

# Developing a Reading Instructional Model for Business English Course Based on Need Analysis

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## Abstract

The purposes of the study were to: 1) reveal problems found in English reading comprehension, 2) explore Business English topics that learners are interested in reading comprehension, 3) discover types of learning activities that learners are interested in, and 4) survey the need for the development in reading comprehension. Participants were five English instructors and 44 students majoring in General Management. Focus group interviews and questionnaires were the research instruments to obtain data from a Business English course. The results showed as follows: 1) Problems found in English reading comprehension were lack of knowledge in English grammar and vocabulary, reading contents did not match with learners' interests, reading comprehension disorder, unattractive reading activities, and lack of opportunities to discuss with others. 2) Topics that learners were interested in were products and services, finance and banking, complaints, and tourism and hotel. 3) Activities that learners were interested in were problem-based, pair or group works, brainstorming, relating to the real world, and the team's workload must be divided fairly. 4) Learners needed to learn vocabulary through activities, and reading contents must match with the learners' interests. Also, the activities must be various, group-based, with assignments to enhance English language knowledge.

**Keywords:** need analysis, Business English, reading comprehension

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## Introduction

English is widely used for various specific purposes and it remarkably gains popularity in the business workforce. Therefore, it is necessary to be efficient language users in order to work and communicate effectively. According to Cambridge Assessment English (2016), employers reported that the most crucial language skill in business is reading, followed by speaking. Reading in English is significant for careers because it is used in international journals, contracts, and instructions. Moreover, English used in business is different from general English due to specific contents. Undergraduates have no experience in the business field. Therefore, it is the course planners' responsibility to design a course that can enhance students' business knowledge and reading comprehension through reading. Undergraduates still have reading difficulties such as vocabulary and grammar, so their reading ability should be developed. This is related to the study of Narkprom, Poosiripinyo, and Saito (2016, pp. 183) that showed problems with the reading comprehension of fourth year English Education undergraduates. The majority (90 percent) of their score was below standard, and their reading obstacles were grammar, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. Using the Vantage English Placement Test for Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University, the English entrance exam result of first year NPRU students yielded similar findings. It showed that the majority of the Faculty of Management Sciences students' reading scores were at around A1 level or considerably low. It could assume that they lacked good reading skills or understanding of the text. Hence, it is needed to find methods or techniques that can enhance their reading comprehension ability.

Reading comprehension is one of the most critical abilities because it helps readers to get along with what they read and is also counted as a fundamental component for high-level reading skills. In other words, learners cannot analyze or criticize anything if they do not have an overall understanding of what they read. However, learners cannot get the idea from what they read due to the lack of vocabulary or background knowledge. Moreover, traditional teaching method or dull activities leads to learners' lack of reading motivation. When learners find reading difficult and tedious, they will lose interest, and this causes failure in learning and teaching.

It is crucial to find out how to design an effective reading course to develop learners' reading comprehension; therefore, instructional planners use instructional design for the designing process. Many educationists identified procedures for instructional design. Dick and Carey (1996, pp. 73-89) stated 10 steps as follows:

1) Identify Instructional Goals, 2) Conduct Instructional Analysis, 3) Analyze Learners and Contexts, 4) Write Performance Objectives, 5) Develop Assessment Instruments, 6) Develop instructional strategies, 7) Develop and select instructional materials, 8) Design and conduct formative evaluation, 9) Revise instruction based on formative evaluations, and 10) Design and conduct a summative evaluation. This is consistent with Heinich, Molenda, Russell & Smaldino's (1999, pp. 7-92) which put forward steps as 1) Analyze Learners, 2) State Standards and Objectives, 3) Select, Modify, or Design Methods and Materials, 4) Utilize Technology and Materials, 5) Require Learner's Participation, and 6) Evaluate and Revise. Moreover, Morrison, Ross, Kemp & Kalman, (2010, pp. 15-17) enumerated some steps as 1) Determine the specific goals, and potential instructional issues, 2) Identify learners' characteristics that should be taken into account during the planning process, 3) Clarify course content, and analyze the proposed task components concerning the stated goals and purposes of the course, 4) Define instructional objectives and desired learning outcomes, 5) Sequence content within each instructional unit for logical learning, 6) Design instructional strategies to enable individual learners to master the content, and achieve desired learning outcomes, 7) Plan the instructional message and the appropriate mode of delivery, 8) Develop evaluation instruments suitable for measuring and assessing learners' progress towards achieving course objectives, and 9) Choose the appropriate resources that will support both teaching and learning activities. Based on the aforementioned studies above, it can be seen that the procedures are considerably similar; hence, the researcher synthesized them as follows: 1) Study fundamental data, statement of the problem, learners' needs, learning context, and course objective, 2) Define purpose and course objectives, 3) Develop teaching materials, determine method and procedures for teaching and learning, 4) Evaluate an instructional model and conduct test before and after using the instructional model, and 5) Improve the instructional model.

