Development of a Competency-based English Oral Communication Course for Undergraduate Public Relations Students

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Abstract

The issue of discrepancies between university English language curriculum and English requirements at the workplace has resulted in incompetent English language graduates. This has influenced a trend toward the promotion of occupational/professional education in higher education such as Academic-for-occupational purposes English (EA/OP) in ESP world. The study proposes the use of a competency-based approach and presents a detailed process for developing such a course step-by-step, with a focus on equipping undergraduate PR students with the needed competencies in English oral communication in the PR job market.

The study consists of two phases: course development and course implementation/evaluation. To develop the course, a needs analysis was conducted based on the modified DACUM technique and also a questionnaire survey. Next, the results of the needs analysis were used to design the course. The course was implemented with 35 PR students at Bangkok University for one semester. To examine the course effectiveness, three phases of course evaluation were conducted: before, during and after the course implementation. The course was evaluated against seven criteria. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data indicated that all of the seven criteria were achieved testifying the effectiveness of the course. Finally, some major points in each process of the study were discussed to justify the effectiveness of the course.

Key words: competency-based, English oral communication, English for Specific Purposes, Academic English for Occupational Purposes, Thai undergraduate public relations students

Abbreviations: ESP – English for Specific Purposes, EA/OP- Academic English for Occupational Purposes, PR – Public Relations

Introduction

Many studies have talked about the need for English oral communication and a discrepancy between the university English language curriculum and English language requirements for jobs (Phosward 1989; Silpa-Anan 1991; Boonjaipet 1992; Crosling and Ward 2002; Vasavakul 2006). Dominguez and Rokowski (2002) refer to the same issue as '*the abyss existing between the goals of the academic and the professional world*' and propose an idea of bridging the gap between English for Academic and Occupational purposes. This corresponds to what Grubb and Lazerson (2005) state in The Journal of Higher Education that there has been a trend toward the promotion of occupational/ professional education in higher education. In the area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Belcher (2004) uses the term--- '*Academic-for-occupational purposes English' (EA/OP)* for the integration between English for academic purposes (EAP) and English for occupational purposes (EOP). In her paper, she gives a brief example of the integration supported with the use of new technologies such as video cameras, network computers and the internet allowing access to virtually real world settings. She states that technology facilitates not just collecting and analyzing data but also generating teaching materials from those actual occupational situations. In addition, Grubb and Eileen (1992:29) present a model called remedial English-as-a-second-Language (ESL) program with an occupational focus as they put it: '*…the integration of occupational content and academic instruction involves teaching basic skills (or English) within courses that draw reading, vocabulary, writing exercises and other applications from a broad occupational area as well as providing what might be termed career exploration---an introduction to the specific jobs within the occupation and to the concepts, practices and demands in these positions'*. However, there is not much information about integration and how to develop such a course of integration in the existing ESP literature.

The mismatch between what the current English courses offer at Bangkok University and what is expected at the workplace was reported in "*A Study of Problems and Needs of Undergraduate Students at Bangkok University in Learning English for Specific Purposes*" conducted by Munsakorn (2007). According to the study, many ESP courses are provided for Bangkok University students such as English for Business Purposes, English for Fine Arts, English for Communication Arts, etc. However, it seems that those courses are not sufficient. It is revealed that there is a call for additional English courses with each particular occupational focus.

The researcher has conducted a preliminary interview with the Director of the Language Institute of Bangkok University and the Head Teacher of the Public Relations Department. From the interview, it has been revealed that there is a need to set up a specific English course for Bangkok University students majoring in Public Relations (PR). The reason behind the idea is that English proficiency is usually a requirement to work in the field of public relations, but most of the PR students do not have strong English proficiency. It seems that the courses offered to them as parts of their degree requirements are not enough to help them be able to get a job in the field of their expertise. Instead, inexperienced lack-of-PR-knowledge English major students are chosen over PR students in the PR job market. Ms. Penruedee Sriwattana, Director of Ernst & Young Recruitment Ltd., responsible for recruiting staff for many companies, shares a similar opinion "a major problem of job applicants is that some very competent people in their profession regrettably fail to land a good job/position due to a lack of competence to communicate in English" (Une-Aree, 2006).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to develop an English oral communication course for undergraduate PR students. It illustrates how to develop an integrated course of EAP and EOP since the course is designed to teach undergraduate PR students but is based on the oral English needs and uses of PR job prospects in international organizations. Such a course is provided as part of their degree program and is taught alongside with other subject academic courses. A Competency-based approach was selected for the course as a key for integration.

The course emphasizes competencies in English oral communication since English oral skills are reported as the most wanted and needed for Communication Arts students (Munsakorn, 2007). Especially in the area of PR, competencies in English oral communication are considered a valuable asset for PR practitioners. The course is thus expected to equip PR students with English oral competencies so that they will receive more opportunities in PR job employment.

This paper aims to answer the following research questions

1. How can a competency-based English oral communication course for undergraduate PR students be developed?
2. How effective is the course as evaluated against the set criteria before, during and after the course implementation?

To answer these research questions, this paper presents a process of developing the competency-based English oral communication course for PR students. The paper illustrates four main frameworks which were proposed and used as a guideline for course design. Later, results of the course evaluation against seven criteria in three phrases are described.

This paper is part of a doctoral dissertation entitled *Development of a Competency-based English Oral Communication Course for Undergraduate Public*

Relations Students. It covers the concept of competency-based education, which is the main focus of the study. The findings testify to the effectiveness of the competency-based approach used in ESP courses.

Competency-based Education (CBE)

Due to widespread concern about the quality of students learning, competency-based education originated in response to increased calls for teacher accountability, for measurable assessment of student achievement, and for skills-based curricula which train students for specific tasks (Auerbach,1986). Especially in post-secondary education, there has been a gradual movement toward competencies and a corresponding focus on learning outcomes as universities have attempted to be more responsive to business needs. This shift has happened in parallel with an extensive interest in using competencies as a unit of analysis and a growing trend in using performance-based models of the human resources field in the business sector (Paulson, 2001).

As for language curriculum development, competency-based curricula have been called "*the most important breakthrough in adult ESL*" (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1983b:1). Unlike traditional programs, in which certificates and diplomas certify that the students has completed a specific number of credit hours, certificates and diplomas granted under CBE programs certify that the students can perform specified tasks. According to the article titled *"Educational Accountability"* in ERIC Digest (1985), it is one method of assuring the general public that degree attainment is a process of learning. Polk (1982) explains that CBE requires students to achieve mastery of sequentially ordered course material, require students to demonstrate competence in performing skills and behaviors that are central to specific tasks, activities or careers. Findley and Nathan (1980:222) support the approach as *"a* *successful model for the delivery of educational services that allows for responsible and accountable teaching".* As the result, the approach has come to be accepted and widely used in many social survival or workplace-oriented language programs.

As discussed earlier, the present study aims to design a professional preparation course for PR undergraduate students. The course will be similar to a workplace-oriented language program since the course has a goal to enable the students to be able to use English to orally communicate in PR job routines. Therefore, the competency-based approach is selected to be the focus of the study since the approach is performance-based emphasizing 'the outcomes or outputs of learning in the development of a language program' (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 141). The focus of the approach matches with what the PR undergraduate students who are about to enter the labor market will need.

