

# Needs Analysis of Knowledge in Linguistics for English-Major Students

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## ABSTRACT

This research investigated the needs of knowledge in linguistics for English-major students. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 123 participants, who were English-major students at the undergraduate and graduate levels in Thailand. The results revealed the students' needs of linguistic knowledge. Of the seven core subfields, six of them were judged as significantly needed. These included phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics. The other subfield, i.e. semantics, was considered as highly significant. Moreover, in each of these subfields, the topics directly related and also easily applied to the study of English were considered more needed by English-major students.

An analysis of the results shows the need of the students for the course in introductory linguistics that is particularly designed for them. Generally speaking, the course should emphasize the concepts and theories of the seven core subfields that have two characteristics. First, these concepts and theories should be easy to apply; they should not be very complicated, covering various abstract and theoretical viewpoints on language. Second, they should be directly relevant to English and contribute to the understanding of the English language systems. These two characteristics reflect that the most important objectives of the course in introductory linguistics for English-major students are to enable the students to recognize the close relationship between the study of linguistics and the study of English and to apply what they learn in the linguistic class to improve their skills in English.

The results of the study are useful for the curriculum development and material design for a course in introductory linguistics for English majors. Moreover, the results reflect the role of learners' needs in designing and developing materials for a course. By taking into account the needs of learners, educators and teachers can provide appropriate instructional input to foster effective learning.

**Key words:** needs analysis, introductory linguistics

## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้สำรวจนิความต้องการความรู้ทางวิชาภาษาศาสตร์ของผู้เรียนเอกวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ ข้อมูลที่ได้มาจากการใช้แบบสอบถามความคิดเห็นของนิสิต

เอกวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ ระดับปริญญาตรีและโท จำนวน 123 คน ในประเทศไทย ผลที่ได้แสดงถึงความต้องการความรู้ทางวิชาภาษาศาสตร์ของผู้เรียนเอกวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ ในจำนวนสาขาวิชาความรู้ทางภาษาศาสตร์เบื้องต้นทั้งหมด 7 สาขา ผู้เรียน

พิจารณาว่าความรู้ทางภาษาศาสตร์ 6 สาขา ได้แก่ สังคมศาสตร์ สังคมวิทยา วิทยาหน่วยคำ ภาษาไทยสัมพันธ์ วัฒนธรรมสังคม มนุษย์ มนุษย์สังคม และภาษาศาสตร์สังคม มีความจำเป็นในระดับสูง ในขณะที่สาขาวิชาอรรถศาสตร์ ถือว่ามีความจำเป็นในระดับสูงมาก นอกจากนี้ ในแต่ละสาขาวิชาเหล่านี้ ผู้เรียนมีความเห็นว่าหัวข้อที่เกี่ยวข้องโดยตรงและนำไปประยุกต์ใช้ในการเรียน วิชาภาษาอังกฤษได้ง่าย เป็นหัวข้อที่มีความจำเป็นมากกว่าหัวข้ออื่นๆ

การวิเคราะห์ผลที่ได้แสดงให้เห็นถึงความต้องการวิชาภาษาศาสตร์เบื้องต้นที่จัดเตรียมสำหรับผู้เรียนเอกวิชาภาษาอังกฤษโดยเฉพาะ กล่าวอีกทางหนึ่ง ก็คือ แนวคิดและทฤษฎี ภาษาศาสตร์เบื้องต้น 7 สาขา ความมีลักษณะเฉพาะ 2 ประการคือ ประการที่หนึ่ง แนวคิดและทฤษฎีเหล่านี้ควรจะนำไปประยุกต์ใช้ได้ง่าย ไม่ควรจะซับซ้อนมาก โดยไม่ควรครอบคลุมมุมมองทางภาษาที่มีลักษณะนามธรรมและมีเนื้อหาในเชิงทฤษฎีมากจนเกินไป ประการที่สอง แนวคิดและทฤษฎีเหล่านี้ควรมีความเกี่ยวข้องโดยตรงกับภาษาอังกฤษ และนำไปสู่ความเข้าใจในระบบภาษาอังกฤษ ทั้งสองลักษณะเฉพาะนี้ สะท้อนให้เห็นว่า วัตถุประสงค์ที่สำคัญที่สุดของวิชาภาษาศาสตร์เบื้องต้นสำหรับผู้เรียนเอกวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ คือ การทำให้ผู้เรียนได้เห็นถึงความสัมพันธ์ที่ใกล้ชิดระหว่างการศึกษาภาษาศาสตร์และการศึกษาภาษาอังกฤษ และการทำให้ผู้เรียนสามารถนำความรู้ที่ได้จากการเรียนวิชาภาษาศาสตร์มาประยุกต์ใช้เพื่อพัฒนาทักษะภาษาอังกฤษของตนเอง