According to instructional design, need analysis (NA) takes a significant role to help those educationists in gaining information for curriculum development. It is an effective method in determining the extent of content and design learning procedures and activities that can attract learners' interest. The effectiveness of need analysis can reflect the realistic context of learners' problems and requirements that will lead to an instructional plan consisting of objectives, content specifications, approaches, and materials. The goals of the need analysis in reading are to observe learners' behaviors, reading preferences, and interests and design a curriculum matching those results. To gain data required for instructional design, many educationists have employed need

analysis to serve that purpose. Richards (2001, pp. 52) stated that NA could be used to study the difference between the present proficiency of learners and their required proficiency. It is a tool that could seek the required skills for learning, determine the congruity of the existing course with the learners' needs, and identify learners' problems. Kayi (2008, pp. 30) mentioned that NA is a process of employing learners' information to inform and define the course and syllabus design or curriculum development. This is in accordance with Ali (2011, pp. 15) who mentioned that NA is the keystone of English for Specific Purposes as it could help to produce a course. It can be summarized that need analysis is the process employed to gather the required data of a particular institute or society to understand the context, design, and develop an instructional curriculum.

Based on the aforementioned situation, the researcher aims at surveying the problems found in reading comprehension and exploring the needs for developing reading comprehension for the undergraduates at the Faculty of Management Sciences, Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University. The findings from this study will assist in designing an English reading instructional model to enhance English reading comprehension ability.

### **Purposes of the Study**

This study aimed to:

1. reveal problems found in English reading comprehension;
- 2 . explore Business English topics that learners are interested in reading comprehension;
3. discover types of learning activities that learners are interested in, and
4. survey needs for the development in reading comprehension.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **1. Populations and samplings**

Populations in this study were 100 second year undergraduates at the Faculty of Management Sciences, Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University and 20 English lecturers who have experienced teaching reading courses or Business English course at the university level.

The respondents were selected by convenience sampling. They were 44 second year undergraduates who were enrolled in Business English 2 and majoring in General Management, Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University in the academic year 1 / 2 0 1 9 .

Moreover, 5 English lecturers at Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University were involved as respondents.

## 2. Instruments

This study was a mixed-method research consisting of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The instrument used for quantitative data collection was a need analysis questionnaire and was divided into four sections. The first section revealed participants' problems when they read. The second one aimed to get information about the topics that learners are interested in reading comprehension. The third part was about the types of learning activities in which they are interested. The last one was suggestions for the development of reading comprehension. Moreover, the items for the focus group discussion consisted of 8 questions concerning the problems in reading comprehension and in business reading and the topics and activities that suit Business English.

## 3. Data Collection

The questionnaire was delivered to 44 second year undergraduates in Business English 2 class and took approximately 20 minutes. The focus group discussion was conducted with 5 English instructors. It was administered and audio recorded and the time commitment was around 1 hour.

## 4. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, namely mean, standard deviation, and ranking were used to understand the learners' preferred reading topics, types of activity, and reading habits. For open-ended questions in the questionnaire and focus group discussion, content analysis was used to obtain information about the problems of reading, suggestions for the development of reading comprehension, and instructors' opinions.

## Results and Discussions

### Results

**Focus Group Discussion:** The researcher conducted a focus group discussion with 5 English lecturers who have experienced teaching reading courses or Business English course as follows:

1. The learners' problems in reading at present were the inadequate skills to get the main point and understand what is going on in a text. Moreover, they lacked motivation in learning.

2. The causes of these problems were the learners' lack of reading objective in mind, enough vocabulary, background knowledge, and interest in what they were

reading. Additionally, the level of difficulty and the length of reading passages did not match the level of learners' ability. They also did not know how to apply strategy to assist them during the reading process.

3. The cause of the problem in reading business text was the learners' unfamiliarity with vocabulary since they did not encounter them in daily life. Also, they did not know the structure of the reading text. They also had no prior knowledge of the topics to gain new knowledge from the reading. In addition, they were unskilled to get the gist.

4. The ability to read a business text could help learners understand business data in various written genres and use this knowledge to communicate efficiently.

5. The interesting topics in Business English were logistics, products and services, complaints, online markets, hotel and tour businesses, international trades, successful people, and correspondences.

6. Some useful business documents for learners were online business texts, correspondences, sales and purchasing documents, financial documents, import-export documents, financial documents, textbooks, and business journals/magazines.

7. The activities that help to promote reading business text were simulation, collaborative, assigned role, racing, and problem-solving activities.