English oral communication for Public Relations

English oral communication has become influential in Thai society in terms of a required qualification in many professions. Especially in the field of PR, English oral communication is considered a valuable asset for PR practitioners (Setawadin 2005). Beginning in 2005, The English Language Development Center (ELDC) developed standards of English for 25 occupations in order to use them as criteria to assess personnel English proficiencies and as a basis for workplace English curriculum development, lesson planning, materials development, resource selection, learner placement and assessment. Standards of English for Public Relations were included in 2006. The standards concerning English oral communication for Public Relations is described in Table 1 below:

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Using spoken English at an intermediate level</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Benchmark indicators:
1. use and respond to basic courtesy formulas, e.g. greetings, leave-taking, introductions
2. use and respond to questions, requests opinions, suggestions and advice from employers and guests
3. give employers'/guests' directions, instructions, suggestions, compliments, advice, confirmations, apologies and warning
4. initiate and carry on small talk
5. handle phone conversations and standard replies
6. express and respond to gratitude, appreciation, complaints, disappointment, dissatisfaction, satisfaction and hope
7. give clear directions and instructions in a workplace situation
8. speak with considerable fluency and accuracy with emphasis on clear pronunciation patterns
9. adjust language for clarity and accuracy</td></tr>
<tr><td>Using an appropriate language variety and register according to audience, purpose, setting and culture</td><td>Understanding and using nonverbal communication appropriate to audience, purpose, setting and culture</td></tr>
<tr><td>Advanced Benchmark indicators:
1. use appropriate language register to interact with employers/guests
2. respond appropriately to compliments, refusals, negative value judgments, criticism and complaints from employers/guest
3. use polite language to interact with guests, especially when persuading, negotiating, and expressing value judgments and emotions
4. use idiomatic expressions appropriately
5. use appropriate strategies to handle communications problems</td><td>Advanced Benchmark indicators:
1. understand body language norms among various cultures
2. identify nonverbal cues that cause misunderstandings or indicate communication problems
3. identify attitudes and emotions of employers/ guest from their nonverbal communication
4. understand and use gestures, facial and body language appropriate to employers'/guests' cultures e.g. space to maintain while standing/sitting near guests, level of eye contact
5. use intonation, pitch, volume and tone of voice appropriately</td></tr>
</table>

Table 1: ELDC standards for English oral communication for PR

However, it seems that the above standards are not quite complete nor sufficiently specific since the indicators do not specify any detail related to PR job descriptions. Apart from this, it seems that there is no research study or much information about English oral communication for PR students available at the present. Therefore, to develop the course, an in-depth investigation of needed competencies in English oral communication for PR students was conducted to shed some light in the area where resources are limited.

Research Methodology

There were three main parts in the study - needs analysis, course development and course implementation/evaluation.

1. Needs Analysis

This study conducted a needs analysis in three steps. The first two steps adopted the basic principles of the DACUM technique. The DACUM technique is an occupational analysis process and is widely used in human resource management to provide a picture of what the worker does in terms of duties, tasks, knowledge, skills, traits and in some cases the tools the worker uses, allows the researcher to systematically collect data from experts in the field. However, due to time and resources limitation, the DACUM technique in this study was modified to better serve the context of the situation by utilizing two rounds of in-depth interviews with the experts in stead of conducting a workshop as described below:

1.1. The first interview round was a semi-structured interview with 12 PR experts. They consisted of PR in-house managers who work in four different types of international organizations (a government organization, a non-profit organization, a private company, and a financial institute); PR managers engaged in four different PR consultancies; and full-time experienced PR teachers from four universities. All of them have some experience recruiting PR entry-level personnel. In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to substitute for a 1- or 2-day brainstorming process due to lack of time and resources to gain information about the needs for competencies in English oral communication for PR jobs and the readiness of PR new graduates as PR job candidates.

1.2. The second interview round were structured interview with 16 experts to validate data. They consisted of PR in-house managers from four other different types of international organizations (a government organization, a non-profit organization, a private company, and a financial institute), PR managers in four other different PR consultancies, full-time experienced heads of PR university teachers from the four universities; and full-time experienced heads of ESP teachers from the four universities. The participants were asked to accept or to revise each statement on the list and also to give suggestions. Each item yielded a consensus based on the majority of the answers. The results of this interview round, called 'the validated list of the competencies in English oral communication for PR undergraduate students,' were then included in the questionnaire for students to identify their wants and expectations of the needed competencies for their ESP course.

1.3. The third step was a survey questionnaire with 222 junior and senior PR students at Bangkok University. This stage uses a Likert's scale (1-5 choices) aiming to explore the students' points of view and to gain insights about the importance of English oral communication, their English learning and teaching problems concerning English oral communication, their self-assessment of their competencies in English oral communication for PR, and their wants and expectations of the needed competencies to be included in their ESP course.

2. Course Development

The results of the needs analysis revealed a list of the needed competencies in English oral communication for undergraduate PR students. Next, the top four needed competencies were selected to be the learning objectives for the course. The Backward Design (Wiggins and Mctighe 2002) and '*Steps in finding out English competencies needed in a particular workplace'* (Sujana 2005) were chosen to be the underlying principles in designing the course. After the course was developed, it was validated and evaluated by experts. Three experts were invited to validate and evaluate the lesson plans and materials and five experts were invited to validate and evaluate the English oral test. Next, the lessons plan, materials and the English oral test were adjusted according to the experts' suggestions. Then, four sample lessons and the English oral test were piloted with fifteen participants having similar characteristics with the participants in the main study. During a four-week pilot study, four class observations by one English teacher at Bangkok University were conducted to observe how the class went each week. At the end, the participants were asked to complete the evaluation form for the sample lessons. After that, the information obtained from the pilot study was used to adjust the lesson as appropriate.

3. Course Implementation and Evaluation

The course was implemented with 35 participants in the main study (third-year and forth-year PR students in a Thai program at Bangkok University) for one semester totaling 35 hours. To evaluate the effectiveness of the course both quantitatively and qualitatively, the evaluation process was conducted in three phases: before, during and after the course implementation. The instruments used and their timing is summarized in Table 2 below:

The timing of the evaluation process	The instruments used	Types of the gathered data
Before the course implementation	1. The checklist for the experts to validate the sample lesson plans and materials	Quantitative and qualitative data
	2. The checklists for the experts to validate the English oral test and the scoring rubrics	Quantitative and qualitative data
	3. The English oral test (pretest)	Quantitative data
	4. The Self checklist (Day 1)	Quantitative data
	5. the class observation form (pilot study)	Quantitative and qualitative data
	6. the evaluation form for the sample lessons (pilot study)	Quantitative and qualitative data
During the course implementation	7. The in-class self-checklists	Quantitative data
	8. The teacher'logs and students'logs	Qualitative data
After the course implementation	9. The English oral test (posttest)	Quantitative data
	10. The self-checklist (The end of the course)	Quantitative data
	11. The end-of the course evaluation form	Quantitative and qualitative data
	12. Semi-structured interview with the participants	Qualitative data

Table 2: The timing and the research instruments used for course evaluation

Seven criteria were set to examine the effectiveness of the course throughout the course. The criteria are listed in Table 3 below:

Criterion number/ Type of the criteria	Timing of the evaluation	Descriptions of each criterion
Criterion no.1/ Affective criterion	Before the course implementation	-evaluating the developed course materials by experts using an evaluation form for the course materials. -The results of the course material evaluation are $\overline{X}$ >3.50 which indicates positive opinions of the experts toward the quality of the course materials.
Criterion no.2/ Affective criterion	During the course implementation	-comparing the students' self-checklists on their first and their second performance. -The students' scores of the self-checklist (on their second performance) are higher than the scores from the self-checklist (on their first performance).
Criterion no.3/ Affective criterion	During the course implementation	-evaluating the process of teaching and learning using teacher's logs and students' logs -The teacher's logs and students' logs indicate positive results.
Criterion no.4/ Cognitive criterion	After the course implementation	-comparing students'scores on the English oral tests before and after the implementation -The students' scores of the post-oral test are significantly higher than the scores from the pre-test according to t-test and the Cohen's d effect size should be > 0.5 (medium effect size)
Criterion no.5/ Affective criterion	After the course implementation	-comparing the students' self-checklists DAY 1 and the students' self-checklists at the end of the course -The students' scores of the self-checklist (at the end of the course) are significantly higher than the scores from the self-checklist (DAY 1).
Criterion no.6/ Affective criterion	After the course implementation	-studying the students' opinions towards the overall developed course in terms of their satisfaction, its usefulness and its practicality through the use of questionnaire -The results of the end-of-the course questionnaire survey are $\overline{X}$ > 3.50 which indicates positive opinions toward the overall course at the end of the course.
Criterion no. 7/ Affective criterion	After the course implementation	-studying the students' opinions towards the overall developed course in terms of their satisfaction, its usefulness and its practicality through the use of interview with the participants -The results of the interview with the participants indicate positive opinions toward the overall course.

