
47.	47	20	31	49
48.	48	34	39	29

Respondents filled the questionnaire variably. There is no decisive figure under the category of “Very Useful”. Among (22) contents, just two are ranked as “Useful”. (13) contents are rated under the category of “Not Very Useful”.

Table (3): Respondents’ needs for speaking contents in B1 course books

No	Contents	Very Useful	Useful	Not Very Useful
49.	49	10	38	52
50.	50	12	12	78
51.	51	18	19	73
52.	52	67	23	20
53.	53	19	29	52
54.	54	2	18	80
55.	55	6	11	83
56.	56	7	7	87
57.	57	2	13	85
58.	58	17	27	56
59.	59	8	9	83
60.	60	6	12	82
61.	61	4	12	84
62.	62	12	29	59
63.	63	11	34	55
64.	64	28	29	43
65.	65	27	31	42
66.	66	14	19	67
67.	67	8	11	81
68.	68	11	12	77
69.	69	12	5	83
70.	70	18	20	62
71.	71	12	12	76
72.	72	15	18	67

Majority of the contents is under the category of “Not Very Useful”. An obvious number of people who completed survey selected one content as very useful. There is no significant figure for “Useful” column.

Table (4): Respondents’ needs for speaking contents in B1+ course books

No	Contents	Very Useful	Useful	Not Very Useful
73.	73	6	14	80
74.	74	23	27	60
75.	75	12	13	75
76.	76	8	39	53
77.	77	9	39	52
78.	78	19	29	52
79.	79	2	8	90
80.	80	20	17	63
81.	81	23	17	60
82.	82	5	6	89
83.	83	12	46	42
84.	84	5	13	82
85.	85	7	8	85
86.	86	6	7	87
87.	87	0	7	93
88.	88	54	26	20
89.	89	33	33	34
90.	90	5	6	89
91.	91	10	7	83
92.	92	33	33	34
93.	93	6	7	87
94.	94	6	10	84
95.	95	5	12	73

“Not Very Useful” is significantly the most common option among respondents for the speaking contents. “Planning & presenting an advertisement for a mineral water” is only content rated as “Most Useful”.

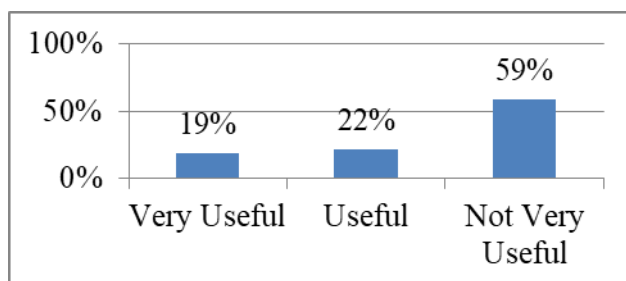


Figure (1): Overall Respondents’ needs for speaking contents in 4 course books

Nearly 59 % of the contents are rated as “Not Very Useful” although the merging number (41%) of “Useful” and “Very Useful” columns are not much different.

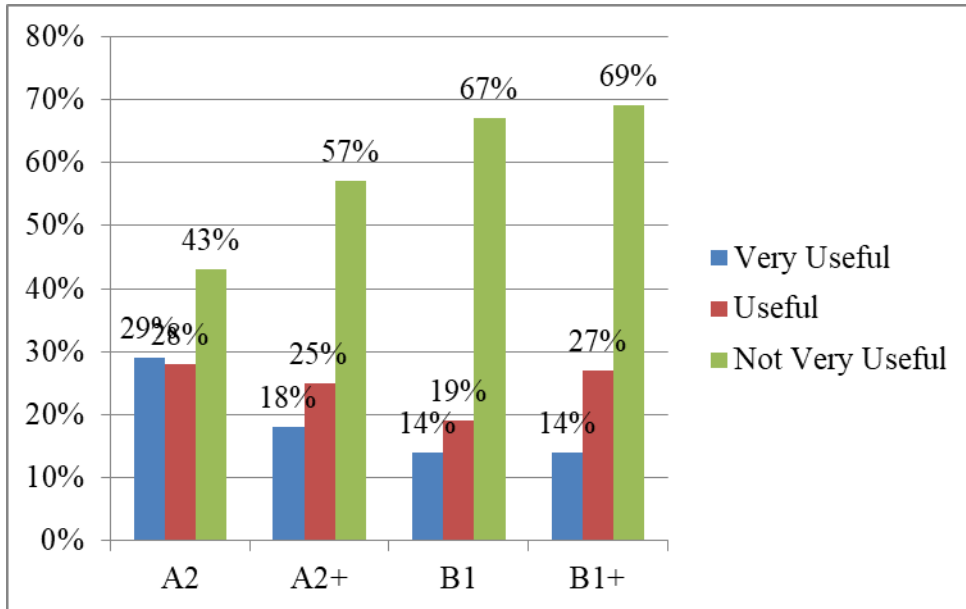


Figure (2): Perspectives of the respondents on speaking contents in 4 course books

“Not Very Useful” category obviously outnumbers others for speaking contents in every course book. The gap between “Useful” and “Very Useful” categories is wider over the course books.

Results and Discussion

There is no decisive figure on whether contents in teaching speaking skill really meet the needs of the students (Figure 1). Respondents revealed that a certain amount of speaking content in the course books does not match with what they really need to learn. The less of applicability from speaking lessons is much wider one level after another (Figure 2). Due to the several limitations including time and test, speaking is fade when it compared to its counterparts language skills. In the exam, speaking is not directly accessed. Effective and comprehensive teaching on speaking skill matches with listening. However, listening is not accessed in the final exams. Depending on the proficiency of the students, they need a lot of input. Too much emphasis on the course book hinders from ample training on speaking and listening which results in insufficient input students have to tackle with a speaking task well.

Throughout two years of respondents learning speaking skill via (95) speaking contents, (7) contents are rated for each category of “Very Useful” and “Useful”. Most of the contents are under “Not Very Useful”. Respondents have no opportunity to practice and employ what they learn in the classroom to the actual setting. In other words, teaching speaking cannot go beyond classroom. Some contents like “Planning an office party”, “Talking about Australia”, and “Carrying out a market research survey” are far away from their daily lives.

Contents which are familiar as well as useful for the upcoming working place should be introduced in the course books. Students’ cultural and social backgrounds are also points to consider in designing lessons. Establishing successful classroom dynamics depends on the fact that what the teachers teach are what the students need. The limitations of this study are being only qualitative way, focusing on a specific group of learners, and insufficient literature on previous research on Myanmar context.

Conclusion

The current study investigated needs for teaching speaking to non-English specialization students in Mandalay University of Foreign Languages, based on (95) speaking contents of 4 Straightforward course books which would be addressed in developing goals, objectives, needs and content for a language program". The teaching implications should be relied on what the students need and lack in learning something. Therefore, English language teachers and course developers should reflect these needs by emphasizing on not only the four language skills but also speaking skill.

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