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Language Needs Analysis: An EAP Curriculum Design to Develop Foreign Students' English Skills

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This study determines the need to strengthen the English Orientation Program (EOP) for foreign language learners especially due to the changes in the Philippine educational system from K-10 to K-12 curriculum that demands higher competency in the use of English in the various academic fields of study. Specifically, this study proposes to redesign the EOP into English for Academic Purposes Program with some modifications and enhancements based on the needs of the students. Thus, this study attempts to determine the language needs of foreign students. First, it determines the needs of foreign students in the four macro skills. Second, it identifies the difficulties experienced by foreign students as perceived by both their content and language teachers. Hence, identifying these needs and difficulties would be helpful in creating syllabi for English programs. Results showed that students identified the problem in vocabulary, taking down notes when listening to lectures, understanding the text when reading texts, and finding the appropriate words when reporting and when writing; this finding on writing is affirmed by language teachers. For the content teachers, they find these skills problematic for their students: pronunciation in speaking, and listening to instructions resulting in not being able to perform tasks well.

Introduction

In the Philippines, language centers have been providing English lessons for non-Filipino non-English speaking students. Ancheta and Perez (2015) report that the Philippines has become an educational center in Asia; hence, foreign students have an easier time to apply for visas. Furthermore, as observed by the Bureau of Immigration (2018), an increase occurred in the number of foreign students who converted or extended their visas in order to study in the undergraduate, graduate, and post graduate levels. In 2014, the BID recorded that 3,005 foreign students had their visas converted from Special Student Permit (SSP) into Conversion/Extension Permit which allowed them to enroll in the tertiary level; and in 2017, this number increased to 14,848. It is worthy to note that majority of these foreign students are EFL learners. This means that they are international students from a non-English medium background or students from countries where English is not the medium of instruction. For example, China, South Korea, Cambodia, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam. These international students popularly referred to FFLrs essentially need an EAP program designed to address their language needs. Hence, this paper primarily aims to conduct a

language needs assessment of the University English Program to find out their perceived needs and difficulties in the macro and sub-skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Competence in these macro skills and sub-skills is considered to be of primary importance to contemporary undergraduate education (Creme, 2000). The results of the language needs assessment serves as basis for a proposed redesigned English Orientation Program (EOP) to English for Academic Purposes Program (EAPP) curriculum focussing on these macro skills as identified in the needs assessment. Also, based on the results, the study endeavors to determine the most appropriate program that will meet the language needs of the FLLrs who go to college. This said program will focus on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) considering that the production of a more refined and complete foreign language program will help to motivate the students and focus the attention of teachers and learners on meaningful and communicative language use.

The question then is, *how should English teachers address these foreign students' needs?* Regarding learners' needs, these English teachers have to note that majority of these FLLrs are not just studying English as an exchange student, but are learning English in preparation for the academic demands in the higher education level, which could be Undergraduate, Graduate, or Post Graduate level. In short, the focus of this study is to determine the academic needs of the FLLrs in order to create an EAP program that would allow these FLLrs to cope with the academic demands in the mainstream classrooms in the Philippine context. Henceforth, these academic demands would be referred to as *Academic language needs*, which as its name implies, refer to the language skills that learners need in order for them to perform tasks in English in an academic context.

Specifically, this study proposes to redesign the EOP (English Orientation Program) into EAPP (English for Academic Purposes Program) with some modifications and enhancements based on the needs of the students. In order to achieve this, this study intends to address the following: the difficulties experienced by the FLLrs in meeting course requirements in their general education subjects that involves competency in the use of academic English; second, the difficulties encountered by the content-area teachers and language teachers in handling FLLrs in their classes in fulfilling academic requirements that require competence; and third, the academic language needs of FLLrs according to their proficiency levels. When all of these are accomplished, this study takes a step closer to its ultimate goal of redesigning EOP to EAPP with a syllabus for a proposed program. Hence, to realize these objectives, this study seeks to answer the following specific questions:

1. As perceived by FLLrs/EOP graduates, what are their academic language learning needs and difficulties in the use of English in the four macro skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing as well as the sub-skills for each macro skill?
2. From the perspectives of language teachers teaching English subjects, what do they perceive as academic language needs and difficulties encountered by these learners in the use of the English language skills for academic purposes in the tertiary level?
3. From the perspectives of content area teachers handling general education classes, what do they perceive as academic language needs and difficulties of these learners in their classes in their use of English particularly in the four macro skills and sub-skills of the language?

Getting different perspectives in assessing learners' needs is important in arriving at the true picture of the FLLrs' academic needs and difficulties in tertiary work.