Table 3: List of criteria used to evaluate the developed course

Findings

1. In response to the research question 1: How can the competency-based English oral communication course for undergraduate PR students be developed? We translated the needs analysis into the course development. First of all, we specified important findings from the needs analysis as follows:

1. It is obvious that the students need an English course to improve their English competencies. The results of the needs analysis reveal a list of the needed competencies consisting of four needed competencies for PR job interview and eight needed competencies for PR entry-level work (see Appendix 1). The students' self-assessment shows that the students rated their competencies quite low for all of the needed competencies. Furthermore, the results of their wants and expectations indicate that all of the competencies are wanted and expected to be included into their English courses. However, the researcher needed to select only some of the needed competencies to be the learning objectives of the course. Since the course consists of twelve sessions for instructions and two sessions for assessment and evaluation, only four of the needed competencies were chosen to be the learning objectives of the course as listed below:

Learning objectives of the course
1. Students will be able to introduce themselves; describe their educational backgrounds, their participation in extra curriculum activities and job experiences.
2. Students will be able to talk about their abilities, their hobbies, their nature, their strengths and weaknesses as well as their likes and dislikes.
3. Students will be able to give some information about the organization they are applying for.
4. Students will be able to handle phone conversations and standard replies.

Table 4: The selected learning objectives for the course

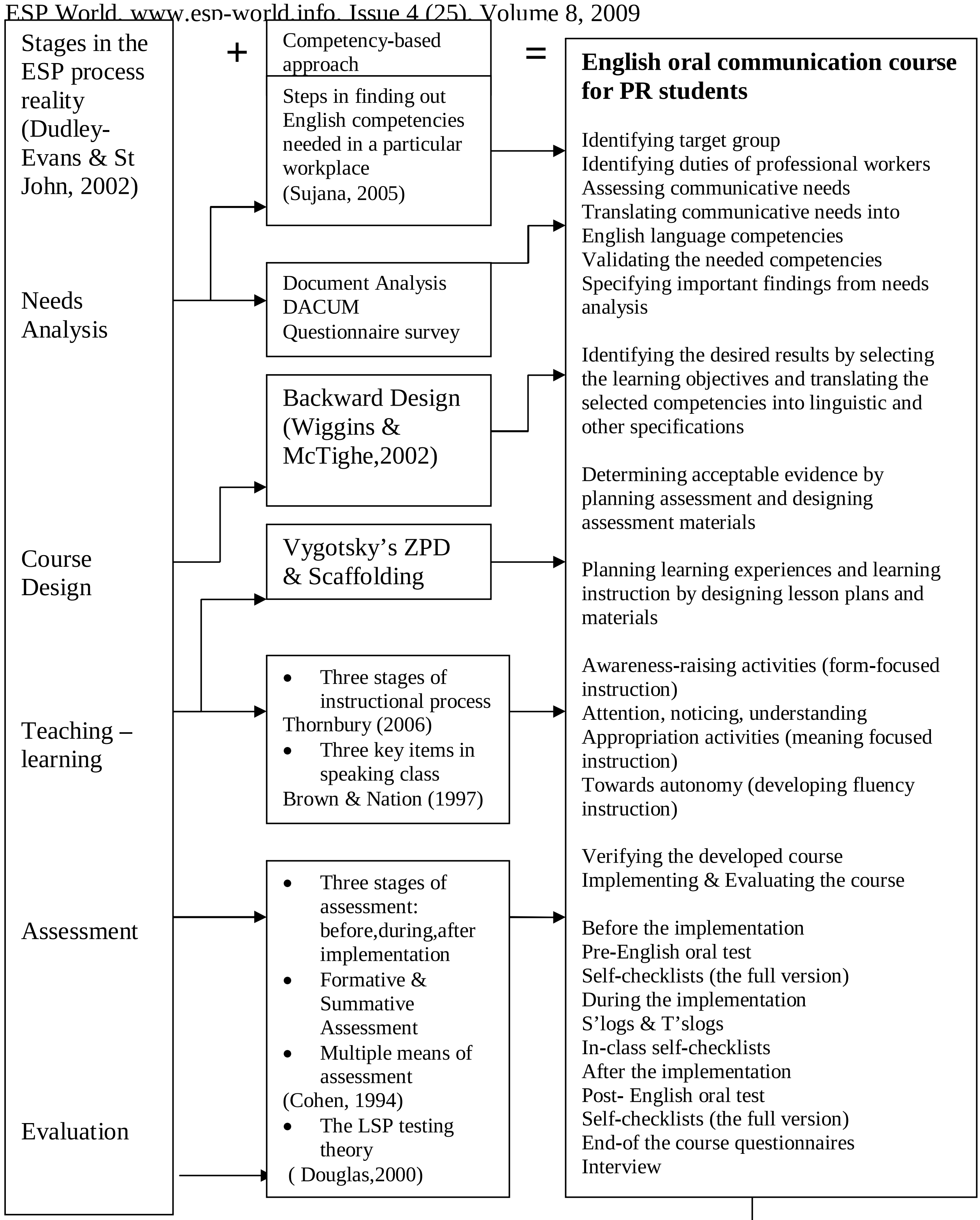
The first three needed competencies for PR job interviews were chosen because these competencies are very essential for the students to get a job. The students need to go to a process of job interview before they work. Moreover, the results of their self-assessment show that they rated their competencies quite low (in a range of 1.96-2.43). As for competency in handling telephone conversations, it was chosen because it was rated as the most wanted and expected course objective for working effectively as entry-level PR personnel. In addition, literature and information from the preliminary interview indicate that communicating over the telephone is one of the tasks that entry-level PR personnel need to handle daily and most frequently.

2. For degree of problems in English oral communication, ‘unable to have a business conversation fluently and properly’ was on the top of the list. Inexperience as well as the lack of practice, which was indicated as the biggest issue for their English learning and teaching, could be the most important factors. Therefore, it is important to focus on business English and business etiquettes. It is also necessary to give the students a lot of opportunity to practice their skills in order to achieve the target competencies.

3. As for learning and teaching method, group activity-based learning and teaching was on the top of the list while role-plays and class discussions were placed the second (2.90) and the third (2.86) respectively. Moreover, there were seven comments in the open-ended part suggesting that the lessons should be group activities focusing on real applications in stead of theories. Therefore, the lessons should provide the students opportunity to do lots of group activities so as to help the students learn and practice their English with their peers.

4. Concerning assessment, performance-based assessment was agreeable to both groups, the experts and the students ($\overline{X}$ = 3.01). Therefore, this study employs performance-based assessments. The learners are assessed as they actually perform the behavior that we want to measure.

Next, we explored theoretical frameworks for course development. Figure 1 below shows an overview of theoretical frameworks used for course development of the study:



The main components of the course:

1) The target competencies must be defined with precision based on a careful process of needs analysis with an attempt to involve all of the stakeholders.

3) The outcome goals must be stated clearly and explicitly with regard to the criteria of an expected performance known and agreed upon all those of stakeholders.

4) The instructional means must be known explicitly, agreed upon, readily available and closely tied to recognized outcome goals. A variety of activities must be provided which allow students to practice the target competencies.

5) Formative and summative assessment with the use of multiple means is required to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

6) The students must be assessed once instruction completed. The criteria for assessment need to be explicit, known, agreed upon and criterion-referenced. Students are given credit for performing to a pre-specified level of competencies under prespecified conditions.

Figure 1: an overview of theoretical frameworks used for course development of the study

According to the above figure, 5 components taken from ‘stages in the ESP process reality’ (Dudley-Evans & St John, 2002) and principles of competency-based approach were chosen to be the core frameworks for course development. Next, we chose to follow Sujana’s steps in finding out English competencies needed in a particular workplace for conducting needs analysis via three channels: document analysis, DACUM technique and a questionnaire survey. Then, to design the course, three stages of the Backward Design (Wiggins and McTighe, 2002) were elaborated and employed. As for teaching and learning, underlying principles of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding including three stages of instructional process proposed by Thornbury (2006) and three key items in speaking class suggested by Brown & Nation (1997) were combined in order to design lesson plans and materials. In terms of assessment and evaluation, the course was evaluated and the students were assessed and evaluated in three phases: before, during and after course implementation. Formative and summative assessments with the use of multiple means were conducted for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. To construct the English oral test, which was the main assessment tools, the LSP testing theory (Douglas, 2000) was used as the framework in developing the English oral test. In the box at the bottom, six components were proposed as the main components of the course.

