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An Investigation of Students' English Achievements and Its Implications for Curriculum Amelioration in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study was to examine the actual situation and needs of the society and to build consensus among the teaching staff on the improvement of the curriculum. The sample consisted of 630 students in third, fourth and fifth grade in the Department of English, employers from 10 organizations, 30 graduates, and teaching staff in the Department of English. Tests, interviews and questionnaires were employed in this study. The result of the test showed that the student achievement was unsatisfactory even in the final year. They still had a lot of difficulties in basic vocabulary, basic grammar and simple reading tasks. The results also suggested that the graduates from the department would have insufficient English skills to perform the given tasks in the real world of work as many employers complain. This shows a large gap between the needs of the society and the actual level of the graduates. The results strongly suggest that the current curriculum has some problems that need to be solved. **Keywords:** Curriculum development, Higher Education, Institutes, Malaysia, needs analysis, Student English achievement

INTRODUCTION

The English departments in Malaysian higher education institutions are expected to play an essential role in providing Malaysian society with competent human resources in the field of English. Although many private institutions can provide English education, the English department is believed to be the best institution. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of students who want to learn English as a foreign language since the 2010s (Cheng & Szeto, 2021; Farashaiyan et al., 2018 ; Sulistiyo et al., 2019). As Malaysia has moved from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented economy, English is becoming a more and more important means of communication in the world. However, the effectiveness of its curriculum in the Department of English is questionable. (Apandi & Raman, 2020; Farashaiyan et al., 2017; Setiawan et al, 2020).

Curriculum development is a series of activities that contribute to the growth of consensus among staff, faculty, administration and students (Shawer, 2019). Brown's approach has six essential components which are crucial in the development and maintenance of a sound language curriculum: (1) need analysis, (2) objectives, (3) testing, (4) materials development, (5) teaching and (6) evaluation (Brown, 2010). The result of the evaluation should be utilized for further improvement of each step, so the curriculum development and maintenance should be a circular process (Farashaiyan & Muthusamy, 2017). In the Department of English, this process of sound curriculum

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improvement has just started. More evaluation and needs analysis are required to improve the curriculum (Nguyen, 2021 ; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020).

OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of the study is to evaluate student achievement in the higher grade levels to clarify problems in the curriculum, materials and teaching methods, and the way to address the problems. The researchers also tried to do a need analysis and build a consensus on the concrete goals of the whole curriculum by clarifying the needs of society.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Richards (1984) and Brown (2010) emphasized that needs analysis is an important initial stage for developing a sound curriculum. According to Brown (2010), needs analysis refers to the systematic collection and analysis of all subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate defensible curriculum purposes that satisfy the language learning requirements of students without the context of particular institutions that influence the learning and teaching situation. Also Richards (1984) and Carless and Boud (2018) stated that needs analysis serves the purpose of:

- providing a mechanism for obtaining a wider range of input into the content, design, and implementation of a language program through involving such people as learners, teachers, administrators and employers in the planning process;

- identifying general or specific language needs which can be addressed in developing goals, objectives, and content, for a language program;

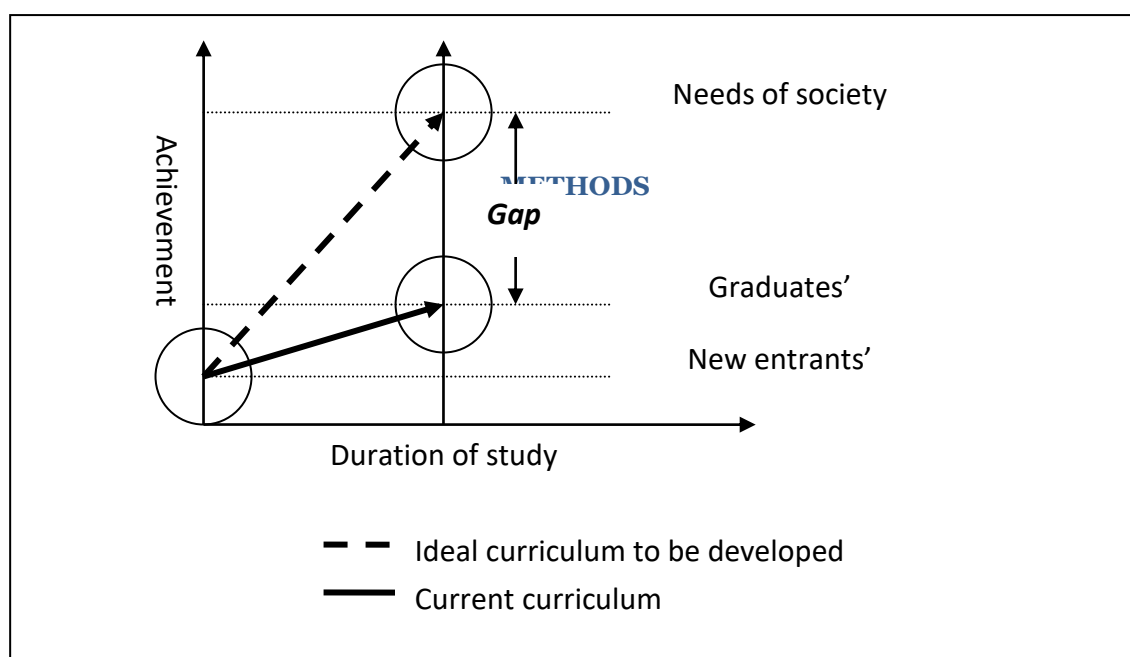- providing data which can serve as the basis for reviewing and evaluating an existing program.