ผลที่ได้จากการวิจัยนี้มีประโยชน์ในการพัฒนาหลักสูตรและเอกสารการสอนวิชาภาษาศาสตร์เบื้องต้นสำหรับผู้เรียนเอกวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ นอกเหนือจากนี้ ผลที่ได้ยังสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงบทบาทของความต้องการของผู้เรียนในการวางแผนแบบและพัฒนาเนื้อหาของวิชาการให้ความสำคัญแก่ความต้องการของผู้เรียนจะทำให้ผู้สอนสามารถจัดเนื้อหาที่เหมาะสมเพื่อเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพในการเรียนได้

## INTRODUCTION

English has long been recognized as a language for international communication. In Thailand, it has increasingly gained an important role in both academic and business areas. A person with a good command of English is likely to have a better chance to get a desired job. Thus, it is not surprising why English has been a popular major subject among students at the undergraduate and graduate levels in Thailand.

The study of linguistics appeared around the end of the nineteenth century. It was considered as a new approach of studying language. Under this perspective, the study of language is treated as a kind of science, and linguistics is a combination of arts and science in itself. While its subject matter involves language, the method it adopts is scientific. Usually, a linguistic study of language proceeds from an observation of problems arising from bodies of data, to the forming of hypotheses that attempt to account for those problems, to the testing and revision of the hypotheses (O'Grady *et al.*, 2001). These hypotheses can be tested by written and spoken data available in speakers' speech community; and the findings can be stated systematically and objectively by rules of usage. The study of linguistics, therefore, has brought objective and empirical facts about human language as well as the better understanding in the language systems.

With these advantages, linguistics has been introduced to the modern study of the English language. Its main goal is to provide a description of the language which is clear, precise, systematic, and consistent with the actual usage, making it easier for students to learn the language, to understand how its systems work, and to be able to analytically compare and contrast it with their own native language and other foreign languages.

However, a major problem of designing a linguistic course for English majors is the scope of the course content. Since linguistics is a complicated subject, covering various components of language

and several concepts and theories for analyzing each of those components, it is not easy to decide what should be more emphasized and less emphasized in the teaching materials of introductory linguistics, and what should be more needed and less needed for students majoring in English.

While it has long been accepted that linguistics is important to the study of language, what is more important is to have a reliable criterion to show us which concepts and theories in linguistics are needed for language students. Therefore, it is the aim of this study to investigate the needs of linguistic knowledge among English-major students in Thailand. A needs analysis will be carried out as a starting point in determining the students' needs in terms of the content and objectives of a course in introductory linguistics. The results of the study will reveal the needs of the students in detail. Moreover, the results will provide the guidelines for developing the teaching materials that correspond with the needs of this group of students.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To investigate the needs of linguistic knowledge for English-major students in Thailand
2. To provide the guidelines for developing the teaching materials of introductory linguistics that are mostly beneficial to English-major students

## LITERATURE REVIEW

As the purpose of this study is to conduct a needs analysis involving the basic linguistic knowledge of English majors, the review of the literature will focus on two areas: needs analysis and the study of introductory linguistics.

### Needs analysis

The term *needs* is used to refer to "wants, desires, demands, expectation, motivations, lacks, constraints, and requirements" (Brindley, 1984: 28). *Learner needs* imply what learners hope to gain from

a particular course (Berwick, 1989). Procedures which are "used to collect information about learners' needs" are known as *needs analysis* (Richards, 2001: 51).

Needs analysis as a distinct and necessary phase in planning educational programs appeared in the 1960s; it served as part of an approach to curriculum development (Stufflebeam, 1985). It has a very crucial role in the development of a course. Graves (2000: 98) expressed such a view as follows:

Essentially, needs assessment is a systematic and ongoing process of gathering information about students' needs and preferences, interpreting the information, and then making course decisions based on the interpretation in order to meet the needs. It is based on the belief that learning is not simply a matter of learners absorbing pre-selected knowledge the teacher gives them, but is a process in which learners—and others—can and should participate... When needs assessment is used as an ongoing part of teaching, it helps the learners to reflect on their learning, to identify their needs, and to gain a sense of ownership and control of their learning.