Each of the frameworks is illustrated and explained in details as follows:

Framework 1: Steps in developing the competency-based English oral communication course

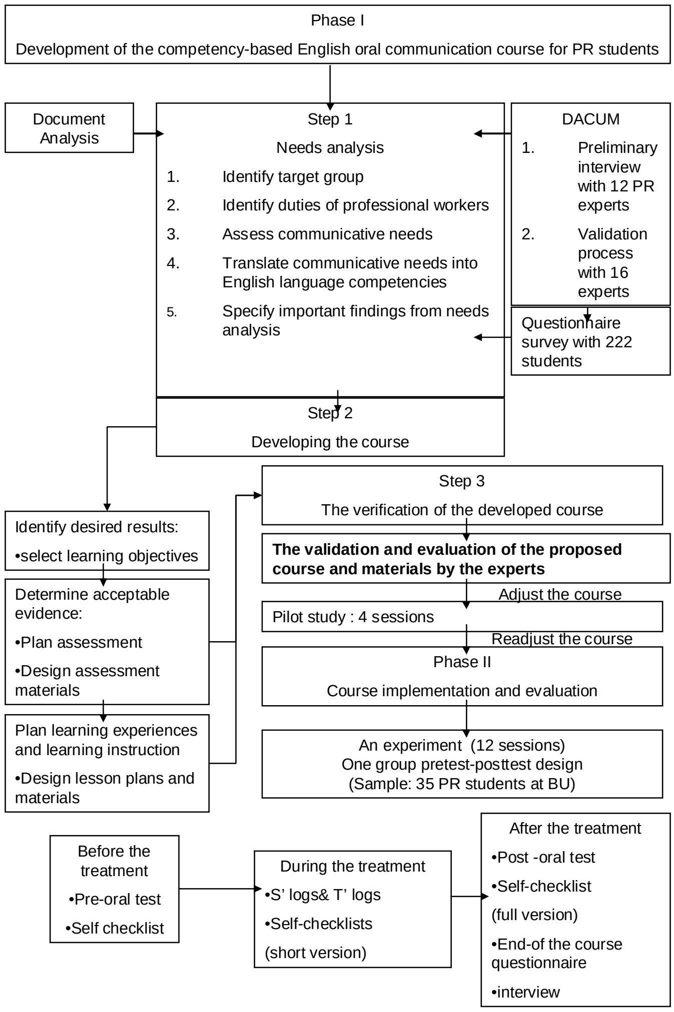


Figure 2: A framework for developing the competency-based English oral communication course

The development of the competency-based English oral communication course for PR students consists of three main phases: 1. Course development 2. Course implementation and evaluation.

Phase I : Course development consists of three sub-steps:

Step 1: needs analysis

The needs analysis began with identifying target group, identifying duties of professional workers, assessing communicative needs, translating communicative needs into English language competencies and validating the needed competencies. All these were done via document analysis, the modified DACUM technique and a questionnaire survey with PR students. What's next was specifying important findings from needs analysis and moving on to step 2, developing the course.

Step 2: developing the course

Three stages of The Backward Design (Wiggings and McTighe, 2002) were elaborated as listed below:

1. Identifying desired results

   At this stage, learning objectives were selected and translated into linguistic and other specifications.

2. Determining acceptable evidence

   At this stage, the assessment plan was constructed and assessment materials were designed.

3. Planning learning experiences and leaning instruction

   At this stage, lesson plans and materials were designed.

Step 3: the verification of the developed course

Once the course was designed, it was verified by experts and pilot study prior to the main course implementation.

Phase II: Course implementation and evaluation

After the implementation, the course was assessed and evaluated in three phases**:** before, during and after the implementation with the use of the English oral test, self-checklists, students' logs and teacher's logs, the end-of-the course questionnaire and interview. More details of assessment plan are provided below:

Framework 2: The assessment plan

The second framework is 'the assessment plan'. The framework illustrates how the learner participants will be assessed.

	Formative assessment	**Summative assessment**
Before implementation	**During implementation**	**After implementation**
The pre-oral test **Self-checklist (pre-test)**	**Homework assignments** **Teacher' logs** **Quizzes** **Student's logs** **Self-checklist** **A group project** **Peer-assessments**	**The post-oral test** **Self-checklist (post test)** **Interview**

Table 5: The assessment plan

According to the assessment plan, each student went through three checkpoints: before, during, after implementation. As for research purpose, the main instruments used to collect quantitative data were the oral test and the self-checklist as well as logs and interview were used to collect qualitative data. The other instruments (homework assignments, quizzes, a group project and peer assessments) were usually used for instructional purposes such as diagnosis, evidence of progress, giving feedback to the students and evaluating teaching.

Framework 3: A framework for developing the English oral test

As for the English oral test, which is the main instrument in assessing the participants' competencies, the LSP testing theory developed by Douglas (2000) was used to design a framework for developing the English oral test below:

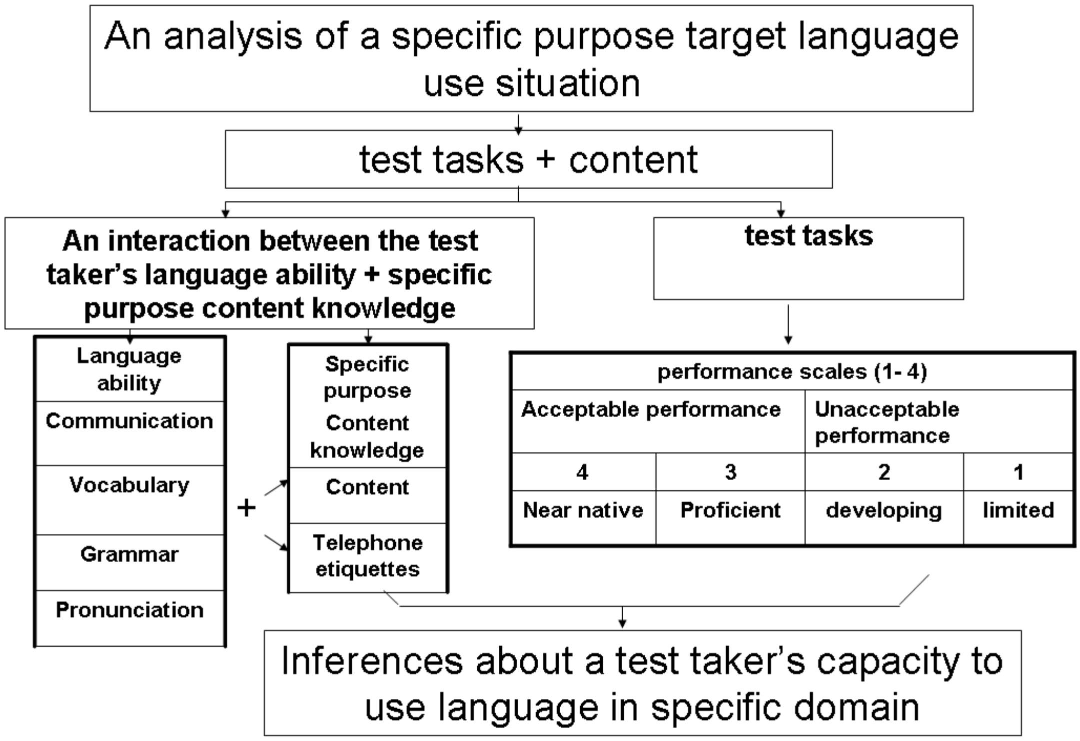


Figure 3: A framework for developing the English oral test

The framework illustrates how the English oral test was developed. The process of developing the English oral test started with an analysis of a specific purpose target language use situation which was the results of the needs analysis and followed by a design of test tasks and content which is the representative of tasks in the target situation. Next, scoring rubrics were created based on an interaction between the test taker's language ability and specific purpose content knowledge on one hand, and the test tasks on the other. In this case, the test taker's language ability refers to four scales in measuring language proficiency (communication, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation).Then, 'content' representing special purpose content knowledge is added as a criterion on the scoring rubric for a job interview while 'business telephone etiquettes' is an additional criterion on the scoring rubric for business telephone conversation. As for the test tasks, it consists of four performance scales starting from 1 means 'limited', 2 mean 'developing', 3 means 'proficient' and

4 means 'near native'. The scale 1 and 2 indicate the test taker's performance is unacceptable (still in need of improvement) while the scale 3 and 4 indicate that the test taker's performance is acceptable. As a result, inferences about a test taker's capacity to use language in specific domain are the expected outcomes of the English oral test in this study.