8. The solutions for the problems in reading business text were choosing up-to-date business content that is not far from the learners' experience for them to apply their background knowledge to reading text and using varieties of activities to attract learners' attention. Additionally, teaching techniques in getting the main idea and guessing the word meaning for learners to have the needed fundamental skills in reading were also parts of these crucial solutions.

**Questionnaire:** To answer the first purpose of the study, the table below showed the problems learners encounter in English reading comprehension:

**Table 1 Problems in English reading comprehension**

Problems in English reading comprehension	Sample extracts from the learners' answers
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Vocabulary/Grammar</li><li>- lack of vocabulary knowledge (Student no. 4, 9, 14, 31, 33, 37)</li><li>- lack of structure knowledge (Student no. 14, 33)</li><li>- unfamiliar or low frequency words (Student no. 17)</li></ul>

Problems in English reading comprehension	Some extracts from the learners' answers
	<p>■ Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- unfamiliar content that isn't found in real life, no background knowledge, uninteresting text, excessively long text (Student no. 3)</li> <li>- text unrelated to interest, no motivation in reading due to uninteresting text (Student no. 5, 21)</li> <li>- content irrelevant to context after graduation (Student no. 8)</li> </ul> <p>■ Reading for the main idea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no reading ability to find the main idea (Student no. 31, 37)</li> </ul>
Learning activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- loss of interest in reading due to lack of learning activities (Student no. 8)</li> <li>- lack of vocabulary guessing skill (Student no. 21)</li> <li>- no consultant while reading (Student no. 21, 24)</li> </ul>

Regarding the problems in English reading comprehension, it was found that, in the aspect of content, the participants reported their lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, the irrelevance of the contents of reading text to their interest, and their lack of reading abilities to find the main idea. For the activity aspect, the participant reported that the activities could not draw their interest in reading and that they could not consult others when facing reading difficulty if they read alone.

The findings below explored the Business English topics the learners were interested in reading comprehension as follows:

**Table 2 Interest level in Business English reading topics**

Topic	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Rank
1. Answering Phone	3.20	1.07	13
2. International Trade	3.32	0.93	9
3. Company Performance	3.52	1.11	5
4. Tour and Hotel	4.11	0.87	4
5. Meeting	3.18	0.76	14
6. Successful People	3.39	1.08	6
7. Finance and Banking	4.39	0.95	2

8. Orders	3.30	1.09	10
9. Products and Services	4.57	0.79	<b>1</b>
10. Complaints	4.18	0.95	<b>3</b>
11. Shipping	3.23	0.96	12
12. Marketing	3.27	0.90	11
13. Email and Memo	3.34	0.96	8
14. Sales	3.36	0.81	7

As shown in Table 2, this section presented learners' favored topics in Business English reading. The questionnaire items with the highest mean were Products and Services, Finance and Banking, Complaints and Tour and Hotel with the mean of 4.57 (S.D. = 0.79), 4.39 (S.D. = 0.95), 4.18 (S.D. = 0.95), and 4.11 (S.D. = 0.87) respectively.

The third part of the questionnaire revealed the learners' preferred types of learning activities.

**Table 3 Interest level in types of learning activity**

Topic	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Rank
1. Activity based on real life situation	4.34	0.83	<b>4</b>
2. Activity learning from various sources	4.11	1.17	5
3. Activity focused on pair or group work	4.41	1.00	<b>2</b>
4. Activity based on role play	3.25	0.94	9
5. Activity focused on presentation	3.36	0.89	8
6. Activity emphasized on communication rather than grammar	3.43	0.79	7
7. Activity focused on research outside the classroom	3.43	0.90	7
8. Activity based on mind maps	3.20	0.90	11
9. Activity based on problem solving	4.55	0.73	<b>1</b>
10. Activity emphasized on various assessment	3.57	1.15	6
11. Activity that members in a group have their own role	4.34	0.96	<b>4</b>
12. Activity focused on brainstorming	4.36	0.94	<b>3</b>
13. Activity based on racing	3.36	0.97	8
14. Activity providing chances for learning plan	3.23	0.89	10



Table 3 showed learners' interest in the types of learning activity. The activities with the highest mean were activity based on problem-solving with a mean of 4.55 (S.D. = 0.73), followed by activity focused on pair or group work 4.41 (S.D. = 1.00), then activity focused on brainstorming 4.36 (S.D. = 0.94), activity based on real-life situation 4.34 (S.D. = 0.83), and activity that members in a group have their own role 4.34 (S.D. = 0.96).