Figure 1. The framework of study

METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The sample of the study included 630 students of both English Normal Course (NC) and English Special Course (SC) from some Malaysian higher education institutions. The students were in the last three terms of the program (e.g., terms 4, 5 and 6 in the English Normal Course and Term 3, 4, and 5 in the English Special Course), 43 teaching staff in the Departments of English, 10 employers of graduates from the department in 10 organizations:

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three ministries, three projects, three private companies, and one hotel and 30 employees of the ten organizations, who are graduates of the departments.

Instrumentations

The researchers employed test, interview and questionnaires.

Test

The test was adapted from Keomany (2016). Cronbrach's alpha of the test was .93. This proved that the test was highly reliable in measuring student achievement. The test included 95 items, which were in a multiple-choice format with four alternative answers. It consisted of five parts: 15 items were for basic vocabulary, 30 were for advanced vocabulary, 35 were for basic grammar, 10 were for advanced grammar and the last five items were intended to measure the reading skill. The test was 70 minutes test. In the part of basic vocabulary, 15 words were selected from the level 1-1,000 words in the GSL (*General Service Word List*) (West, 2010). Ten of them were direct translations, while the other five items were identification of vocabulary in daily life context.

In the part of advanced vocabulary, 30 items were taken from the "Vocabulary Levels Test for Learners of English" (Tanaka & Lauer, 2015). They were divided into three levels: 1-1,000, 1,001-2,000 and 2,001-3,000. The words were taken from the JACET List of 8,000 Basic Words (JACET Committee for Revising Basic Words Eds., 2003). However, the first 2,000 words were almost the same as those in GSL. Many items were in formal or academic contexts, and most of them had more complex sentence structures than those in basic vocabulary. In the basic grammar part, thirty-five items were taken from Keomany's test (Keomany, 2016). All these items were taught in NC from Year 2 to Year 3 and in SC Year 1 and Year 2.

In the part of advanced grammar, 10 items were taken from the "English Qualification Test (Tanaka & Lauer, 2015). All these items were taught in higher grade levels in the department. In this part, the words that were out of the level of 1-2,000 words in GSL (West, 2010) were replaced with easier words, to ensure that the items only measured the students' grammar skill, not their vocabulary skill.

In the reading comprehension part were the last five items. There were two texts in this part. The first text was taken from *The Third Step of The Step Test in Practical English Proficiency* (Pifer, 2016). The topic of the reading text was "The cultural difference between Americans and Malaysians". Considering the time limit, the researchers extracted two paragraphs from the original text, which originally consisted of three paragraphs. Eighty-nine per cent of the words in the text were at the level of 1-1,000 most frequently used words in the GSL (West, 2010). Five percent were in the level of 1,001-2,000. The remaining 6% were mostly proper nouns. The second text was extracted from a preparation book for the TOEIC Test (George, 2005). The text was about global changes, especially climate change caused by human activity. Seventy-eight per cent of the words in the text were at the level of 1-1,000 most frequently used words in the GSL (West, 2010). The other 7% were in the level of 1,001- 2,000. Eight percent were in the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2014).

Questionnaires and interview

Three set of questionnaires and a set of interview questions were employed in this study.

a. Questionnaire for consensus building on the content of General English II

The questionnaire was employed to check whether consensus could be reached among the teaching staff in the department on the contents of the General English II (GE II). The questionnaire consists of eight questions.

b. Employers interview questions

The researchers conducted an interview in ten organizations. The researchers asked three main questions: (1) What kind of work do you expect the graduates to do in your organization?, (2) What skills do you wish the graduates (employees) to have?, and (3) Do the graduates meet your expectations? If not, what are their weaknesses? These questions were asked to find out the employers' expectation of English language skills in their organizations and about the level of graduates from the Department.

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c. Employees' questionnaire (employees' self evaluation)

The purpose of this set of question was to ask about the employees' self evaluation of their ability in English. The questions were adopted from "Can-Do Guide: Linking TOEIC Scores to Activities Performed Using English" by The Chauncey Group International (2015) and to clarify whether the former graduates had the ability to perform tasks in English. The questionnaire was mainly organized around four main skills: listening skill, interactive skill, reading skill, and writing skill and also it asked about general information regarding using English.

d. Questionnaire for consensus on the goal- setting

The questionnaire was developed based on the results of employers' interviews and employees' questionnaires. It was designed to explore the opinion of the teaching staff on the five main skills (listening skill, interactive skill, reading skill, writing skill, translation skill and interpretation skill).