Framework 4: A framework for designing the instructional/learning plan

The learning and instructional plan was based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding as well as stages of instructional process of Thornbury (2006) and Brown and Nation (1997).

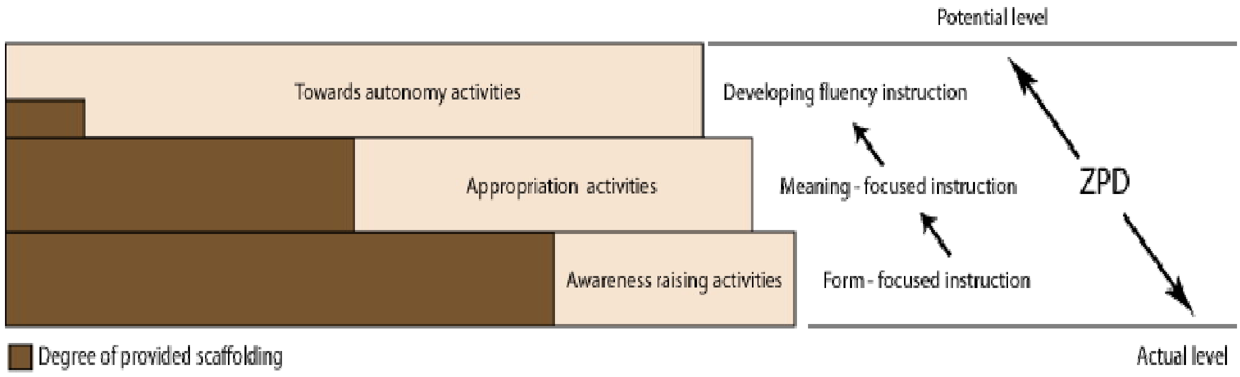


Figure 4: A framework for designing the instructional/learning plan

There were three kinds of activities in a lesson plan. Awareness raising activities were used to start the lesson. The activities were to stimulate the students' background knowledge and introduce the students to language use. Next, appropriation activities were provided aiming at practicing the forms as well as meanings focused by providing contexts of the situations. Later, towards autonomy activities were provided for more practices to enhance fluency.

Concerning the types of the instruction, each of the lesson units normally started with form-focused instruction before moving on to meaning-focused and finally to developing fluency. However, each of the lessons was flexible. The type of instruction could be overlapping for some activities. For example, it was possible that appropriation activities could be both form-focused and meaning-focused. It could also be acceptable if appropriation activities allowed some sorts of 'developing fluency' instruction in a way.

All of these frameworks were used as a blueprint to develop the competency-based English oral communication course for PR students. After that, we began to design the course structure based on the four selected learning objectives. Since the first three learning objectives are parts of needed competencies for job interview while the last one is a part of needed competencies for PR working situations. The course therefore contained two modules: English for job interview and English for entry-level PR personnel as illustrated in the proposed course structure below:

<u>The course structure of English oral communication course for PR students</u>

English Oral Communication Course for PR students
<u>Module I: English for Job Interview (6 sessions)</u>

- Introduction to PR job recruitment process and PR job positions
- Talking about your background and experiences
- Talking about your strengths
- Talking about your weaknesses
- Talking about companies and organizations
- Practicing a job interview

+++ In-class Midterm Exam /Posttest 1 (1 session)
<u>Module II: English for entry-level PR personnel</u> (6 sessions)

II.1 Receiving business telephone calls (3 sessions)
- Taking business telephone messages
- Receiving business telephone calls
- Receiving complaint calls

II.2 Making business telephone calls (2 sessions)
- Making PR-related business telephone calls
- Practicing making PR related business telephone calls

II.6 Wrap-up session (1 session)
+++ In-class Final Exam / Posttest 2 (1 session)

Table 6: The Course Structure

The course consisted of 14 sessions (2 hours/session). The first six sessions were dedicated to English lessons for job interview. Then, a week after the students needed to take a midterm exam which was considered their posttest 1. The content of the exam covered the first four learning objectives. For lessons under the module of English for entry-level PR staff, six sessions were dedicated to cover the most required aspects of business telephone conversations (three sessions for receiving business telephone calls, two sessions for making business telephone calls and one session for wrap-up practice). A week later, in their last session at the end of the course the students needed to take in-class final exam which was their posttest 2. The content of the exam covered only the learning objective 5 which is about handling business telephone conversations.

The lessons were developed and adapted from several sources considered relevant to the participants. For example, some of the textbooks have been produced and used by major universities in Thailand such as Thammasat University and Dhurakij Bundit University and authentic materials such as real PR job advertisements, video clips from the internet have been included in the lessons. The lessons in this module were verified by two English language teachers with a doctoral degree and one PR teacher with PR working experiences as being appropriate and useful for the students.

2. In response to the research question 2: How effective is the course as evaluated against the set criteria before, during and after the course implementation?

The results of examining the effectiveness of the course against each criterion are reported in Table 5 as following:

Criterion number/ Type of the criteria	Timing of the evaluation	Descriptions of each criterion	The outcome
Criterion no.1/ Affective criterion	Before the course implementation	-evaluating the developed course materials by experts using an evaluation form for the course materials. -The results of the course material evaluation are $\overline{X} \geq 3.50$ which indicates positive opinions of the experts toward the quality of the course materials.	on the five-rating scale, all of the listed criteria on both of the evaluation forms (for the lesson plans and the English oral test) received $\overline{X} \geq 3.50$ which indicates positive opinions of the experts toward the quality of the course materials (see Appendix 2).
Criterion no.2/ Affective criterion	During the course implementation	-comparing the students' self-checklists on their first and their second performance. -The students' scores of the self-checklist (on their second performance) are higher than the scores from the self-checklist (on their first performance).	The results of the self-checklists during the course implementation from paired samples test indicate that participants rated themselves higher after the course implementation at a statistical significant level ($p < .05$) (See Appendix 3)
Criterion no.3/ Affective criterion	During the course implementation	-evaluating the process of teaching and learning using teacher's logs and students' logs -The teacher's logs and students' logs indicate positive results.	Three main aspects: classroom environment, awareness of their weaknesses and strengths and motivation were observed and there were positive evidences for all of the three aspects.
Criterion no.4/ Cognitive criterion	After the course implementation	-comparing students'scores on the English oral tests before and after the implementation -The students' scores of the post-oral test are significantly higher than the scores from the pre-test according to t-test and the Cohen's d effect size should be > 0.5 (medium effect size)	The results of -16.550 from *t-test* indicated that participants in the study had higher scores in their oral post-test at a significant level ($p < .05$). The Cohen's d effect-size of 2.65 indicates a large effect size (see Appendix 4).
Criterion no.5/ Affective criterion	After the course implementation	-comparing the students' self-checklists DAY 1 and the students' self-checklists at the end of the course -The students' scores of the self-checklist (at the end of the course) are significantly higher than the scores from the self-checklist (DAY 1).	The results of the self-checklists before and after the course implementation from paired samples test indicate that participants rated themselves higher after the course implementation at a statistically significant level ($p < .05$) (see Appendix 5).
Criterion no.6/ Affective criterion	After the course implementation	-studying the students' opinions towards the overall developed course in terms of their satisfaction, its usefulness and its practicality through the use of questionnaire -The results of the end-of-the course questionnaire survey are $\overline{X}$ ≥ 3.50 which indicates positive	On the five-rating scale, all of the listed criteria on both of the evaluation form received $\overline{X} \geq 3.50$ which indicates positive opinions of the participants toward the overall course (see Appendix 6)

		opinions toward the overall course at the end of the course.	
Criterion no. 7/ Affective criterion	After the course implementation	-studying the students' opinions towards the overall developed course in terms of their satisfaction, its usefulness and its practicality through the use of interview with the participants -The results of the interview with the participants indicate positive opinions toward the overall course.	All of the participants said that the course was 'useful' and 'practical'. This suggests that they were satisfied with the course.