Literature Review

Academic Language Needs Analysis of Foreign Students

Learning needs, as the term implies, are needs perceived by the learners as to their lacks or weaknesses, skills needed, and their own perceptions of what they need. They involve mainly subjective data–self-perceived strengths, needs and weaknesses. The needs analysis is therefore a combination of objective and subjective data. A review of the literature on academic language needs analysis reveals that these needs are wide-ranging, meaning the difficulties relate to the productive and receptive macro skills. There are two forms of productive performance–spoken and written–and two forms of receptive performance – listening and reading. In the classroom setting, if a student is not proficient in the skills, success in the academic field would be impeded. For instance, Berman and Cheng (2010) explored the perceived English language needs in the context of EAP of foreign students many of whom were non-native speakers of the language. Results revealed that the perceived language difficulties of non-native foreign students were on the productive skills and were directly related to their academic performance; thus, oral presentations, written essay examinations, and taking part in class discussions were among the highlighted difficulties. Chien and Hsu (2011) revealed in their study of students' and professors' perception on students' English needs that students' preference for speaking was the most important skill and that both teachers and students considered poor writing and speaking abilities as the major problems. Finally, Mahfoodh (2014) who examined the oral academic socialization of undergraduate students revealed that a major difficulty is on their oral academic activities such as oral presentations and group discussions. The findings of Berman and Cheng, as well as those of Chien and Hsu, and Mahfoodh, thus implied that EAP instruction focusing on the productive skills would significantly contribute to the development of these students once they are accepted into the program of their specific studies. In addition to the results on the productive skills, existing literature shows that in the academic context, one of the needs is writing. Huang (2010) found in his study on the academic needs of graduate and undergraduate foreign students' needs and instructors' perspectives that writing was perceived as highly important and that it is an area where much needed attention and help is necessary. Pourshahian, Gholami, Vaseghi, and Kalajahi (2012) in investigating Iranians' general language problems in undertaking and planning research came up with similar results--that the writing skill was deemed crucial because students had to grapple with this skill more than with the other skills. The cruciality of writing as an academic skill is further defined by Gborsong et. al (2015) who examined the needs of students who were offered communicative skills in an English-medium university in Ghana. They reported a great need for grammar and writing skills among students, and that the students desired to be exposed to modern writing skills such as research and proposal writing.

As for the receptive skills, listening and reading comprehension also contribute to language learning difficulty. Listening is a complex process of absorbing and understanding information. According to Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016a) and Rost (2002), the listening processing involves the phases of decoding, comprehending, and interpreting to provide an appropriate response to incoming information. Thus, the ability to adjust the interpretation is especially crucial in the second/foreign language listening (Buck, 2001). It is the medium through which people gain a large portion of their education, their information, their understanding of the world and of human affairs, their ideals, sense of values, and their appreciation. The listening macro skill is the basic building block of EFL communication, and failing to comprehend when listening leads to misunderstanding or non-understanding. A review of previous research regarding four language learning skills used by EFL students indicates that a skill that is considered weak is listening (Abedin, 2010; Alam, 2009; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016b; Kavaliauskiene, 2008; Velička, 2007). In terms of reading comprehension as another receptive skill, experts argue that reading is the most important skill among the four language skills as it can improve the overall language proficiency (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Krashen& Brown, 2007). For example, in Jordan, research on reading comprehension difficulties of first and second year students of Yarmouk University

revealed that the secondary school EFL learners faced difficulties in their reading comprehension as they encounter ambiguous words, unfamiliar vocabulary, and limited available time to cognitively process the text (Qarqez & Radzuwan, 2017). Indeed, reading plays a central role in the educational, working, recreational, and social lives of people. People read for different purposes; sometimes to get the main idea, at times to locate specific information; frequently people nowadays read texts to learn something, and every now and then, one needs to synthesize information to take a critical position. Perhaps most often, people read for general comprehension in order to understand main ideas and the relevant supporting information (Grabe, 1991; Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Kaplan, 2002; The Save the Children Fund, 2015).

Furthermore, Moon, Choi and Kang (2019), investigate the relative predictability of reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge for advanced Korean EFL learner's writing performance for its form and content qualities along with their proficiency level. The study reveals that the reading comprehension abilities, vocabulary knowledge, and general English proficiency had a significant relationship with advanced Korean EFL learner's structural and linguistic aspects of writing performances. Thus, the foreign students' lack of vocabulary as impediment to their learning in the academic context confirms with this present study that is, they specially encountered difficulty or trouble in academic language tasks that fundamentally require having good vocabulary in performing them. Much of their language difficulties and needs are easily attributable to their limited vocabulary knowledge or are all rooted in their lack of comprehension abilities.

English for Academic Purposes

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) consists of comprehending all areas associated with academic practice including pre-tertiary and tertiary contexts (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 2001 in Hyland, 2006). It is primarily concerned with those communication skills in English which are required for study purposes in formal educational systems (ETIC, 1975 in Jordan, 1977). Learning in higher education, according to Lea and Street (2000), involves adapting to new ways of knowing–new ways of understanding, interpreting and organizing knowledge--and working on practices that constitute the central process of reading and writing through which students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge about new areas of study. Therefore, EAP is of fundamental importance for students who aim to pursue higher and specialized academic disciplines.