RESULTS

Overall results of the test

The overall achievement of the NC (n=150) and the SC (n=480) was similar (58.2%, and 57.7% respectively). This phenomenon was difficult to explain, because the curriculum was different: the NC students had more learning periods than SC students. NC students had a lot of opportunities to explore English language with native teachers unlike SC students. In addition, about a half of the NC students had scholarship, so their focus was not diverted to daily needs. The reason why the difference in instruction time did not bring any difference in achievement should be examined seriously.

The achievement of students in SC term 5 was markedly better than that of those in NC term 6 as shown in Figure 2. Each year seemed to have some progress except NC term 6. In NC, the mean score was 54.2% in the Term 4, 61.4% in the Term 5. However, in the term 6, the mean score declined to 57.6%. In SC, on the other hand, the mean score was 52.6% in the term 3, 55.4% in the term 4 and advanced to 64.1% in the term 5. The SC students in term 5 are the last students of the former curriculum, in which students have learned only four subjects: General English, Grammar, Literature and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). All other students, including term 6 students in NC undertook the actual curriculum, which contains more diversified subjects. The results seemed to suggest that the former curriculum was better at improving student achievement than the current one.
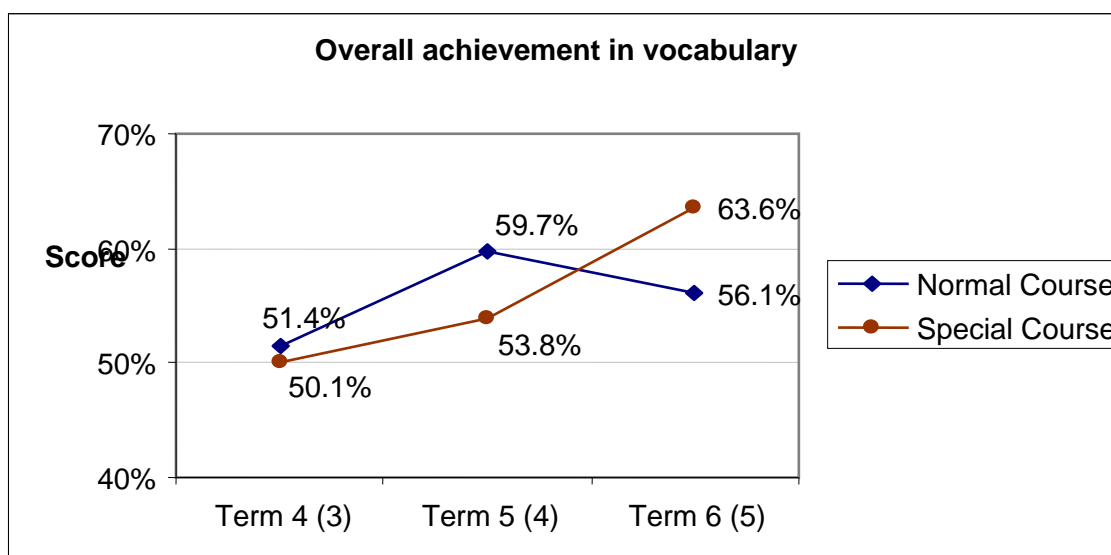

Figure 2. Overall achievement by course and term (%)

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Vocabulary

The results show that many students of NC and SC still had difficulties in some items in both direct translation and vocabulary in context even though the overall achievement of each term was over 80% as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistic for Basic Vocabulary (15 items)*

Course & Term	n	Mean	%	SD	Min	Max	Full score
N-Term 4	43	12.5	83.1%	2.49	5	15	15
N-Term 5	63	13.1	87.3%	2.51	3	15	15
N-Term 6	44	13.3	88.3%	2.27	4	15	15
S-Term 3	165	12.0	80.2%	3.06	1	15	15
S-Term 4	133	13.9	86.3%	2.45	3	15	15
S-Term 5	182	14.7	91.4%	1.78	5	15	15

The following items are examples of some difficulties in the vocabulary part.

In the "Q4 increase", the rate of the right is not so different in NC and SC terms 3 and 4, but SC Term 5 outperformed others, the rate of the right answer was 91.8% and no one in this term chose option "(d) *stop*". SC Term 5 is different from others in terms of selection of the right answer because in other terms, more than 10% of the students chose "(b) *continue*" as their right answer and the remaining percentage was also in other options like option "(a) *work*" and "(d) *stop*" as shown in Table 2. This result suggests that SC Term 5 have more knowledge of basic vocabulary than other classes in both NC and SC.

Table 2. Percentage of Students' Answers in Question 4

7. increase	(a) *work*	(b) *continue*	(c) *stop*	(d) *increase*	
Course & Term	a	b	c	d*	No answer
NC-Term 4	2.3%	11.6%	2.3%	**76.7**%	7.0%
NC-Term 5	1.6%	12.7%	4.8%	**77.8**%	3.2%
NC-Term 6	0.0%	13.6%	4.5%	**75.0**%	6.8%
SC-Term 3	4.8%	18.2%	2.4%	**61.8**%	12.7%
SC-Term 4	6.0%	12.8%	1.5%	**77.4**%	2.3%
SC-Term 5	2.2%	3.8%	0.0%	**91.8**%	2.2%

Another example is "Q7 fact", the rate of right answer for both courses is not so different. For example, the rate of Term 6 in NC was 77.3% and that of Term 5 in SC was 80.2% as shown in Table 3. More than 14% of the students in both NC and SC chose the answer "(c) *face*". Even though both NC Term 4 and SC Term 3 met this word several times in their Language Practice textbooks in the previous years, they still could not get a higher rate of the right answer. This might be because they were confused with the spelling of the word "face", as the two words are similar in spelling. This might be the result of diversification of the subject. If the meaning, pronunciation and spelling of words were taught simultaneously about the curriculum, words such as "face" and "fact" would not have been confused.