Richards (1984) suggested that needs analysis serves three main academic purposes. It provides a means of obtaining wider input into the content, design, and implementation of a course; it is used in developing goals, objectives, and content; and it functions to provide data for reviewing and evaluating an existing program.

Graves (2000) noted that needs assessment involves six steps which are cyclical in nature and result in valuable information for designing, implementing, developing, reviewing, and evaluating a course. These steps include (1) deciding what information to gather and why; (2) deciding the best way to gather it; (3) gathering the information; (4) interpreting the information; (5) acting on the

information; and (6) evaluating the effect and effectiveness of the action.

A variety of procedures are used in conducting a needs analysis. Questionnaires are one of the most common instruments. The reasons for their popularity are because “they are relatively easy to prepare, they can be used with large numbers of subjects, and they obtain information that is relatively easy to tabulate and analyze” (Richards, 2001: 60). Other common instruments include interviews, observations, and analyses of available information.

During the 1970s, needs analysis was introduced into language planning and teaching (Nunan 1988), particularly in relation to ESP (English for Specific Purposes), EAP (English for Academic Purposes), and vocationally oriented programs (Brindley, 1984; Graves, 2000). For this particular case, needs are described as language deficiencies or language needs, i.e. the difference between what a language learner can presently do and what she should be able to do (Richards, 2001). Since this period, needs analysis has become a topic of high interest among language researchers and teachers. By the 1980s, a “needs-based philosophy” emerged in language teaching in many parts of the world (Brindley, 1984). A large number of needs analysis studies on language deficiencies and language needs have been conducted (e.g., Chia *et al.*, 1999; Bosher and Smalkoski 2002, Crosling and Ward, 2002 and Aunruen, 2005). The main objective of these studies is to analyze learners’ needs in different areas of language settings, both in academic and business fields.

### The study of introductory linguistics

Linguistics can be defined as “the systematic inquiry into human language” (Finegan, 2004:24). It includes many different approaches to the study of language and many different areas of investigation, for example, sound systems, word structure, phrase and sentence organization, relationships between language and cognition, meaning systems, as well as language and social factors. Moreover, several specialized branches of linguistics have also developed in combination with other disciplines. These include, for instance, psycholinguistics, anthropological linguistics, and forensic linguistics (Richards and Schmidt, 2002).

Despite the vast area of study, the gist of linguistics centers on the mental system that allows human beings to produce and interpret the sounds, words, phrases, and sentences of their language. Linguists call this system a *grammar* (O’Grady *et al.*, 2001). More recently, the concept of grammar has been modified to include context of use and social aspects (Finegan, 2004). Such modification reflects that speakers know how to use language not only grammatically but also appropriately in a particular context and that an individual’s use of language is partly shaped by social influences. Therefore, in the recent study of a grammar, attention has focused on two kinds of aspects — the relationship between expression and meaning (i.e. *grammatical competence*); and context, social interactions, and interpretation (i.e. *communicative competence*). Based on these views of language, the system of grammar is broken down into seven basic components (Table 1).

**Table 1** The components of a grammar

Component	Domain
Phonetics	The articulation and perception of speech sounds
Phonology	The patterning of speech sounds
Morphology	The formation of words
Syntax	The formation of phrases and sentences
Semantics	The interpretation of words, phrases, and sentences
Pragmatics	The use of language in context
Sociolinguistics	The use of language in social context

These seven components constitute the core of linguistics. They are regarded as the basic subfields of linguistics, which make up the main content of the study of introductory linguistics.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed the quantitative and qualitative approaches, using a questionnaire to collect data and interpreting the results in terms of the needs of linguistic knowledge for English-major students. The details of the participants and the questionnaire are as follows:

### Participants

The target population was English-major students who had taken at least one course in introductory linguistics. Both the purposive sampling and the random sampling procedures were used to select the representatives of the population. That is, undergraduate and graduate students majoring in English at Kasetsart University were targeted since they all took linguistics as one of their compulsory courses in the program. The participants were then randomly selected from this group of students.