Table 7: set criteria for course evaluation

In conclusion, the results of the course evaluation indicate that the course was effective since all of the set criteria (both cognitive and affective criteria) were achieved. Both quantitative and qualitative data reveal that there were significant improvements in participants' competencies in English oral communication and

Discussion

This section discusses some distinguishing features of the study: the course development and theoretical justifications of the course effectiveness

1. The course development

The present study has completely covered the whole process of an ESP course design ranging from a thorough needs analysis to course development, course implementation and course evaluation. Referring to Figure1:'The competency-based English oral communication course theoretical framework' as previously presented, several theories and principles were incorporated to construct the proper framework for the present study. Based on stages in the ESP process reality and the competency-based approach, the study has started from the needs analysis by incorporating 'Steps of Competency-based Approach of Course Design' (Sujana, 2005) and DACUM technique including the questionnaire survey with the students. The study then moves to developing the course. The Backward Design developed by Wiggins and McTighe (2002) was chosen to be the framework for course design because of its underlying principle that focuses on the outcomes matches the concept of competency-based approach. Moreover, the concept of multiple assessment, formative and summative assessment were the basis of the assessment and evaluation. The LSP testing theory was adopted for constructing the English oral test. In terms of teaching and learning, the learning and instructional plan was based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding as well as stages of instructional process of Thornbury (2006) and Brown and Nation (1997).

- **From theory to practice: applying theories to develop a unique framework for each particular ESP competency-based course**

It can be seen that the framework for developing the competency-based English oral communication course presented above is a mix and match of several existing frameworks based on a consideration of appropriateness and relevance. In theory, several frameworks for course development were proposed with similar components: needs analysis, objectives, materials, teaching and evaluation. However, in practice, those frameworks do not seem to provide enough detail for ESP course developers to successfully develop a particular ESP course. Take this study as an example. Although this study chose to follow stages in the ESP process reality proposed by Dudley-Evans and St. John (2002), the researcher needed to search for more information from some other sources in order to develop a more complete step-by-step framework to be used for the present study. This also includes some adaptation needed to be made so the framework was suitable for the context of the study. Other developmental studies proposed an exclusive framework for course development. Vasavakul (2005) integrates relevant theories of needs analysis, adult learners, social constructivism, competency-based approach and ESP to create her own framework for developing the Business English Oral Communication (BEOC) course for customer-services staff of international banks in Thailand.

In her study, conducting site observations at workplace apart from a questionnaire survey and a semi-structured interview was a distinctive element in the process of needs analysis. It is impossible due to the issue of confidentiality and timing in this present study. In search for suitable data collection research strategies for this study, the researcher came across two research-based strategies used in identifying important competencies: DACUM Technique and Delphi Technique. However, after deliberating on the possibility and pros and cons of each technique, the researcher decided to adopt the key principles of the DACUM technique and modify the process. Two rounds of in-depth interviews were chosen to be an alternative method instead of conducting a workshop.

Another example is the process model for the development of tourism students' ESP competence proposed by Luka (2009). The model was created based on action theory and social constructivism with the use of the integrated syllabus---a combination of topical syllabus, task-based and process syllabi. Topical syllabus was chosen as the leading syllabus and task-based and process syllabi were used as the supplementary ones. The theme is studied by using a specially created system of tasks. It is begun by a communicative pre-task, and followed by a task phase in which students study the theme cooperating among them. The theme is completed by a comprehensive post-task part, which starts with simple tasks and is completed with creative problem solving tasks that contain tourism related problems, which promote students' professional thinking. Her framework of the syllabus design consisting of three phases of tasks is similar to the developed 3- step framework for designing the instructional plan of the competency-based English oral communication course for PR students (refer to Figure 4).Both frameworks are based on social constructivism, putting emphasis on social interaction and collaborative learning by providing three phases of instructional/learning tasks leading to acquisition of each target competency. However, there is a little bit difference between the two frameworks. While the Luka's framework uses a theme-based approach with the last phase aiming at comprehension of the target theme and developing problem solving and thinking skills, the researcher's framework focuses on acquiring each target competency and achieving fluency through practice in the final phase.

Another similarity and difference can also be observed in the process of assessment and evaluation. The two frameworks utilize both of formative and summative assessment. Having completed the theme, following Luka's process and the competency, following the researcher's process, students performed a test, self-assessment of their competency and recorded their feedbacks. The difference is in the evaluation process. In Luka's study, the evaluation is done after the completion of each syllabus and after the completion of the whole curriculum. The curriculum is also evaluated by the experts during its accreditation process, as well as by employers and alumni of the Faculty. On the contrary, the present study proposed three phases of evaluation: before, during and after the course implementation. Before the course implementation, the course was evaluated by experts though document evaluation, pilot study and class observation before the course implementation. During the course, data was derived from self-assessments, students'logs and teacher logs. At the end of the course, data from the oral test, self-assessment, a questionnaire survey and interview was used. This study did not go beyond to evaluate the course by experts, employers and alumni of the Faculty during its accreditation.

It can be concluded that theories and principles of course development provide just a big picture of how a course is developed. Based on those theories ESP course developers may need to adapt and create their own frameworks that are specific to the context of the course in order to better serve the purposes of the course and achieve their goal. In addition, this illustrates the counterclaim against the concern of a lack of creativity of the competency-based education. It supports Larson's argument that teacher creativity in designing instruction and developing learning activities is not restricted in a competency-based program. The above analysis shows that based on the main theories of course development and the principle of competency-based approach, various applications showing creativity are possible in numerous ESP competency-based courses.

- **Multiple means of assessment : an important ingredient in competency-based education**

Multiple means of assessment were used in three phases: before the course implementation, during the course implementation, after the course implementation. The use of multiple means of assessment is supported by Cohen (1994:196) stating that assessment of language benefits from the use of multiple means over time. By utilizing multiple means of assessment, the teacher was able to obtain rich data of both quantitative and qualitative information. The use of multiple means of assessment is especially necessary especially for competency-based courses because the rich data obtained from various means of assessment allow the teacher to analyze and identify the process of achieving the outcomes. The teacher is able to state what outcomes were achieved, when they were achieved, how they were achieved and why they were achieved. In this study, the researcher thinks that the analysis of the process of outcome achievement is important for justifying 'accountability' of the course.

- **Developing an ESP course: A long but worthwhile journey**

All of the frameworks illustrate how a competency-based university ESP course is developed. A development of the course begins with careful investigation of the learners' needs, a plan to translate those needs into a course design, a process of verification and evaluation of the lessons and materials, then an implementation of the course and finally an evaluation of the course. It is obvious that the process of developing such a course involves many steps and takes quite a lot of time and resources.

In this study, the needs analysis started in January 2008 and finished in April 2008. Next, the process of developing the course began and finished in May 2008. Then, a validation and evaluation process of the proposed course and materials started from June 2008 to August 2008. The pilot study including the class observation began and finished in September 2008. The course implementation and evaluation started from November 2008 to February 2009. To sum up, the process of course development in this study took more than a year. During that year, many people were asked to involve in the process and there were many obstacles such as a difficulty in contacting those expert participants, receiving late replies from the expert participants and even being rejected in some cases.

This makes the researcher realize that strong determination is required for the course developer to go through the process, handle challenges on the way and able to get everything done successfully. However, it was very much worth the effort as the degree to which the course accomplishes is significant both in terms of cognitive aspect (the achievement of the students) and affective aspects (the increase of motivation and the learner's satisfaction). If more and more effective ESP courses are available to the students, it would make a huge difference in education and national workforces as universities are able to produce more and more English proficient job candidates.