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Table 3. Percentage of Students' Answers in Question 7

7. fact	(a) *big city*	(b) *fact*	(c) *face*	(d) *river*	
Course & Year	a	b*	c	d	No answer
NC-Term 4	2.3%	**62.8**%	27.9%	2.3%	4.7%
NC-Term 5	4.8%	**79.4**%	14.3%	0.0%	1.6%
NC-Term 6	2.3%	**77.3%**	18.2%	2.3%	0.0%
SC-Term 3	6.1%	**66.1%**	23.0%	1.8%	3.0%
SC-Term 4	3.0%	**77.4**%	18.0%	0.8%	0.8%
SC-Term 5	0.5%	**80.2%**	17.6%	0.5%	1.1%

* *Right answer*

In the part of advanced vocabulary 1- 1,000 words (Q51-60), the rate of right answers ranged from 11.4% to 84.4% in NC Term 6, and 26.4% to 87.4% in SC Term 5. The lowest rate of right answer in NC and SC Term 3 and 4 is in Q59. The rate of right answer was 37.4% as shown in Table 4. The rate of right answers in NC Term 6 is the lowest (11.4%). All students have the same trend of choosing the answer because over 50% of the students chose option "(a) future" as their answer instead of option "(d) wire". The students might see the word "going" or they might not know the meaning of many words in the sentence even though all the given words in this sentence are in the range of 1-1,000 word level (GSL), so they chose other options randomly.

Table 4. *Percentage of Students' Answers in Question 59*

59. The scientist measured the amount of energy going through the ( ).					
(a) future	(b) price		(c) vote		(d) wire
Course & Term	**a**	**b**	**c**	**d***	**No answer**
NC-Term4	53.5%	18.6%	11.6%	**16.3**%	0.0%
NC-Term 5	68.3%	12.7%	3.2%	**15.9**%	0.0%
NC-Term 6	77.3%	4.5%	4.5%	**11.4%**	2.3%
SC-Term 3	64.2%	7.9%	7.9%	**12.1%**	7.9%
SC-Term 4	67.7%	9.0%	6.0%	**16.5%**	0.8%
SC-Term5	48.9%	7.1%	4.4%	**37.4%**	2.2%

* **Right answer**

In the part of advanced vocabulary 1,001-2,000 word level (Q61-70), the rates of right answer ranged from 11.4% to 81.8% in NC Term 6, and 24.7% to 83.5% in SC Term 5. For example, in "Q66 solid", again NC final-year students got the lowest rate of the right answer in this item (11.4%) compared to other years. However, other terms also had very low achievement as in Table 5. Over 60% of students in both courses chose "(b) direct" except SC Term 4 (45.5%). The students might only remember the phrase "direct object" they have learned in Grammar, but they were unfamiliar with other usages of the word "object". Many students also chose "brave" and "early". This might indicate that students were not able to identify the meaning of the word "object" in this question.

Table 5. *Percentage of Students' Answers in Question 66*

66. "What is this ( ) object on the shelf?" he asked.			
(a) brave	(b) direct	(c) early	(d) solid

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Course & Term	a	b	c	d*	No answer
NC-Term 4	11.6%	62.8%	11.6%	11.6%	2.3%
NC-Term 5	17.9%	63.5%	7.9%	19.0%	1.6%
NC-Term 6	9.1%	68.2%	11.4%	11.4%	0.0%
SC-Term 3	11.5%	45.5%	10.3%	22.4%	10.3%
SC-Term 4	6.8%	63.2%	8.3%	20.3%	1.5%
SC-Term 5	6.6%	61.5%	6.0%	24.7%	1.1%

* Right answer

Grammar

Basic grammar

The overall achievement of basic grammar was unsatisfactory in general. The mean score of basic grammar in NC Term 6 was 64.2%, which was the same mean as the score in SC Term 3 as shown in Table 6. Considering the easiness of the questions and the fact that these questions were multiple choice questions with four choices, one would have expected that they were going to do well in this area. It is however surprising that the rates of right answers were quite low in many items. The results indicated that many students still could not master several basic grammatical items such as gerund and infinitive, use of pronouns, prepositions, inflexion of verbs, negative form, parts of speech, passive voice, past tense, past continue tense and distinction of adjective/adverb.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistic for Basic Grammar

Course & Term	n	Mean	%	SD	Min	Max	Full score
NC-Term 4	43	22.8	65.2%	6.21	9	35	35
NC-Term 5	63	24.4	69.8%	6.72	8	35	35
NC-Term 6	44	22.5	64.2%	6.98	6	35	35
SC-Term 3	165	22.5	64.2%	6.55	7	35	35
SC-Term 4	133	23.7	64.8%	6.51	6	35	35
SC-Term 5	182	25.4	72.5%	6.32	7	35	35

