

A NEEDS ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS FOR LOGISTICS STUDENTS: EVIDENCE FROM THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

In the context of globalization, English plays a vital role in the logistics industry, where professionals regularly communicate with international partners and handle English-based documentation. However, at many Vietnamese universities, English courses for logistics students are still largely general in nature and may not fully meet the specific demands of the field. This study investigates the English language needs of Logistics students at the University of Economics and Business Administration, Thai Nguyen University. Using a questionnaire survey with 120 undergraduate students, the research examines their perceptions of the importance of English skills, as well as the professional contexts in which they expect to use English in the future. The findings indicate that students place strong emphasis on communication skills, particularly speaking and listening, while also recognizing the importance of reading and writing in logistics-related tasks. The study also highlights a gap between students' current English proficiency and the practical requirements of the industry. These results suggest the need for more targeted English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses that better reflect the real-world communication needs of logistics professionals.

Keyword: *English language needs; Logistics students; English for Specific Purposes (ESP); language skills; professional communication; Vietnam*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the growth of global trade and supply chains has increased the demand for logistics professionals who can work effectively in international environments. As English is widely used in cross-border communication, documentation, and professional interactions, it has become an essential skill for logistics graduates. In practice, they are often required to read specialized documents, communicate with foreign partners, and participate in meetings conducted in English.

In the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), needs analysis is considered a key step in designing relevant and effective courses. Researchers have emphasized that language teaching should be closely aligned with learners' academic and professional requirements. Therefore, understanding students' actual language needs plays an important role in improving teaching content and methods.

However, in many Vietnamese universities, English courses for logistics students still focus

mainly on general English rather than job-related communication skills. As a result, students may not be fully prepared for the real demands of the workplace. In addition, while ESP research in Vietnam has covered areas such as business and tourism, logistics education has received relatively limited attention.

Against this background, this study aims to investigate the English language needs of logistics students at a Vietnamese university named TUEBA. It focuses on identifying the key language skills, common professional tasks, and the gap between current English instruction and workplace requirements. The findings are expected to provide useful insights for developing more practical and relevant ESP courses for logistics students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Needs Analysis

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has been widely recognized as an approach that focuses on learners' specific academic and professional needs

[2]. Rather than teaching general English, ESP aims to equip learners with the language skills required in particular disciplines or workplaces. A key concept in ESP is *needs analysis*, which is considered a fundamental step in course design.

Needs analysis is considered a fundamental step in ESP course design, as it helps identify learners' target language use in real-life contexts [1], including the skills, tasks, and situations relevant to their future careers. It also provides a basis for developing appropriate teaching materials, classroom activities, and assessment methods. Therefore, understanding learners' needs is essential for designing effective and relevant ESP courses.

2.2. Previous Studies on ESP and Needs Analysis in Vietnam

In the Vietnamese context, a number of studies have explored needs analysis in ESP across different disciplines. For example, a study conducted at the People's Police University found that students considered reading and writing as the most important skills for their future profession [3]. The study also highlighted students' difficulties in understanding specialized terminology and accessing English materials.

Similarly, research in other fields has emphasized the importance of aligning ESP courses with learners' professional needs. A study on air traffic controller students in Vietnam revealed that learners faced challenges in essential communication skills, particularly speaking and listening, and expressed the need for more specialized and practice-oriented English courses [5].

In addition, another study revealed that learners require both academic and occupational English skills suggesting that ESP programs should address multiple dimensions of language use in professional contexts [4].

These studies indicate that although ESP has been increasingly implemented in Vietnam, many programs still struggle to fully meet learners' practical needs, especially in terms of specialized vocabulary and real-world communication tasks.

2.3. ESP in Logistics and Related Fields

Recent research in logistics education suggests that students need to integrate language skills with specialized knowledge [6]. Compared to

other disciplines such as business, tourism, and engineering, research on ESP in logistics education in Vietnam remains relatively limited. However, some recent studies have begun to address this area.

For instance, a study on ESP learning in logistics education highlighted that students are required to integrate all four language skills alongside specialized knowledge, and that they often face difficulties due to a lack of appropriate learning support and resources.

Another study on logistics students' perceptions of listening assessment in ESP courses showed that learners recognize the importance of listening skills in professional contexts, particularly when supported by technological tools.

These findings suggest that logistics students have diverse and complex language needs, especially in communication and task-based situations. However, existing research tends to focus more on teaching methods or specific skills rather than providing a comprehensive needs analysis.

In summary, previous studies have confirmed the importance of needs analysis in designing effective ESP courses and have highlighted the mismatch between English instruction and professional demands in various fields. However, there is still a lack of research focusing specifically on logistics education. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the English language needs of logistics students in a Vietnamese university, with a focus on both language skills and professional applications.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design to explore the English language needs of Logistics students at the University of Economics and Business Administration, Thai Nguyen University. A questionnaire survey was selected as the main data collection method due to its efficiency in gathering information from a relatively large number of participants within a limited time. The participants consisted of 120 undergraduate students majoring in Logistics from different academic years, all of whom had completed at least one English course as part of their program, making them suitable representatives of the target group for ESP course development.