Gillet (2001) pointed out some features of EAP courses as follows: EAP courses take place at the institution wherein the students expect to take their academic courses and are intended to prepare students to study higher education; EAP courses allow students to familiarize themselves with the new environment and facilities of the institution before their main course starts; EAP courses enable students to learn to adopt particular approaches to their study and learn strategies and skills that will enable them to succeed in the higher education system.

Hence, the importance of developing the four macro skills for foreign students' academic demands in tertiary life plays an important role in teaching a particular language skill. Each of them is indispensible in the learning process and teaching performance on the part of the learners and teachers. The four foundational skills of language learning are listening, speaking, reading and writing. The focus is making students more active learners by teaching them how to develop themselves into language and how to apply what they have learned in order to be successful as individuals. These skills will be used as the main vehicle to achieve an effective communication in a global community (Croom Helm, 1998). In addition, teachers teach the macro skills to help students understand and learn English language skills in order to prepare them for college work and to enrol to better quality universities abroad (Teaching and Developing the Four Major Skills, 2016).

In a higher education system, proficient performance in the macro skills of language learning – listening, speaking, reading and writing – is expected from students. Thus, the learning focus in language programs, particularly addressed in EAP, is to make students become more active and engaged so they can become more effective language users. They are also expected to apply what they have learned to be

successful as individuals. Teachers teach the macro skills to help students understand and learn English language skills that will also prepare them for college work and qualify them to enroll in universities with quality standard abroad (Teaching and Developing the Four Major Skills, 2016). These skills are the main vehicles by which to achieve effective communication in a global community (Croom Helm, 1998). Thus, the aim of any language program is to use the different macro skills of learners. As such, approaches have been introduced in teaching macro skills, and communicative language teaching and task-based approaches are considered to be the most effective ones (Barrot, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Based on the needs assessment results of the FLLrs' listening, speaking, reading, and writing needs, the researchers attempt to redesign the EOP (English Orientation Program) to EAP (English for Academic Purpose) to equip the FLLrs with these language skills needed to meet the demands of tertiary academic work.

As this study aims to create a curriculum design for an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Program, this study anchors on a framework with three components. See Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the study.

First component of this framework, which is at the center of Figure 1, is the Needs Analysis Theory; second is the Course Design Theory; third is Communicative Competence. First, Needs Analysis is defined as the "systematic collection and analysis of all subjective and objective of information necessary to define and validate defensible curriculum purposes that satisfy the language learning requirements of the students within the context of particular institutions that influence the learning and teaching situation" (Brown, 1995, p. 36). Furthermore, needs analysis plays a vital role in the process of designing and carrying out any language course. Conducting needs analysis helps teachers and curriculum designers in many ways: first, it can create in-class activities which can help learners use learned skills and knowledge as weapon to address their real-life-needs meaningfully. Second, it can help them understand "local needs" of learners or the needs of a particular group and come up with a sound and practical decision in pedagogy and assessment for the betterment of the program. Third, it can help understand the potential difference in learning expectations between teachers and learners. Fourth, it is vital to the design, implementation, evaluation and revision of the program. Fifth, it may provide a basis for planning goals and objectives for a future program, and also for making syllabus design and instructional teaching materials for the course. Lastly, a program that seeks to address the learners "perceived needs will be more encouraging and substantial" (Richards, 2002).

The second component in the framework is the Course Design following Graves (200) model. Graves' framework of course design processes considers assessing needs, formulating goals and objectives, conceptualizing content, organizing the course, developing materials, designing an assessment plan, defining the context, and articulating beliefs. This present study primarily focuses on assessing needs, formulating goals and objectives, conceptualizing content, and organizing the course. Graves's model of curriculum design is like most models which follow a *systems* approach, that is, the components of the design are interrelated and each of the processes involved influences and is influenced by the others in some way. However, most classic models of curriculum design present their components in a linear way, whereas the model shown here presents the components in a flow chart where the teachers or course designers can begin anywhere in the framework depending on how they problematize the situation or how they determine the challenges that they can most productively address within their given context. Being cyclical, it has no hierarchy in the processes involved and no sequence in their accomplishment as the figure above.

The last component is Communicative Competence. It is believed that from the Needs Analysis on which the Course Design would be based, the program would yield FLLrs that have communicative competence. Relevant to this study is communicative competence in FLLRs which this study ultimately addresses. The theory of Communicative competence seeks to understand an individual's ability to effectively communicate meaning to a variety of people within given contexts (Hymes, 1972). There are four aspects of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence comprises knowledge of vocabulary, pronunciation, sound-letter-relationships, and the rules of word and sentence formation. This is traditionally identified with language learning. Sociolinguistic competence demonstrates an individual's ability to create and understand appropriate utterances within a given context. This category includes the use of speech acts and an individual's knowledge of etiquette in a variety of social situations. Discourse competence pertains to one's ability to integrate grammatical forms and meanings to produce a unified text in distinct genres. Genres may be written or spoken. Strategic competence pertains to the ability to express oneself regardless of difficulties or lack of language knowledge. In addition, the socio-cultural competence aspect describes one's ability to grasp how culture affects communication (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1995).