The following item is an example how many students still have problems:

In "Q34 Passive", the percentage of right answers in all years both of NC and SC Term 3 and SC Term 4 was not so different (ranging from 22.3% to 36.5%), except SC Term 5 (54.4%) as shown in Table 7. All terms in both courses have the same trend of choosing the answer, for example, over 30% of students chose the option "(d) built". The students might not know how to change the word "build" into both past tense and past participle. They might only remember how to change the regular verb in past tense and past participle, which just add "ed" at the end of the verb. It suggested that these students might not know that they have to put the passive form for the answer to this question.

Table 7. Percentage of Students' Answers in Question 34

48. That-luang was ( ) along time ago.					
(a) built	(b) building		(c) builds		(d) builded
Course &Term	a*	b	c	d	No answer
NC-Term 4	23.3%	15.9%	1.6%	39.7%	6.3%

NC-Term 5	36.5%	34.9%	2.3%	34.9%	4.7%
NC-Term 6	29.5%	15.9%	0.0%	54.5%	0.0%
SC-Term 3	32.1%	21.8%	8.5%	34.5%	3.0%
SC-Term 4	35.3%	18.0%	4.5%	39.8%	2.3%
SC-Term 5	54.4%	11.0%	4.4%	30.2%	0.0%

* Right answer

Advanced Grammar

The overall achievement of the advanced grammar part was very low in both NC and SC even for the final-year students. This part consisted of many complex sentence structures such as relative adverbs, relative pronouns, infinitive and SVC form with non be-verb. It would be true for the students in NC Term 4 (37.7%) and SC Term 3 (35.7%) did not get a high rate of the right answer, but it is very difficult to explain why the higher grades also have nearly the same rate of the right answer as shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics for Advanced Grammar

Course & Year	n	Mean	%	SD	Min	Max	Full score
NC-Term 4	43	3.8	37.7%	2.20	0	8	10
NC-Term 5	63	4.9	48.6%	2.31	0	10	10
NC-Term 6	44	4.7	47.3%	2.55	0	10	10
SC-Term 3	165	3.6	35.7%	2.46	0	9	10
SC-Term 4	133	4.1	40.8%	2.30	0	10	10
SC-Term 5	182	5.0	49.6%	2.34	0	10	10

For example, the rate of the right answer of Q81 ranged from 26.7% in SC Term 3 to 43.2% in NC Term 6. Over 20% of students chose answer (a) "to satisfy" and the remaining percentages were in option "(b) satisfying" and "(d) being satisfied" as shown in Table 9. It suggested that many students might not know the structure S+V+C and just chose randomly from the given options.

Table 9. Percentage of Students' Answers in Question 81

81. John finished third in the race. He seems ( ) with the result.					
(a) to satisfy	(b) satisfying		(c) satisfied		(d) being satisfied
Course &Term	a	b	c*	d	No answer
NC-Term 4	27.9%	23.3%	30.2%	16.3%	2.3%
NC-Term 5	36.5%	14.3%	33.3%	12.7%	3.2%
NC-Term 6	25.0%	11.4%	43.2%	15.9%	4.5%
SC-Term 3	25.5%	15.8%	26.7%	12.1%	20.0%
SC-Term 4	32.3%	15.0%	39.8%	12.0%	0.8%
SC-Term 5	36.8%	14.8%	33.5%	12.6%	2.2%

* Right answer

Reading

It was also found that most students (including final term students) had difficulty in reading. The overall achievement of this part was low in general. Even though NC students outperformed SC students, the average score was only 46.4% for NC Term 6 as shown in Figure 3.

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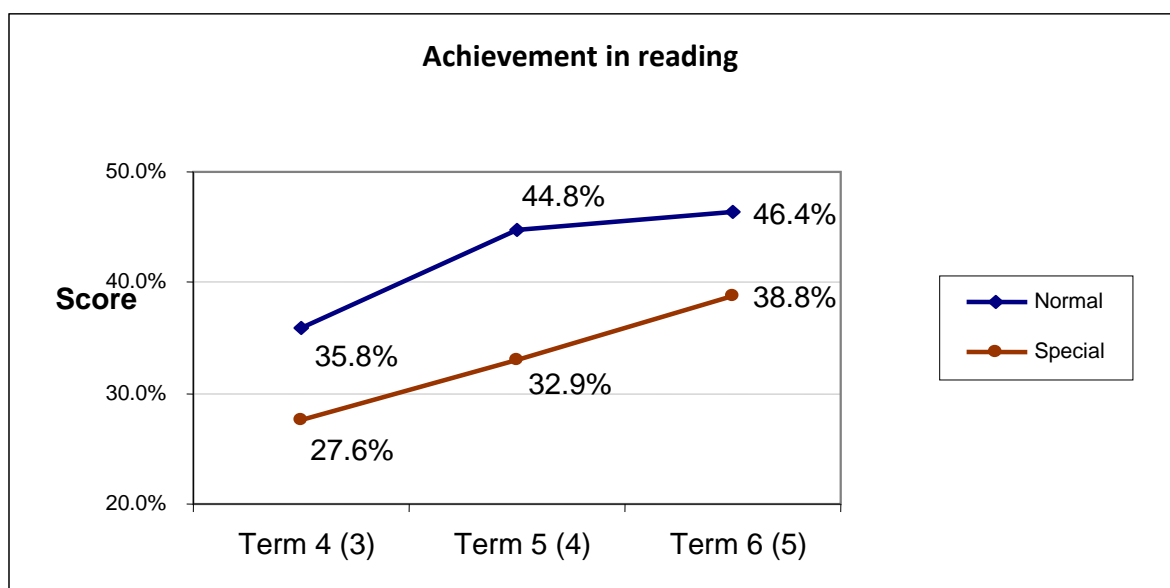
Figure 3.Achievement in reading by course and year (%)