2. Theoretical justifications for the effectiveness of the competency-based English oral communication for undergraduate PR students

The effectiveness of this competency-based English oral communication course for PR students was examined in three phrases: before the implementation of the course, during the implementation of the course and after the implementation of the course. Seven criteria were used to examine the effectiveness of the course. As a result, all of the criteria were achieved. It can be said that the competency-based English oral communication course for PR students works well. The followings are theoretical justifications for the effectiveness of the course.

- **'Needs analysis is the corner stone of ESP and leads to a very focused course' (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 122)**

One of the most important reasons leading to the effective course design is the fact that the course was tailor-made to serve the very specific needs of these learners and this motivates them and enables them to be able to concentrate on their learning in order to achieve the needed competencies. As the results of the-end-of-the course survey revealed, the high mean of 4.69 indicates that the course responded to the needs of the students and the very high mean of 4.91 shows that the course was useful and practical. The same results revealed in the interview. 100% of the learner participants shared the same comment during the interview stating that the course was effective because it was appropriate, practical and served their needs with 40% of the participants thought the course was effective because it was specially designed for PR students. This supports the point that surveying students' needs before the class can heighten learner motivation, as students may feel what is taught in class will be relevant to their needs (Brown 1995).

The results from this present study confirm the idea of needs analysis, to gather as much information about the needs and problems of participants is the key and vital step for a successful ESP course design.

- **EA/OP courses heighten motivation leading to the success of the course**

The second reason to explain why the course was effective is that the nature of the course which is EA/OP affects the students' high motivation contributing to the success of the course. This advantage of ESP especially EOP is also pointed out by Lorenzo (2005: 1). In his opinion, ESP concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures and as ESP is usually delivered to adult students, frequently in a work related setting (EOP), that motivation to learn is higher than in usual ESL (English as a Second Language) contexts. In this study, the participants are third-year and fourth-year students. Their program of study becomes more intense in their disciplines and practice. The students start thinking about their future: their job opportunities. This course focusing on occupational purposes help the students prepare for what they need in the future. It also allows the students to bring what they have learned in theory into practice by giving them a chance to actually perform the job-related tasks. This could be a reason for high motivation of the students.

- **The components of CBE contribute to the success of the course**

The characteristics of competency-based approach play a big role in the achievement of the course. Firstly, competencies are precise and useful. It means that they are well defined and that they can be related to what students need and to what is

appealing to them. Secondly, the way that competency-based approach put emphasis on the outcomes is straightforward and easy to understand for the teacher and the students. When designing the outcome-based course, it is easy for course designers to create instructional and assessment plan because the focus of the course which is the expected outcomes are made obvious and explicit at the beginning. In a competency-based classroom, criteria of an expected performance is made clear and agreed upon between the teacher and the students at the beginning of the course. The approach helps the teacher to concentrate in leading the students in an appropriate direction and not getting lost on the way as the approach itself requires the teacher to set up clear measurable objectives since the beginning. As the focus is put on the outcome performances, the teacher can always assess and review their instructions whenever the students fail to meet their standard. As for the students, this approach also assists the students tremendously especially the weak ones. They are informed directly what they need to learn and what exactly is going to be tested in the course. This way, students are going to be aware of their learning process and the goals they need to achieve. Another way to look at it, when everything is stated clearly and explicitly to both parties at the beginning of the course, it is like signing a contract between the teacher and the students to complete a mission. As a result, the teacher and the students feel like working in a team to accomplish the mission. This appears in some of the comments on the teacher's logs as well as on the students' logs and interview:
The comment from one of the teacher' logs says:

"After a while, the students knew their roles in class. They understood the rules and they were willing to participate. I felt that we were working very well as a team. This made the class run very smoothly."

The following comments are taken from the students' logs:

"I enjoyed the class. Working in group made learning fun. Everybody participated in class activities. No stress. The class was very active."

"We worked well together. We cooperated very well. I had fun".

The following comments are taken from the interview:

"The teacher told us right at the beginning what the objectives were. She explained the activities and the assessment criteria. I think it was fair and helpful. My friends and I enjoyed learning and practice speaking English."

"The class was very active and energetic. I liked it. Everybody pay attention in learning and practicing. We helped one another in learning. I really enjoyed the class."

Thirdly, the fact that assessment in competency-based approach is meaningful and fair to the students increases motivation of the students. Competency-based approach employs performance-based assessment which is criterion-referenced. It measures how much/how well a learner has accomplished on each objective without reference to the other learner's results. It is opposite to assessment in traditional university English courses which relies heavily on paper and pencil tests and each student's performance is usually compared to the group norm (a norm-referenced test). Moreover, there were many activities provided for the students to help them practice their English oral competencies. A variety of activities in each class such as discussion, listening, reading, writing, games, role-plays, MSN catches the students' interest. Heavy emphasis on 'practicing' each competency is given in every session. In each session, class activities as well as homework assignments aims to help the participants to achieve each competency. A lot of practices together with their strong motivation to learn could be one of the reasons why participants demonstrated significant improvements.

- **The importance and the benefit of self- and peer assessment in the competency-based course**

In a learner-centered system, learners can be sensitized to their roles as learner, and can also be assisted to develop as autonomous learners by the systematic use of self-assessment. Such learner-centered assessment will help develop a critical self-consciousness by learners of their own role as active agents within the learning process (Nunan, 1994:135). In this study, self-assessment and peer assessment activities through the use of in-class self-checklists were useful for the participants and affected the achievement of the participants to certain extend. While the participants were practicing each of the unit lessons, they were also asked to do self-assessment and peer-assessment by filling the self-checklists. An explanation of the criteria for assessment and some training were provided for the participants on the first day of the course. The main objective of these two activities is to make the participants aware of and be familiar with the criteria used to assess their performances. In addition, the activities gave the participants a chance to monitor their own and other' performance. While doing the self-assessment and peer assessment activities, the participants learned their strengths and weaknesses as well as their peers'.

There might be a questioning about a reliability of the scoring in self-assessment and peer assessment as the participants and their peers may underestimate or overestimate their performance. However, the concern of the reliability is not applicable in this study for two main reasons. The first reason is that the activities were used as formative assessment with their primary focus the ongoing development of the learners. The second reason is that the results of the self-assessment or peer-assessment are not used to infer a real language capacity of the participants. But, they were used to examine the affective aspects of the participants in term of their satisfaction of their progress. In this study, the results of the in-class self-assessment show that most of the students rated their second in-class performance higher than their first in-class performance. The same results found from the comparison of self-assessment Day 1 and at the end of the course. This means that most students felt that they had made a progress. During the interview, some of the students provided a comment on the use of self-assessment as follows:

"The self and peer assessment was useful because it made me realize my strengths and weaknesses as well as my peers'. We got to observe and comment one another. It showed my development. Before I was able to speak little, but now I can speak English better."

"We got to know what we have learned and how we have achieved each week. It (self-assessment) was useful because we were able to learn from the comments and keep developing. It (self-assessment) gives us an idea of how we speak and whether we speak correctly."

Lewis (1990) provides a consistent comment by stating that self-assessment is a useful tool in encouraging learners to be more involved in planning their own learning, reflecting their progress and it is a means to see if learners are meeting their needs.

All of the above reasons explain the factors contribute to success of the course. The characteristics of competency-based approach play a major role in the achievement of the course. This supports an idea to use competency-based approach in ESP courses.

Conclusion

The study presents a process of developing the competency-based English oral communication course for undergraduate PR students. The results and findings from each stage of the study are reported in response to the research questions. After the needs analysis was conducted, the tailor-made competency-based English oral communication course for PR students was developed. The study presents the course development process. Four frameworks for developing a competency-based English oral communication course were proposed and used as guidelines in designing the course. The main study was conducted in twelve sessions and evaluation of the course is made. The results of the course evaluation reveal significant improvement both in terms of English oral performances and students' satisfaction toward the course. Several reasons underlying the achievement of the course are discussed. Very importantly, the study supports the use of competency-based approach in ESP courses as its characteristics contribute a great deal of the course effectiveness.

Acknowledgments

We thank The 90th ANNIVERSARY OF CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY FUND (Ratchadaphiseksomphot Endowment Fund) for the financial sponsorship and all the experts for their cooperation.