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire adapted from previous studies on needs analysis in ESP. It included three main sections: background information (such as year of study, self-assessed English proficiency, and prior experience using English), students' perceptions of the importance of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) measured on a five-point Likert scale, and the expected use of English in professional logistics contexts, including tasks such as reading documents, writing business emails, communicating with international partners, and participating in meetings.

Data were collected through both online and in-class surveys. Prior to participation, students were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. Participation was entirely voluntary, and the data were used solely for academic purposes. After collection, the responses were coded and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistical methods, including frequency analysis, mean scores, and standard deviations, were applied to identify patterns in students' perceptions and to determine the relative importance of different language skills as well as the professional contexts in which English is expected to be used.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Participants' Background Information

The frequency analysis reveals that the majority of participants were in their second and third years of study. Specifically, 18% of the students were first-year ($n = 22$), 27% were second-year ($n = 32$), 35% were third-year ($n = 42$), and the remaining 20% were in their final year ($n = 24$). This distribution suggests that most respondents had already gained some academic and career-related awareness.

Regarding self-assessed English proficiency, 30% of the students reported being at a basic level (A1–A2), 45% at an intermediate level (B1), and only 25% at an upper-intermediate level or higher (B2+). This indicates that the majority of logistics students possess a moderate level of English proficiency, which is generally consistent with the broader context of English education in Vietnam.

In terms of English usage experience, only 28% of the participants reported using English frequently,

while 52% used it occasionally and 20% rarely used it. This suggests that many students still lack regular exposure to English in real-life contexts, which may limit their ability to develop practical communication skills.

4.2. Importance of English Language Skills

The mean scores and standard deviations for the four language skills are presented as follows:

- Speaking: $M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.64$
- Listening: $M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.68$
- Reading: $M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.72$

Writing: $M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.75$

Overall, all four skills were rated above 3.5, indicating that students generally perceive English as important for their future careers.

Among the four skills, speaking was rated as the most important. This reflects students' awareness of the need for effective verbal communication in logistics, particularly when interacting with international partners or clients. Listening was ranked second, highlighting its importance in understanding conversations, meetings, and professional instructions.

Reading also received a relatively high score, as logistics professionals are often required to deal with documents such as contracts, shipping papers, and technical materials. Writing, although still considered important, received the lowest mean score. This may suggest that students are less confident in their writing ability or may underestimate its importance in professional contexts, such as composing emails or reports.

In general, the results indicate a clear preference for communication-oriented skills (speaking and listening) over literacy-based skills (reading and writing).

4.3. Professional Use of English in Logistics

The analysis of students' expectations regarding the use of English in their future careers shows that English is widely perceived as essential across various professional tasks.

A large majority of students (92%) considered communicating with international partners to be important or very important. This is not surprising, given the global nature of the logistics industry. Similarly, 88% of the respondents

emphasized the importance of reading logistics-related documents, which are often written in English.

Participation in professional meetings was also highly rated, with 85% of students recognizing its importance. This highlights the need for both listening and speaking skills in real-world workplace settings. Writing business emails, while slightly lower at 79%, was still considered important by a significant proportion of participants. This again suggests that although writing is necessary, students may not feel fully confident in this skill

Several key findings can be drawn from the study as follows:

First, English is clearly regarded as an essential skill for logistics students, with all four language skills receiving relatively high importance ratings. Second, communication skills, particularly speaking and listening, are prioritized over other skills, reflecting the practical demands of the logistics profession.

However, there appears to be a noticeable gap between students' perceived needs and their current proficiency levels. While most students recognize the importance of English, the majority are only at a basic to intermediate level. In addition, limited opportunities to use English in real-life situations further widen this gap.

5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the English language needs of Logistics students at the University of Economics and Business Administration, Thai Nguyen University. The findings confirm that English plays a crucial role in students' future careers, particularly in the context of international communication and professional tasks within the logistics industry.

The results indicate that students place the greatest importance on speaking and listening skills, reflecting the need for effective communication with international partners and participation in workplace interactions. Reading is also considered essential for understanding logistics-related documents, while writing, although important, is perceived as less critical. In addition, the study reveals that students expect to use English in a variety of professional contexts,

including communication, document handling, and meetings.

However, a noticeable gap exists between students' current English proficiency and the actual demands of the logistics workplace. Most students are at a basic to intermediate level, which may limit their ability to perform effectively in real-world situations. This highlights the need for more practical and specialized English instruction.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that universities strengthen English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs for logistics students, with a greater focus on communication skills and real-life professional tasks. By aligning English teaching with workplace requirements, institutions can better prepare students for successful participation in the global logistics industry.

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