Conceptual Model

The flow of this study would begin with Needs Analysis, which would be collected from three groups: FLLrs/EOP graduates, Content-Area teachers, and English Language Teachers as shown in Figure 2 below.
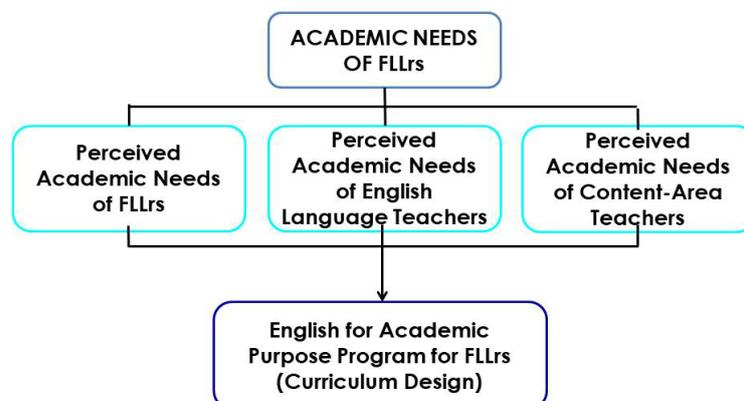

Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the study.

From this diagram, it can be understood that assessing the learners' language needs will inform the teaching-learning process. It also aids administrators and teachers to improve the development of a language program. It assures a flexible, responsive curriculum rather than a fixed, linear curriculum determined ahead of time by instructors. Hence, it provides information to the instructor and learners about what the learners want and need to know in order to help them achieve the kind of proficiency they want to acquire with the language (Brod, 1995).

The investigation may yield similar or different views of students and teachers on these academic language needs. That is, the teachers' view of what needs to be learned and how they should be learned may match or not match those of the students. Finding out what these academic needs are from their different perspective is, therefore, necessary. An EAPP syllabus and course design for FLLRs can help bridge differences and reconcile competing views that will prepare them for academic work in the tertiary level.

Method

Participants

There are three main groups of participants in this study: the FLLrs or EOP graduates, content-area teachers, and language teachers. Thirty-five EOP graduates are the main respondents of the study. The respondents are composed of nine nationalities: South Koreans, Japanese, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Chinese, Kenyan, Thai, Swiss, and Burmese. Among the nine, 40% are South Koreans, 23% are Chinese, 14% are Japanese, 9% are Taiwanese and the rest are equal with 3%. This distribution of respondents shows that majority of the FLLrs EOP graduates is dominated by South Korean students. The proficiency level ranges from pre-intermediate, low intermediate, intermediate, upper intermediate to advanced. Majority of these FFLrs or EOP have low intermediate or intermediate level of proficiency in the four macro skills.

The teacher respondents were divided into two groups: The first group was composed of ten (10) teachers from the College of Arts and Sciences teaching non-language general education courses: Chemistry, Biology, Math, Physics, Political Science/History, Sociology/Anthropology, Psychology, English and Literature, Social Work, and Philosophy. The ten content-area teachers each represent the ten respective departments of the College of Arts and Sciences who have handled foreign students in their classes. The second group of teachers was composed of seven (7) teachers of English teaching English Language Courses: Basic Grammar, Paragraphs and Essays, and Research Paper Writing in the Disciplines. A total of 17 teachers participated in the study. The study took place in Silliman University, a campus by the sea located within the progressive and safe University Town of Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, Philippines. Established in 1901 by the Presbyterian missionaries, Silliman University is that first American University in the Philippines.

Instruments

Three research instruments were used in this study: (1) the *Needs Analysis Questionnaire for Non-English Background Students* by Gravatt, Richards, and Lewis (1997 cited in Richards, 2001), (2) focus group discussion (FGD) questions, and (3) semi-structured interview questions. The needs analysis questionnaire by Gravatt, Richards and Lewis (1997 cited in Richards, 2001) was used for non-English–background students at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. Other changes to the questionnaire for the EOP graduates had also been made. The question "Should this be emphasized in the EOP" was added as an item in the "Skills You Would Like to Improve" section of the questionnaire. A yes-no question was also added: "Do you believe that some changes should be made to the EOP?" This present study had adapted the said questionnaire. Some modifications had been made with the original one to suit the

purpose of the present study; therefore, a reliability testing was performed. This was done with a group of respondents who were similarly situated to the final set of respondents. Once the data were collected, these were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha. In this study, the instruments yielded the following reliability coefficients: Listening = 0.85, Speaking = 0.84, Reading = 0.85 and Writing = 0.84; hence, the instruments are considered highly reliable.