The fourth section explored the last purpose about the learners' needs for development in reading comprehension as follows:

**Table 4 Needs for the development in reading comprehension**

Needs for the development in reading comprehension	Sample extracts from the learners' answers
Content	<p style="text-align: center;">■ <b>Vocabulary/Grammar</b></p> <p>- need for more vocabulary and grammatical knowledge (Student no. 9, 11)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">■ <b>Content</b></p> <p>- content relevant to learners' interest (Student no. 3)</p> <p>- topic related to learners' interest or experience after graduation (Student no. 8, 21)</p>
Learning Activity	<p style="text-align: center;">■ <b>Collaborative reading</b></p> <p>- collaborative reading and knowledge exchange with friends (Student no. 9, 10, 11, 21, 24)</p> <p>- collaborative reading for translation and pronunciation (Student no. 32, 42)</p>
Needs for development in reading comprehension	Sample extracts from the learners' answers
	<p style="text-align: center;">■ <b>Vocabulary guessing skill</b></p> <p>- vocabulary games and review for 10 – 15 words every lesson (Student no. 17)</p> <p>- knowledge or skill how to guess vocabulary meaning (Student no. 21, 24)</p>

	<p>■ <b>Variety of activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- new activity to attract learners' interest (Student no. 1)</li> <li>- more learning activities (Student no. 3, 8)</li> <li>- extra assignment to practice more English outside the classroom (Student no. 13)</li> <li>- activity to encourage thinking skill and various activities (Student no. 24)</li> <li>- teaching sentence structure and providing positive reinforcement (Student no. 25)</li> <li>- role playing and brainstorming activities (Student no. 39)</li> <li>- online research (Student no. 41)</li> <li>- collaborative project and compound word teaching (Student no. 42)</li> </ul>
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According to table 4, learners needed activities to improve their vocabulary knowledge and the content should be related to their interest. There should also be varieties in learning activities. Moreover, collaborative learning and reading should be used to support their learning. In addition, more extra tasks and projects outside the classroom should be added to increase English knowledge.

### Discussions

The need analysis for designing an effective instructional reading model for English for business is essential due to inadequate study in the field. Moreover, the findings in this study could contribute to designing an effective Business English course.

The findings explained the correlations between the first and last purposes of the study. There was a close relationship between the problems found in reading comprehension and the need for the development in reading comprehension for both content and activity aspects. Based on the first aspect, they needed to have more vocabulary knowledge. The reason why both instructors and learners recognized the importance of vocabulary knowledge can be explained by Zhang and Anual's study (2014, pp. 65). The findings claimed that students' vocabulary knowledge at the 2,000-word and 3,000-word levels was correlated to their reading comprehension. Moreover, learners needed to study topics related to their interests or experiences after graduation. The second one showed that collaborative reading, vocabulary activity, and activity variations could draw their interest.

To answer the second purpose, this study revealed that the result from the focus group interview corresponded to the one gained from the learners' answers. The results showed that topics should be related to their life. Similarly, Mathews-Aydinli's research (2007, pp. 5) supported that providing learners chances to deal with problematic issues they will face in their life can make learning meaningful, and the learning management enhances second language acquisition.

For the types of learning activity, the learners' most preferred activities were those based on problem-solving and focused on pair or group work. These findings are also in line with the results of the focus group interview. They showed that activities encouraging problem-solution and collaboration could promote business text reading. Additionally, the explanation is supported by Arjuna and Jufri's study in 2016. It pointed out that encouraging learners to discuss real-world problems could draw them into meaningful learning participation. This also agrees with Vaughn and Edmonds's study (2006, pp. 131-132) that stated that learners read more effectively if they read collaboratively.

Based on the need analysis, approaches that are effective for Business English reading courses should suit learners' needs for both content and activity area. Interest-based contents like Products and Services, Finance and Banking, Complaints, and Tour and Hotel and interest-based activities like problem-solving and collaboration gained the highest preferences among the participants. The data gained from this need analysis will be used to design a reading comprehension model and develop instructional materials. When a course is designed to get along well with learners' needs, a reading classroom will be successful as the learners are motivated to read. According to Guthrie (2004, pp. 6), what motivates learners to read leads to reading achievement. After designing a reading course based on needs analysis, experimental research will be conducted to study the effects of implementing the instructional reading model on the undergraduates at the Faculty of Management Sciences, Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University. This also aims to enhance the English reading comprehension ability. The findings of the experimental research will provide valuable recommendations not only to the reading comprehension community but also to language instruction and pedagogical research.

### **Recommendations for further study**

According to the findings, recommendations are shown as follows:

- 1 . Based on the findings of this study, the Business English course must be revised according to learners' needs.
2. According to the findings of this study, further research should be conducted to explore the effectiveness of an English reading instructional model.
3. Qualitative data like interviews should be conducted with students to gain more in-depth details of the participants.

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