The undergraduate students were in the third and fourth years of their study in the English program. They took a course in introductory linguistics in the second year of study. There were 41 third-year students and 39 fourth-year students, yielding 80 third-year and fourth-year students. 73 of them, i.e. 91.25, were chosen to participate in the present study. Of this figure, 37 students were the third-year students, and 36 were the fourth-year students.

The graduate students were the second-year students in the ESP program. They took a course in introductory linguistics in the first year of study. There were 22 second-year students in the regular program and 33 second-year students in the weekend program, yielding 55 second-year students in the entire ESP program. 50 of them, or 90.9, took part in the present study. Of this figure, 21 students were

in the regular program, and 29 were in the weekend program.

### Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to investigate the needs of linguistic knowledge for English-majors. It was constructed based on a number of studies in needs analysis and a wide range of topics presented in many textbooks of introductory linguistics. The questionnaire was validated by two experts, one in the field of needs analysis and the other in the field of linguistics.

A pilot study was conducted to ensure that the participants fully understood the questions on the questionnaire. Ten participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire and give some comments on it. These participants were graduate students in the ESP program. The questionnaire was then modified in light of the feedback from the participants.

The questionnaire consisted of two main parts. Part 1 elicited the participants' personal information. Part 2 asked the participants to rate their needs of linguistics on the basis of a 1-5 scale. The content in this part was divided into the seven domains of linguistics. Each domain comprised various topics frequently found in introductory linguistics textbooks (e.g., Stewart Jr. and Vaillette, 2001; Finegan, 2004 and Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams, 2007). The participants were told to feel free to ask for clarification of any topics with which they were unfamiliar.

## RESULTS

### General information of the participants

The total number of the participants, including both the undergraduate and graduate students, was 123. 82.1 percent of the participants were female; 17.9 percent were male. A large number of the participants, i.e. 69.1percent , were younger than 24 years old; 23.6percent were 24-30 years old; and a few of them, 7.3percent , were older than 30 years old. As to the educational background, 59.3percent

of the participants were undergraduate students whereas 40.7 percent were graduate students.

### Needs of the knowledge in linguistics for English-major students

For this part of the questionnaire, the participants were to rate each topic related to the seven basic subfields in terms of its importance to the understanding of human language, the application to the English study, their language-related research, and their future occupation, on the basis of the five Likert scales:

SCALE	NEEDS OF LINGUISTICS
5	Most
4	A lot
3	Moderate
2	A little
1	Least

The study relies on the following criterion of standard mean ranges in interpreting the results:

MEAN RANGE	MEANING
4.21-5.00	Highly significantly needed
3.41-4.20	Significantly needed
2.61-3.40	Moderately needed
1.81-2.60	A little needed
1.00-1.80	Least needed

#### 1. Needs of phonetics

Phonetics is the study of sounds in spoken language. Under this subfield of linguistics, five topics are commonly discussed.

The results showed that on the whole the participants considered phonetics as significantly

needed ( $M = 3.91$ ). Four topics were judged as highly significant or significant. These topics are directly concerned with English pronunciation. Phonetic transcription is a tool that suggests how to pronounce each sound which appears in particular words; consonant and vowel articulations explain the manner of producing the English consonant and vowel sounds; and supra-segmental features describe the stress and intonation patterns in English. Among these topics, supra-segmental features received the highest mean rating ( $M = 4.44$ ). In terms of such features, English is classified as a language of stress and intonation, as opposed to Thai, which is a tone language. These differences bring about the significant contrast in the melodies and rhythms of speech between the two languages. On the other hand, the topic with the lowest mean rating was non-English speech sounds ( $M = 2.92$ ). As the name implies, this topic involves the study of other interesting sounds that are found in the world's languages, but not in English (Table 2).

#### 2. Needs of phonology

Phonology investigates the organization and distribution of sounds in a language. Five phonological topics are frequently discussed.