Data Collection

The study devised a three-phased research plan tailored for the purpose of this study. First, copies of the Needs Analysis Questionnaire for Non-English Background Students mentioned above were distributed to the EOP graduates. The questionnaire similar to the one for the EOP graduates was also administered to the content-area teachers handling regular general education subject offerings in the university. Quantitative data were generated from the questionnaires. FGDs were conducted to elicit qualitative data. FGDs were conducted separately among EOP graduates and among the content-area teachers teaching general education courses. Discussions were moderated by a faculty member of the English and Literature Department of the university. The researcher conscientiously recorded the audio proceedings of the session. The semi-structured interview also provided qualitative data. It was conducted with language teachers handling Basic Communication courses.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using percentage and weighted mean. Percentage was used in presenting the distribution of the respondents as follows: FLLrs/EOPs, content area teachers, and language teachers handling English subjects. It was also used in showing the distribution of the three groups of respondents as to the extent of their perceptions on the FLLrs/EOPs' learners' needs and difficulties in using the English language in the four macro skills and sub-skills, such as: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Weighted mean, on the other hand, was utilized in determining the extent of the needs and difficulties in the use of the English language in the four macro skills and sub-skills as perceived by the learners themselves, the content area teachers, and the teachers handling English subjects. The FGDs for student and teacher participants and interview with language teachers made use of lexical transcriptions and the method of analysis was thematic content analysis.

Results and Discussion

It is not surprising that both students and teachers revealed that FLLrs are expected to use all skills. With this, the FLLrs, therefore, have academic needs in all the four macro skills: Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing. Please see Table 1:

TABLE 1
Frequency of FLLrs' Expected Use of the Four Macro Skills as Perceived by FLLrs/EOP Graduates and Teachers

Skills	FLLrs/EOP Graduates	Teachers	Students and Teachers	Interpretation
	Mean	Mean	Mean	
Listening	3.80	3.64	3.72	Always
Reading	3.26	3.55	3.41	Always
Writing	3.03	3.45	3.24	Always
Speaking	3.00	3.36	3.18	Always

From the table, it can be surmised that all macro skills are needed. However, when delving deeper into these results, the three groups had different results as to which macro skill they had the most difficulty with, or which could be translated as their most needed academic skill.

FLLrs or EOP Graduates

For the FLLrs, reading and listening were the topmost skills that they found difficult. For listening, this finding is supported by Kaur and Khan's (2010) study which indicated that listening is the most important language skill among students. For these students, they specifically indicated that they had difficulty in the following micro skills: (1) taking effective notes, (2) understanding informal language, (3) understanding lectures, and (4) understanding discussions when more than one person is speaking. These were all supported during the focus group discussions when they all expressed their need in listening. They stated that they had difficulty when their classmates were talking all at once, and they needed to learn how to listen to instructions of and discussions with the teacher; more so, they needed to learn how to take down notes effectively from the teacher's lecture, especially when there are classmates talking around them. They also expressed that they need to learn how to understand formal language in formal lectures or symposia. In addition, the foreign students struggled with listening comprehension, especially when confronted with complex sentences, which is easily attributable to their limited vocabulary, together with other factors such as their pronunciation deficiency. These findings are supported by Solorzano and Frazier (2002) who expounded that students need different kinds of listening skills and strategies at different levels but they need academic listening the most to enable them to understand and/or participate in college lectures and discussions. Furthermore, Yeldham (2018), in his study on L2 listening instruction, found out that improvements in learners' bottom-up skills did not greatly develop respondents' listening comprehension. He noted that findings lend lukewarm support to the theoretical notions underscoring bottom-up skills instruction. The claim that automatizing learners' bottom-up linguistic processes frees working memory for more effective meaning making processes and transfer of L1 strategies to the L2, thus improving listener's comprehension.

One factor explaining these difficulties is the fact that in many language classrooms, improving listening is not consciously emphasized even if teachers are aware of its importance in the field of language learning. Nunan (2002) opined that "Listening is the Cinderella skill in second language learning" inasmuch as this skill is often overlooked in favor of its "elder sister - speaking". Renandya and Jacobs (2002) also claimed that "listening skills could be acquired through exposure but not really taught". Given these scenarios, it needs reiterating that listening comprehension is fundamental to second language acquisition and consequently calls for a much greater attention in English language teaching. This likewise implies the need to extensively study the nature and principles of second language listening and, afterwards, to be able to design teaching activities and classroom materials appropriate for foreign students. This is to address the students' concerns regarding their listening skills/difficulties foremost of which are *having trouble taking effective notes* and *having trouble understanding informal language* as shown in this study's analysis of gathered data.