For example, in text one, the percentage of the right answer was 52.3% in NC Term 6 and 48.4% in SC Term 5 for Q92. Over 20% of the students in all terms in both courses chose option (b), the students might only notice that this answer includes "wrote to their American friends...", but they did not recognize the following sentence which mentions the invitation of friends by sending the letter. They only chose when they noticed some words, which were the same as the words in the question to be in the answer. It suggested that those students who chose the wrong answers might not understand the question. They only matched some words that they saw in the question with the word in the text and chose the answer. It can be seen through the percentage of their answer as shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Percentage of Students' Answers in Question 92

92. What did the Malaysian businessman and his wife do to their American friends?

(a) They invited their friends for dinner.

(b) They wrote their American friends a card to know how to cook.

(c) They expected their American friends to cook their dinner.

(d) They went to their American friends' house to dine with them.

Course & Term	a*	b	c	d	No answer
NC-Term 4	37.2%	25.6%	18.6%	14.0%	4.7%
NC-Term 5	55.6%	27.0%	3.2%	12.7%	1.6%
NC-Term 6	52.3%	22.7%	15.9%	9.1%	0.0%
SC-Term 3	29.1%	26.1%	20.6%	7.3%	17.0%
SC-Term 4	41.4%	33.1%	12.0%	9.0%	4.5%
SC-Term 5	48.4%	25.3%	10.4%	9.3%	6.6%

* Right answer

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Another example is Q95 in the second text, the rate of right answer of this item is the lowest in the reading part, which was 18.2% in NC Term 6 and 15.4% in SC Term 5 as shown in Table 11. More than 25% of the students in both courses and more chose option "(c) Government policymakers". It might be because "government policymakers" and "causing suffering" appeared in the last sentence of the text together. On the other hand, the right answer "(a) People living in coastal areas" did not appear explicitly in the text. Other remaining percentages are in option (b) and (d). The rate of no answer is also high for this item.

Table 11. Percentage of Students' Answers in Question 95

95. Who would suffer the most immediate effects of a sudden rise in temperature?

(a) People living in coastal areas

(b) People living in the tropics

(c) Government policy makers

(d) People in the northern part of the world

Course & Term	a*	b	c	d	No answer
NC-Term 4	9.3%	23.3%	25.6%	32.6%	9.3%
NC-Term 5	22.2%	17.5%	34.9%	22.2%	3.2%
NC-Term 6	18.2%	9.1%%	47.7%	22.7%	2.3%
SC-Term 3	14.5%	10.3%	32.7%	23.0%	19.4%
SC-Term 4	12.8%	16.5%	44.4%	21.1%	5.3%
SC-Term 5	15.4%	13.7%	35.2%	29.1%	6.6%

* Right answer

The results indicated that many students did not read the text, but just tried to guess the answer from some parts of the text. It might be because of their lack of vocabulary and basic grammar (sentence patterns) which made them unable to read, but also because of their lack of willingness to read. They were not serious in understanding the content of the text, even though the text consists of easy vocabulary and grammar. Instead, many students preferred to answer by guessing or picking up some words in the text.