On the whole, the participants considered phonology as significantly needed ( $M = 3.99$ ). The topic with the highest mean rating was prosodic phonology ( $M = 4.40$ ). Like supra-segmental features, prosodic phonology studies stress and intonation, but it emphasizes more the systematic rules underlying the use of these features. The next

**Table 2** Means and standard deviations of the participants' ratings of needs of phonetics

Topics in phonetics	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Phonetic transcription	4.02	.900	4
Consonant articulation	4.14	.843	2
Vowel articulation	4.05	.895	3
Supra-segmental features	4.44	.726	1
Non-English speech sounds	2.92	1.106	5
Total	3.91	.638	N/A

three topics with the lower mean ratings – phonemes and allophones ( $M = 4.01$ ), phonological rules ( $M = 3.97$ ), and phonotactic constraints ( $M = 3.89$ ) – provide more details of accurate pronunciation. These topics are more complicated; they stipulate how each sound may be pronounced slightly differently in various phonetic environments and which sound sequences are allowed and disallowed in a language. Thus, the knowledge of all these four topics contributes to the correct pronunciation of English utterances. On the other hand, the topic with the lowest mean rating was phonological analysis ( $M = 3.69$ ), which is concerned with an approach of comparing and analyzing the sound patterns across languages. Data for analyses in this topic are drawn from not only English but also many other languages, especially those with unfamiliar, distinguished phonological systems (Table 3).

### 3. Needs of morphology

Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words and the morphological relationship between them. Under the scope of this subfield, five topics are often presented.

On the whole, the participants considered morphology as significantly needed ( $M = 3.90$ ). The highest rated topic was morphological elements ( $M = 4.34$ ). This topic can be applied easily to the study of English vocabulary. It deals with how to divide a word into morphemes and how to recognize a word's meaning by combining the meaning of each morpheme attached to it. The next three topics with the lower mean ratings were morphological processes ( $M = 3.92$ ), the hierarchical structure of words ( $M = 3.89$ ), and morphological systems ( $M = 3.85$ ). These topics are a little more theoretical and complicated. The first one describes major processes of creating words into language. The other two involve the more in-depth analysis of words in terms of their internal, hierarchical structure and the classification of languages based on the morphological structure of words. On the other hand, the topic with the lowest mean rating was morphological analysis ( $M = 3.56$ ), which is about an approach of identifying morphemes and their meanings in different languages. Data for analyses are drawn from English and many other languages (Table 4).

**Table 3** Means and standard deviations of the participants' ratings of needs of phonology

Topics in phonology	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Phonemes and allophones	4.01	.773	2
Phonological rules	3.97	.839	3
Phonological analysis	3.69	.933	5
Prosodic phonology	4.40	.797	1
Phonotactic constraints	3.89	.948	4
Total	3.99	.589	N/A

**Table 4** Means and standard deviations of the participants' ratings of needs of morphology

Topics in morphology	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Morphological elements	4.34	.711	1
Hierarchical structure	3.89	.930	3
Morphological processes	3.92	.845	2
Morphological systems	3.85	.850	4
Morphological analysis	3.56	1.056	5
Total	3.90	.642	N/A

#### 4. Needs of syntax

Syntax studies rules that govern the way words are organized into phrases and phrases into sentences, and also the relationship between different sentence types. Six topics are frequently presented.

On average, the participants considered syntax as significantly needed ( $M = 4.18$ ). In fact, the mean ratings of all topics were relatively similar; they were judged as highly significant or significant ( $M = 4.10 - 4.24$ ). This indicated that the participants considered all syntactic topics as relatively equally important. These results are not unexpected given that all of the topics directly contribute and can be easily applied to the study and understanding of phrase and sentence structures in English. The first four topics in the table categorize the elements that make up a sentence and clarify their linear and hierarchical relationships. The last two topics involve the analysis of various kinds of sentence structures and their syntactic relationship (Table 5).

#### 5. Needs of semantics

Semantics studies the meaning and relationship of words and sentences, and also the properties of

the conceptual system underlying meaning. Six topics are frequently included.

On average, the participants considered semantics as highly significant ( $M = 4.21$ ). Four topics were judged as highly significant. These topics included sentence interpretations ( $M = 4.43$ ), denotation and connotation ( $M = 4.36$ ), semantic relations of words ( $M = 4.33$ ), and semantic relations of sentences ( $M = 4.33$ ). All of these topics are easily applied and related directly to the study of meaning in English. In contrast, the topic with the lowest mean rating was metaphors ( $M = 3.85$ ). The study of metaphors is known to be more complicated; the ability to use and understand metaphors involves not only the knowledge about words and their semantic properties, but also the combining powers of different concepts that speakers possess (Fromkin et al. 2007). The second lowest rated topic was semantic features ( $M = 3.98$ ). This topic is somewhat abstract. Essentially, it deals with the way a speaker understands meaning by breaking down the meaning of each word into very small semantic features, such as  $[\pm\text{human}]$  or  $[\pm\text{male}]$ . (Table 6)