As for reading, these students expressed that they had difficulty with the following: (1) reading an entire reference or textbook, (2) reading a text quickly to establish a general idea of the content (skimming), (3) understanding specialist vocabulary in a text, (4) guessing unknown words in a text, and (5) general comprehension. These findings were confirmed in the FGD with students, wherein many participants revealed that having poor vocabulary is their major problem. Moreover, most of them disclosed that they could not easily understand the content of the text, given their lack of vocabulary. These findings validate the study of Hirano (2015) which revealed that students encountered various difficulties with academic reading. In the said study, the reading difficulty of foreign language learners is related to English, the medium of instruction, not being their first language. The students' encountering reading difficulties was also attributed to the nature of reading activities at the college level. Their assigned reading tasks in college proved to be much more complex compared to the reading tasks they

were given in high school in their countries of origin. In this regard, the author offered strategies for the foreign language learners to cope with the academic reading challenges such as making time to read, studying after class, getting support from friends and classmates, asking help from teachers, using dictionaries, and reading selectively using study guides and PowerPoint slides. This problem on vocabulary was also extended to writing; these students found it difficult to search for the appropriate word to use in their composition. Thus, they had difficulty conveying their message. As Wilkins (1972) succinctly put it: "…without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (pp. 111-112).

English Language Teachers

For the English language teachers, they all agreed that the skill which the FLLrs needed most, being the most difficult skill for these FLLrs, was the skill of expressing themselves–and this is in both writing and speaking. Data culled from the interviews indicated that the difficulties were attributable to their FLLrs' limited vocabulary, and pronunciation deficit as well as lack of comprehension, especially when faced with complex sentence structures. These disclosures are shown in the following teachers' responses:

> **Teacher 1**: *Most of them have difficulties in writing, specifically writing essays and research papers.*
> **Teacher 4**: *The foreign students would more often than not take the back seat in terms of accomplishing tasks. They rarely communicate and are still hindered by the use of the language (in group tasks). In writing activities, they barely finish the task on time.*
> **Teacher 7**: *Their problems with speaking and in expressing themselves in the target language stem from their limited vocabulary and comprehension of complex sentence structures. Difficulty in pronunciation is also a source of problem. Most of the time, their limited listening comprehension skills also inhibit them from speaking or from using the L2 in classroom interactions.*
> **Teacher 7**: *… EFL students in our mainstream classes need to develop more confidence and spontaneity in speaking in L2. Most of them also have problems in L2 pronunciation such as the /l/ and the /r/ or [they have] incomprehensible pronunciation. They also need to learn how to negotiate meaning with other learners during discussions, presentations, and other speaking tasks.*

Between the two skills, however, the language teachers considered writing as the most difficult or challenging skill encountered by foreign students based on the performance of the latter in the Basic Communication classes, which are writing performance-based. Needless to say, academic writing needs attention and support from academic institutions because it holds great significance for these students' academic success. By increasing several practical approaches to develop excellent writing, "academic institutions have the opportunity to harness effective frameworks to assist students in the academic advancement" (Copland, 2015, p. 16). Whichever approach to academic writing is adopted, it is important to engage students in initial awareness-raising activities. They should be provided with a list of academic writing skills and discuss their relative significance, and their own needs and difficulties (Waters, 1995). Writing plays a major role in enhancing one's study and honing skills needed in one's career.

 In addition, during the interviews, the language teachers were able to point out foreign language learners' specific difficulties in listening, speaking, reading and writing in terms of accomplishing academic tasks or activities. As regards listening, the teachers said that the FLLrs find difficulties in understanding lectures, formal speeches, movies, spoken instructions, and listening for details. For speaking, most of the students manifested difficulties in pronunciation and organization of idea. They could hardly elaborate ideas when they speak. Because of these difficulties, they would tend to appear hesitant to speak and could hardly project their voices.

Reading is another macro skill in which students experienced difficulties. Specifically, students had low comprehension, limited vocabulary and understanding of complex structures. As regards writing, the students often wrote grammatically incorrect sentences, incoherent paragraphs, and limited and

inappropriate word choice. These realities are shown in the following disclosures of the language teachers:

> **Teacher 1***: Listening for details is one of their difficulties. In terms of speaking, the problem ties on clear pronunciation and organization of ideas. For reading and writing, lack of vocabulary, organization and sentence structures.*
> **Teacher 2***: [They] had a hard time understanding my instructions especially students who got Low Intermediate [Proficiency] in their EO Program. Many were inhibited or hesitant to speak in class, afraid to make mistake. They also have generally low reading comprehension skills and often write grammatically incorrect sentences especially those who have Low Intermediate Proficiency [in English].*
> **Teacher 3***: Probably because they were still adjusting to my accent and word choices, they could not easily get what I said the first time. I had to speak slowly and repeat myself. [When they spoke] there is always the perennial pronunciation problem. This is not a big issue compared to how incoherent they could be. They usually had difficulties elaborating on an idea. Most of the time, they prattle on something; worse, they abandon topics they could not elaborate on ….*
> *Academic reading can be a challenge to students. Vocabulary and complex structures challenged them …. Because [writing] is the most cognitively challenging among the skills, the students had the most problem in this area. Even the basics of writing are a challenge.*
> **Teacher 4***: They could comprehend well (listening/reading) but when it comes to producing an output, they still need to be skillful in writing cohesive paragraphs and being able to not be handicapped with word choice.*