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Appendix 1

The needed competencies are listed below:

For PR job application:

1. Can introduce themselves, describe their educational backgrounds, their participation in extra curriculum activities, and job experiences.
2. Can talk about their abilities, their hobbies, their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their likes and dislikes.
3. Can give some information about the organization they are applying for.
4. Can use some proper communicative strategies to help them when they are asked some difficult/problematic questions.

For working as entry-level PR personnel:

1. Can use basic courtesy formulas and carry on small talk.
2. Can handle phone conversations and standard replies, i.e., receiving a telephone call, taking messages, and making a basic phone call like inviting guests to press conferences or arranging appointments.
3. Can welcome company guests and assist them when they pay a visit to the company or when they come to join the company events.
4. Can catch important points from information received and be able to communicate it to their bosses, their colleagues, and the press.
5. Can answer and give information about company products and services to clients and the press.
6. Can describe marketing contexts of clients and clients' opponents to their colleagues and their supervisors.
7. Can share their opinions plus their supporting reasons in a meeting.

8. Can persuade, convince, or negotiate (e.g., taking basic complaints from clients or from the press or persuading/convincing the press to come to the press conference or to publish their press release.

Appendix 2

The results of the evaluation of the proposed course and materials by the experts

Criteria for evaluating the course plan	Mean
A: Objectives:	
1. The objectives are realistic.	**4.60**
2. The objectives are appropriate.	**4.30**
3. The objectives are achievable.	**5.00**
B: Contents:	
4. The contents are relevant to the students' needs.	**4.60**
5. The contents are at the right level.	**4.60**
6. The contents are suitable for the time allotted.	**4.60**
7. The sequence of the contents is appropriate.	**4.60**
8. The contents are comprehensive enough.	**4.60**
9. The contents are focused enough.	**4.00**
C: The way the course is organized	
10. It flows from unit to unit.	**4.60**
11. It flows within units.	**4.30**
12. It allows the students to perceive a sensible progression.	**4.60**
D: The materials and instructional activities	
13. The materials/ activities match the unit objectives.	**4.60**
14. The materials/activities make clear the communicative uses of the language.	**4.60**
15. The materials/activities are age appropriate, at the right level and of appropriate difficulty.	**4.60**
16. The materials/ activities are engaging and learner-centered.	**4.00**
17. The materials/activities encourage cooperative learning.	**4.60**
18. The materials/activities are meaningful and useful to these students.	**5.00**
19. The materials/ activities are varied and can accommodate different learning styles and preferences.	**3.50**
20. The materials/activities include cultural content appropriate to the target culture.	**4.00**
21.The materials /activities are authentic	**4.30**
22. The materials/activities seem fun and interesting.	**4.60**
23. The materials/activities are suitable for the time allotted.	**4.00**
24. The instructions are clear and appropriate to the students.	**5.00**
25. There is enough practice for the students.	**4.60**
E: The assessment and evaluation plan	
26. The assessment/evaluation plan allows the students to understand how and why they will be assessed.	**4.60**
27. The assessment activities assess what has been learned.	**4.00**
28. The assessment activities are appropriate to the students' level.	**4.60**
29. The assessment activities are able to measure progress or achievement.	**4.00**
30. The assessment activities are suitable for the time allotted.	**5.00**
Criteria for evaluating the oral test	**Mean**
1. The test is valid and consistent with its objectives.	**4.80**
2. The test has appropriate content and construct validity.	**4.80**
3. The test assesses competencies in oral communication through actual performance in social settings appropriate to the competencies being assessed.	**4.20**
4. The results of the test will reflect the intended competencies.	**3.80**

5. The length of the test is appropriate.	**4.20**
6. The test is suitable for the time allotted.	**3.80**
7. The language is used appropriately.	**4.20**
8. The instructions of the test are clear and suitable.	**4.00**
9. The test has an acceptable level of reliability (e.g. inter-rater reliability)	**4.60**
10. The test is free from cultural, sexual, ethical, racial, age and developmental bias.	**4.40**
11. The test is suitable for the developmental level of the individual being assessed.	**4.20**
12. The scoring rubric for assessing oral communication describes degrees of competencies.	**4.40**
13. The scoring rubric consists of appropriate and enough criteria to assess the intended competencies.	**4.40**

Appendix 3

A comparison of the participants' self-assessment on English oral communication for a job interview

Job interview	Min	Max	$\overline{X}$	SD	t-test	Cohen's d
Performance 1	2.00	3.00	2.0286	.16903	-24.598	5.69
Performance 2	3.00	4.00	3.8000	.40584		

$p < 0.05$

A comparison of the participants' self assessments on receiving business telephone calls

Receiving calls	Min	Max	$\overline{X}$	SD	t-test	Cohen's d
Performance 1	2.00	4.00	2.9714	.70651	-5.122	1.18
Performance 2	3.00	4.00	3.6857	.4710		

$p < 0.05$

A comparison of the participants' self assessments on making business telephone calls

Making calls	Min	Max	$\overline{X}$	SD	t-test	Cohen's d
Performance 1	2.00	3.00	2.6286	.49024	-10.492	2.28
Performance 2	3.00	4.00	3.7143	.45835		

$p < 0.05$

Appendix 4

The mean scores of the English oral pretest and posttest including the effect size of Cohen's d

	Min	Max	Paired Differences			
			$\overline{X}$	SD	t	Cohen' d
Pretest	1.00	3.00	1.62	0.59	-16.55	2.65
Posttest	2.00	4.00	3.00	0.42		
Pretest-posttest			-1.37	0.49		

$p<0.05$

Appendix 5

Paired Samples Test of the Self-checklists before and after the course implementation

Items		**Paired Differences**					**t**	**Cohen's d**
		$\overline{X}$	**SD**	**SE**	**95% Confidence interval of the difference**			
					Lower	**Upper**		
General opinions about English and learning English	Pretest-posttest	-0.28	0.42	0.71	-0.43	-0.13	-3.97	0.86
Opinions about competencies in English oral communication	Pretest-posttest	-0.57	0.52	0.89	-0.75	-0.38	-6.39	1.42
Self-assessment of the needed competencies in	Pretest-posttest	-1.68	0.65	0.11	-1.91	-1.46	-15.19	3.66

English oral communication for PR job interview								
Self-assessment of the needed competencies in English oral communication for entry-level PR work	Pretest-posttest	-1.77	0.77	0.13	-2.03	-1.50	-13.60	2.84

$p<0.05$

Appendix 6

The results of the end-of-the-course questionnaire survey

Criteria for evaluating the course	**N**	**Min**	**Max**	**Mean**	**SD.**
1. The lessons responded to the needs of the students.	35	4.00	5.00	4.69	.47
2. The lessons were useful and practical.	35	4.00	5.00	4.91	.28
3. The lessons were understandable and suitable to the student's language level/knowledge and age.	35	4.00	5.00	4.86	.36
4. The lessons were authentic.	35	3.00	5.00	4.83	.45
5. The sequence and the organization of the lessons were suitable.	35	4.00	5.00	4.77	.43
6. The timing was suitable.	35	2.00	5.00	4.34	.73
7. The speed was appropriate.	35	3.00	5.00	4.43	.56
8. The lessons were fun and interesting.	35	4.00	5.00	4.69	.47
9. The lessons and teaching styles were various.	35	4.00	5.00	4.51	.51
10. The teacher/ the teaching methods helped you to learn.	35	4.00	5.00	4.89	.32
11. The teacher/the teaching methods allowed opportunities for exchanging knowledge and promoted shared learning.	35	3.00	5.00	4.80	.47
12. The materials were useful and appropriate.	35	3.00	5.00	4.49	.61
13. The assessment was clear and useful.	35	4.00	5.00	4.57	.50
14. You have learned and improved your competency in English oral communication after the lessons.	35	4.00	5.00	4.80	.41
15. Overall, you like the lessons and the teaching and you would like to continue to study more lessons.	35	4.00	5.00	4.89	.32
16. You think that there should be a course like this one offered for you in the university.	35	4.00	5.00	4.89	.32
17. You think that there should be some other sequential or related courses like this one e.g. English courses teaching other skills of English for PR students that are necessary for job application and working as PR personnel.	35	4.00	5.00	4.89	.32