Relationship among five parts of the test

To see the relationship of the five parts, basic vocabulary, advanced vocabulary, basic grammar, advanced grammar and reading, a path analysis was applied. Figure 4 shows the results. All five parts have a significant influence on each other. The most significant one is that basic grammar had a strong influence on basic vocabulary (.657**) and advanced vocabulary (.447**). The basic vocabulary only had a direct influence on basic grammar (.382**). From the figure, it can be said that basic grammar is the basic skill of all. It is strongly suggested that by improving basic grammar, students would be able to improve advanced vocabulary, advanced grammar and finally reading. This suggestion supported the results of the analysis of each part and each item. The results of the analysis show that the students' problems were in the understanding of sentence structures. Training students to understand the basic sentence structures is strongly recommended as the way to solve the problem.
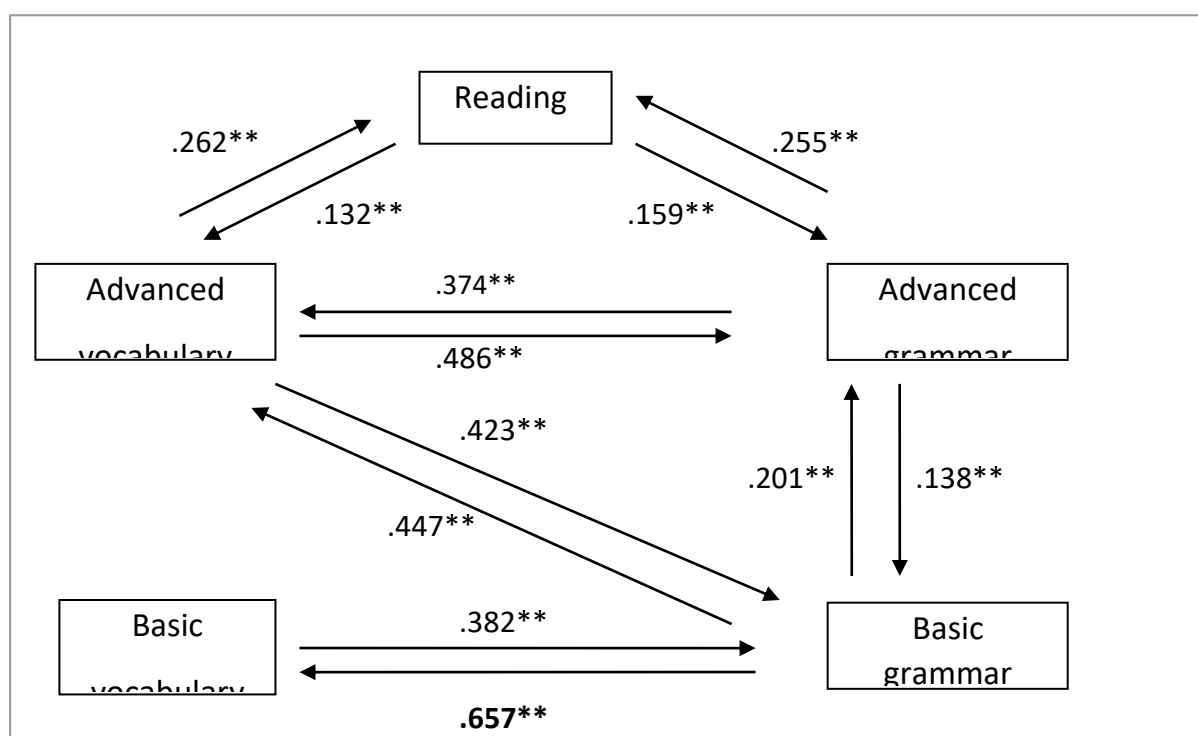
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Figure 4. The relationship among five parts of the test

** Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01 (two-tailed)

There was a strong relationship between basic grammar, basic vocabulary and advanced vocabulary. This indicates that vocabulary and basic grammar should be taught together. As Ellis (cited in Schmitt, 2000) states the main reason for believing that vocabulary knowledge can help grammar acquisition is that knowing the word in a text or conversation permits learners to understand the meaning of the discourse. Therefore, this issue in turn allows the grammatical patterning to become more transparent. Richards and Renandya (2012) also agree that lexical knowledge and grammatical knowledge are inextricably interrelated in a kind of lexicogrammar.

Employer interview (expectations)

The interview with ten employers of the graduates was held from the end of October to November 2020 to clarify the strengths and weaknesses in English usage of the graduates from the department. The interview results could bring very valuable information for the department because all the employers answered the questions frankly. Most of them mentioned that current staff who graduated from the Departments of English still could not meet their expectation. They wanted the departments to understand their expectations. They would like their employees to have a high level of English proficiency so that the employees could:

- deal with the documentary work in English;
- interact with boss, colleagues, clients, and others in English with the cultural awareness;
- attend the English meeting, take note, participate and do other necessary tasks in the meeting;
- do English presentation; and
- write reports, business letters and others.

In addition, they should have adequate vocabulary knowledge (for business, management, politics, economics, and others) and be able to do translation and interpretation.

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Many employers complained that their current employees who graduated from the departments of English have insufficient English command. They could not perform the given tasks in English as their employers expected and also faced many difficulties in their work using English. Even though the employees have to deal with very easy-level English tasks, they still have to consult with their bosses. The employers would like the department to improve its current curriculum to fulfill the requirements in the workplace. Some comments are as follows:

"I need someone who can help me to prepare English documents and complete other tasks in English. My employees are not able to accomplish any given tasks in English. For example, I asked them to write an English letter, but instead, I had to do it by myself because they could not do it. I would say that it is very difficult for them to accomplish any single task in English".

"My employees could not do whatever I asked them to do even an easy task."

"I thought that the students who graduated from the department had a proficiency in English. In fact, it is not true. They are not able to accomplish the given tasks by themselves; they also ask the help from their bosses. It is very difficult for them to use English in their work because they have very low English ability."