Content-Area Teachers

TABLE 2
Frequency of Emphasis on Macroskills in GE Classes as Perceived by Content-area Teachers

Skills	Weighted mean	Interpretation
Speaking English	3.82	Always
Listening English	3.60	Always
Reading English	3.55	Always
Writing English	3.45	Always

As for the content-area teachers, they found listening and speaking as the skills which the FLLrs often have the most difficulty applying in their classroom activities. Specifically, these teachers expressed that these FLLrs have difficulty in the following micro skills of Speaking: (1) difficulty in entering into discussions, (2) expressing ideas in English, and (3) giving oral presentations. With the combined difficulty of listening and speaking, these content-area teachers have observed that these FLLrs have (1) trouble leading class discussions, (2) difficulty doing tasks that involve class participation, (3) difficulty participating in debates, and (4) difficulty interacting with student reporters/demonstrators.

Between the two skills, however, the content-area teachers perceive that Speaking English is the most frequently occurring difficult skill for their foreign students, and this could be attributed to the classroom tasks often assigned to students, which utilize much talking. In the focus group discussion (FGD) session with the same teacher respondents as participants, it was revealed that students were always asked to do *reporting, presentations, and giving opinions/perspectives.* However, the teachers observed that "most foreign students were reluctant to speak and they generally answered in chorus". One teacher clarified that she "always encourages students to speak English" to overcome their shyness or hesitance to speak the language. Another teacher also recounted that "because of time constraints, we cannot have all students report orally their laboratory results, and hence, reporting and speaking tasks in chemistry lectures/laboratories are minimal." In this last shared observation, it could be deduced that some courses taken by foreign students do not allow them to maximize their use of all the macro skills hence they lose

the opportunity to practice these skills constantly. As a result, it takes more time for them to overcome their difficulties in certain, if not all, the macro skills.

Hence, the teacher respondents ranked speaking as the number one most frequently encountered difficulty among the macro skills. This may be partly attributed to cultural difference that contributes to the difficulties of EFL learners to use English in their daily conversation and in appropriate social interaction (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1986). In addition, most learners find it difficult to express grammatically correct sentences because of their inadequate knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Hence, they put emphasis on fluency rather than accuracy. During the FGD with the teachers, most of them said that foreign students are reluctant to express themselves during presentations as well as give opinions or perspectives on matters being discussed.

The demands of speaking in academic settings as enumerated by Cox and Hill (2004) may explain the students' difficulties with this particular skill. The authors emphasized that speaking is used as a skill in discussion work and, often, discussions include critical thinking based upon readings that are provided. Students learn and practice participation skills such as active participation in class discussions. When doing research, for the preparation and presentation of various oral tasks required in the university, oral presentation skills are likewise needed. Hence, persuasion counts as a technique in speaking [and listening] contexts at the university (Cox & Hill, 2004). Going over the enumerated list, it becomes obvious why foreign students encounter frequent difficulties with speaking starting with many of them being naturally shy as pointed out earlier in this paper. Being shy to speak in public, in fact, is even perceived as a cultural trait or educational orientation of some groups such as the Japanese and the Koreans.

Finally, in addressing the difficulties in speaking of the 21st century learners, Ehsanifard, Ghapanchi, and Afsharrad (2020) in their study examined the effects of blended versus face-to-face learning on learners' oral performance and engagement. The findings revealed that learners who received blended instruction outperformed the control group in both oral proficiency and engagement. Therefore, "based on the results of this study, introducing technology to learning and teaching contexts fosters learner engagement with the course and is more efficient in improving learners' speaking ability" (p. 258).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is therefore concluded that EOP should be redesigned in order to prepare FLLrs for tertiary work. There is no doubt that these foreign students regarded the acquisition of the four macro skills–listening, speaking, reading, and writing–as critical components in the success of their academic life as well as for their survival, living in a foreign country like the Philippines. Although all the macro skills were needed and frequently used, the listening and speaking skills stood out to be the most needed as they are always used in their classes as well as in their discourses with other students. Adequate vocabulary needed in tertiary classroom tasks should also be prioritized. Evidently, as they strived to learn the language skills, they expressed facing challenges and difficulties that were corroborated by their teachers. In this context, the findings of this study point to the need of revisiting and reviewing the existing English programs to respond effectively to the needs of the foreign students. There is a need for the modification of existing programs to be able to address some gaps in the program that have been identified: specifically in terms of more emphasis on listening and speaking, more use of authentic materials and textbooks appropriate to their specific language needs that can effectively address the FLLRs' needed academic skills, and collaboration between language teachers and content teachers to improve instruction in these areas.

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APPENDIX A

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Questions for EOP Graduates

The questions asked from the students can be classified into four:

1 .What activities or tasks require you to use listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in your classes?

2. Were there situations/ instances that you had difficulty using these skills? Cite/ describe an example.

3. What should be added (in terms of activities/ tasks) in an EFL program like EO that can help foreign students improve their skills?