**Table 5** Means and standard deviations of the participants' ratings of needs of syntax

Topics in syntax	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Linear/hierarchical order	4.15	.850	4
Lexical categories	4.23	.867	2
Subcategories	4.10	.817	6
Phrasal categories	4.24	.761	1
Analyzing sentences	4.12	.928	5
Transformations	4.20	.877	3
Total	4.18	.614	N/A

**Table 6** Means and standard deviations of the participants' ratings of needs of semantics

Topics in semantics	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Denotation and connotation	4.36	.770	2
Semantic relations of words	4.33	.754	3
Semantic relations of sentences	4.33	.784	3
Semantic features	3.98	.891	5
Metaphors	3.85	.915	6
Sentence interpretations	4.43	.811	1
Total	4.21	.606	N/A

## 6. Needs of pragmatics

Pragmatics studies language in context. It includes such additional information as attitudes and beliefs, the way language is used to inform, to ask, etc. Four topics are discussed.

On the whole, the participants considered pragmatics as significantly needed ( $M = 4.05$ ). Each of the four topics was averagely judged as significant. In fact, pragmatics is known to be a field of applied linguistics, which is not theoretical in nature but instead focuses more on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the use of language within a context. The four topics under this subfield are all concerned with the ability to produce and interpret English utterances in particular actual situations in an appropriate and effective way. The lowest rated topic was speech acts ( $M = 3.89$ ), which is more complicated involving the direct and indirect uses of language to produce intended effects on the hearer. (Table 7)

## 7. Needs of sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics focuses on “the relationship

between linguistic behavior and social situations, roles, and functions” (O’Grady et al. 2001: 537). Seven topics under this linguistic subfield are frequently found.

The results showed that on the whole the participants considered sociolinguistics as significantly needed ( $M = 3.97$ ). The topics which were judged as highly significant were language in use ( $M = 4.35$ ) and speech styles ( $M = 4.25$ ), both of which deal with the distinction between formal and informal forms in English. The other topics were judged as significant; they deal with language variation in response to various kinds of social influences. Like pragmatics, sociolinguistics is another field of applied linguistics. Its content focuses more on language use than on theoretical notions; all topics contribute to the ability to use and understand English appropriately in particular social contexts. The three lowest rated topics involve varieties used by speakers of very specific groups: gender, region, and ethnicity (Table 8).

**Table 7** Means and standard deviations of the participants’ ratings of needs of pragmatics

Topics in pragmatics	Mean	S.D.	Rank
New/old information	4.17	.827	1
Speech acts	3.89	.861	4
Drawing conclusions	4.09	.868	2
Rules of conversation	4.05	.922	3
Total	4.05	.638	N/A

**Table 8** Means and standard deviations of the participants’ ratings of needs of sociolinguistics

Topics in sociolinguistics	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Variation at different levels	4.15	.859	3
Language and socioeconomic	3.90	.944	4
Language and region	3.76	.899	6
Language and ethnicity	3.85	.850	5
Language and gender	3.56	1.095	7
Speech styles	4.25	.893	2
Language in use	4.35	.868	1
Total	3.97	.653	N/A

## DISCUSSION

The overall results of the needs analysis of linguistic knowledge for English majors show the needs of the focus on the English language systems. The results generally indicate that the linguistic concepts and theories that are needed should have the following characteristics:

1. These concepts and theories should be easy to apply; they should not be very complicated, covering various abstract and theoretical viewpoints on language.
2. These concepts and theories should be directly relevant to English and contribute to the students' better understanding of the English language systems.

These two characteristics reflect that the most important objectives of the course in introductory linguistics for English-major students are to enable the students to recognize the close relationship between the study of linguistics and the study of English and to apply what they learn in the linguistic class to improve their skills in English.

Based on the results of the needs analysis and the two characteristics above, the present study suggests the objective and provides the scope of content for each subfield in introductory linguistics for English-major students. For each of the subfields presented below, the objective of the study is

indicated, and the relevant concepts and theories are categorized into groups according to their relative importance to the students.

### 1. Scope of phonetics

For phonetics, the topics that are emphasized should help the students improve their pronunciation skills in English. These include phonetic transcription, the articulation of English consonants, the articulation of English vowels, and supra-segmental features. Among these topics, the topic of supra-segmental features is the most important since it involves the striking contrast in pronunciation between English and Thai. In contrast, the topic of non-English sounds should be the least important since it deals with speech sounds in other languages.