Views' of employers

Employee's self evaluation

The questionnaire was distributed to 30 employees who were currently working in the ten organizations. The result of employees' questionnaire showed a similarity to that of the employers' views. They felt that their English skills were insufficient for the demand of their current work place. They faced many difficulties dealing with the given tasks in English even those tasks just required basic English, for example, conducting a simple business transaction at the placed such as post office, bank, and drugstore in English. They also perceived that they had insufficient English skill to accomplish more difficult tasks that require high level of English interactive skill. For instance, 45% of the employees faced difficulty in discussing with coworkers the best way to accomplish a job task. These difficulties are the obstacles for the employees to accomplish given tasks in English. The employees required the departments to improve the curriculum so that it could meet the needs of the real work place by emphasizing on the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) together with translation and interpretation. They also recommended that it is necessary to use their first language (L1) in teaching the language. This is to explain the points that the students have not yet understood.

Reaction of the Department of English

4.6.1 Consensus building on goal setting of the final year at the department

After the researchers presented the result of the interview to the employers and the questionnaire to the employees, and discussion, the participants of the seminar agreed to set the final goals of the department as shown in Table 12. The result of the questionnaire indicates that the graduates from the Departments of English should be able to work in the real society. In other words, the graduates from the department will have sufficient English skills to deal with their jobs.

Table 12. The Result of Questionnaire on Goal Setting

Listening skill

After graduating from the Departments of English, students should be able to ......

No		Agree
1.	understand explanations about how to perform a routine task related to their jobs.	100%
2.	understand a co-work discussing a simple problem that arose at work	97%
3.	understand headline news broadcasts on the radio	93%
4.	understand direction about what time to come to a meeting and the room in which	95%

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	it will be held	
5.	understanding a discussion of current events taking place among a group of persons speaking English	87%
6.	understand the discussion issue in English meeting	100%

Interactive skill

After graduating from the Departments of English, students should be able to ......

No		Agree
1.	explain written company policies to a new employee	98%
2.	discuss with a co-worker the best way to accomplish a job task	73%
3.	discuss world events with an English-speaking guest	93%
4.	discuss with boss ways to improve customer service or product quality	89%
5.	communicate with customers about various matters	95%
6.	do English presentation about the main tasks in the organization	98%
7	conduct an interview with an applicant for a job in their area of expertise	91%

Reading skill

After graduating from the Departments of English, students should be able to ......

No		Agree
1.	read and understand an agenda for a meeting	100%
2.	read and understand magazine articles like those found in Times or Newsweek, without using a dictionary	82%
3.	identify inconsistencies or differences in points of view in two newspaper interviews with politicians of opposing parties	69%
4.	read highly technical materials in my field or area of expertise with no use or only infrequent use of a dictionary	73%
5.	read the document that discuss about the current situation	98%
6.	read and understand a letter of thanks from a client or customer	98%

Writing skill

After graduating from the Departments of English, students should be able to ......

No		Agree
1.	write a memorandum to their supervisors explaining why they need a new time off from work	98%
2.	write a letter introducing themselves and describing their qualifications to accompany in employment application form	100%
3.	write a memorandum to their supervisors describing the progress being made on a current project or assignment	93%
4.	write a letter to a potential client describing the service and/or products of their company	93%
5.	write a 5-page formal report on a project in which they participated	89%
6.	write a memorandum summarizing the main points of meeting they recently attended	93%

Translation and Interpreting skills

After graduating from the Departments of English, students should be able to ......

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No		Agree
1.	translate and interpret the document about social economy	89%
2.	translate and interpret the document about politics	82%
3.	translate and interpret the document about business and investment	84%

Questionnaire for consensus building (The content of the General English textbook II)

Based on the researcher's report on the results of the test and discussion, in the seminar, the consensus for development of General English II (GE II) could be reached. Over 90% of teaching staff agreed to include some revision units to review the lessons of the General English I (GE I) in the new textbook (GE II), and this textbook should cover other 1500 words, including those in Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2010). They also agreed that this textbook should include the remaining grammar points that were not included in GE I, and included more reading texts and more writing tasks to help students to be familiar with the basic reading and basic writing. The consensus was confirmed by the questionnaire to the participants.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and the analysis of the test, interview and questionnaires, the researchers would like to summarize the results and suggest for future improvement as the followings. The students in both Normal and Special Courses had very low achievement. They had difficulty with basic vocabulary, basic grammar, advanced vocabulary, advanced grammar and reading even in the final year. Most employers were not satisfied with the staff who graduated from the Departments due to the low ability of English skills. This shows that there was a large gap between the expected goal and the actual achievement. The consensus for curriculum improvement, particularly for the development of GE II could be reached in order to reach the final goals which were built among the teaching staff. Most of teaching staff agreed to set the goals for the final year students to be able to perform tasks in listening, interaction, reading, writing, translation and interpretation. The results strongly suggest that the current curriculum has some problems because higher grades still have problems in basic vocabulary and grammar even in their final year of study.

Limitations and further studies

There are some limitations in this study. First, curriculum, teaching materials and teaching methods were not analyzed in this research. Second, the needs analysis was not fully systematic, due to the limitation of the samples. As the time for conducting the interview was limited, the researchers could only interview ten employers from ten organizations. Finally, as this research is an action research, the results cannot be generalized to other institutions. This research can be conducted in other settings or other institutions.

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