4. How long should a program for foreign language learners be to prepare them adequately for college work?

☐ One semester

☐ Two semesters

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Questions for Content-area Teachers

The questions asked from the teachers can be categorized into three:

1. What listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks and activities do foreign students engage in their courses?

2. What listening, speaking, reading and writing problems/ difficulty do your foreign students encounter?

3. What do you think a language program such as EOP should focus on in helping foreig students in their academic needs?

Appendix C

EAP: Basic English for Academic Purposes (Proposed Syllabus)

Course Description:

        English for Academic Purposes 1 (EAP1) program is a basic 12- unit academic English language course designed for students from non-English medium background who have future plans to enroll in any of the regular tertiary academic courses offered in Silliman University. Primarily, the course is designed to develop students' ability to use English for study purposes in a range of skills.

The course is divided into four components designed to provide practice on specific macro skills:

                    Component 1: Listening   (3 Units)
                    Component 2: Speaking   (3 Units)
                    Component 3: Reading   (3 Units)
                    Component 4: Writing   (3 Units)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES:

EAP1 should equip foreign students to achieve the following goals.

1. Actively engage students in meaningful conversational exchanges within carefully   structured grammatical frameworks.

2. Provide students opportunities to use vocabulary in open-ended conversational exercises   which focuses on the basic grammatical structures of the language.

3. Provide a lively and relevant experience through English practice and reading

4. Give more practice in writing by doing varied activities based on oral presentation.
5. Develop vocabulary among students by allowing them to create and write original stories   based on   their interests, backgrounds, and imaginations.
6. Practice in spelling and writing through listening and dictation exercises and activities.
7. Use English in performing various academic language functions.

EAP2: Advance English for Academic Purposes (Proposed Syllabus)

Course Description:
              English for Academic Purposes 2 (EAP 2) program is an advanced 12 –unit academic English course intended for foreign students who have completed EAP 1(satisfying the grade requirements of the English Department). This course is designed to prepare the students to accomplish tasks in their content classes and in their professions. Furthermore, the course is divided into four components designed to provide practice on specific macro skills:

<div align="center">

Component 1: Academic Listening   (3 units)
Listening to Speaking
Listening to Writing
Component 2: Academic Speaking   (3 Units)
Collaborative Learning
</div>

- Debate
- Panel Discussion
- Prepared Informative Speech
- Impromptu

<div align="center">

Component 3: Academic Reading   (3 Units)
Reading to Speaking
Reading to Writing
Component 4: Academic Writing   (3 Units)
Academic Essay
</div>

GENERAL OBJECTIVES:
EAP 2 should equip foreign students to achieve the following goals.

1. Develop or enhance their critical and creative thinking, reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills.
2. Acquire knowledge of structure and content of selected text types, especially those in the academic   context, and acquire skill in analyzing and identifying them.
3 .Acquire knowledge of basic data collection: interviews, research, etc.
4. Acquire a better understanding of research process and its importance in the academe and professions.
5. Develop and demonstrate appreciation for the importance of academic listening,   speaking, reading, and writing.
6. Use English in performing various academic language fun.

<div align="center">

Conceptualize Content (course outline)
</div>

EAP 1 BASIC ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES (12 Units)	EAP 2 ADVANCED ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES(12 Units)

I. Listening (3 Units)
    Listening for Acquisition
    Listening for comprehension
    Academic listening
        Texts: Academic audio recordings
         Speeches
	I. Academic listening (3 units)
	        Listening to speaking
	        Listening to writing instructions
	
	II. Academic speaking (3units)
	        Collaborative learning

Lectures Reports News (business reports) Political reports II. Speaking (3 units) 　　Talk as interaction 　　Talk as transaction 　　Talk as performance III. Reading (3 units) 　　Scanning and Skimming 　　3 Levels of reading: 　　Reading the lines 　　Reading between the lines 　　Reading beyond the lines 　　Reading comprehension skills: 　　Noting details 　　Vocabulary 　　Main idea 　　Supporting details 　　Pronoun referents IV. Writing (3 units) 　　Paragraph 　　Topic sentence 　　Supporting details (primary, 　　secondary, and tertiary) 　　Coherence 　　Cohesion Note: Themes SELF BUSINESS COMMUNITY Note: 18 Weeks	• 　　　Debate • 　　　Panel discussion • 　　　Informative speech • 　　　Impromptu III. Academic reading (3 units) 　　Reading to speaking 　　Reading to writing IV. Academic writing (3 units) 　　Academic essay 　　Structure of the essay: 　　　Thesis statement 　　　Supporting paragraphs 　　　Concluding paragraph 　　Outlining 　　Research for good source-annotation 　　APA format 　　Writing of the draft 　　Peer evaluation, editing ,and revising 　　Final paper writing 　Note: Themes STEM (Science, Technology, 　Engineering and Mathematics) ABM (Accountancy, Business, 　and Management HUMSS (Humanities and Social 　　　Sciences) Note: 18 Weeks