### 2. Scope of phonology

The main objectives of the study of phonology for English majors should be to learn the rules of the sound system in English and to apply these rules to improve pronunciation skills in the language. Thus, the study should give the most importance to prosodic phonology, which is very useful and applied easily to the understanding of the English phonology. Moreover, the topics of phonemes and allophones, phonological rules, and phonotactic constraints are also important because they give more details of the native-like pronunciation. These three topics are

**Table 9** The classification of topics in phonetics according to their relative importance

Subfield and objective	Very important	Important	Least important
Phonetics: To improve skills in English pronunciation	-Supra-segmental features	-Phonetic transcription -Articulation of consonants -Articulation of vowels	-Non-English speech sounds

**Table 10** The classification of topics in phonology according to their relative importance

Subfield and objective	Very important	Important	Least important
Phonology: To learn the sound system and to improve pronunciation skills in English	-Prosodic phonology	-Phonemes/allophones -Phonological rules -Phonotactic constraints	-Phonological analysis

more theoretical, involving the concepts of phonemes, allophones, and syllable structure. On the other hand, the topic of phonological analysis should be the least important since it is an approach of analyzing the sound systems in unfamiliar languages.

### 3. Scope of morphology

As to the subfield of morphology, its main objective is to enhance the students' knowledge in English vocabulary. Thus, the most important topic should be morphological elements, which enables the students to recognize morphemes in the language and make use of this knowledge in grasping the meaning of unfamiliar words. Moreover, the topics of hierarchical structure of words, morphological processes, and morphological systems are also important. Although these topics are more theoretical, they bring about valuable insights into the internal structure of English words. In contrast, the topic of morphological analysis should be the least important because it involves analyzing morphemes in unfamiliar languages.

### 4. Scope of syntax

The study of syntax aims to explore the organization of phrases and sentences in English and to learn the rules that govern such organization in the language. Accordingly, all topics directly contributing to the better understanding of the phrase

and sentence structures in English should be regarded as important to the students. Moreover, a special emphasis should be put on the topics of lexical categories and phrasal categories. This is because these topics deal with the classification and properties of words and phrases, which are the most elementary syntactic units that serve as the building blocks of a sentence.

### 5. Scope of semantics

As to semantics, the most important topics should help the students gain insights into the nature of meaning of utterances in English. These include the topics of denotation and connotation, semantic relations of words, semantic relations of sentences, and sentence interpretations. With these topics, the students will learn various types of meaning that are associated with words, phrases, and sentences. They will also learn how these linguistic units are semantically related. Moreover, the topics of semantic features and metaphors are important to the students, but they should be less emphasized. These topics are more complicated, involving abstract semantic features and the conceptual systems that underlie the meaning of an utterance.

### 6. Scope of pragmatics

The main objective of the study of pragmatics is to study the way native speakers use and interpret

**Table 11** The classification of topics in morphology according to their relative importance

Subfield and objective	Very important	Important	Least important
Morphology: To enhance knowledge in English vocabulary	-Morphological elements	-Hierarchical structure -Morphological processes -Morphological systems	-Morphological analysis

**Table 12** The classification of topics in syntax according to their relative importance

Subfield and objective	Very important	Important
Syntax: To have the better understanding in the organization of phrases and sentences in English	-Lexical categories -Phrasal categories	-Linear /hierarchical structure -Subcategories -Analyzing sentences -Transformations

**Table 13** The classification of topics in semantics according to their relative importance

Subfield and objective	Very important	Important
Semantics:	-Denotation/connotation	-Semantic features
To gain insights into the nature of meaning of English utterances	-Relations of words -Relations of sentences -Sentence interpretations	-Metaphors

**Table 14** The classification of topics in pragmatics according to their relative importance

Subfield and objective	Important
Pragmatics:	-New/old information -Speech acts -Drawing conclusions -Rules of conversation

English within a context. The common topics under this subfield – information structure, speech acts, drawing conclusions, and rules of conversation – should be considered equally important because all of these topics are concerned with the principles of using and interpreting English utterances effectively and appropriately within a context.

### 7. Scope of sociolinguistics

The study of sociolinguistics for English-major students aims to show the influences of social factors on the use and variation of English. The topics of speech styles and language in use should be treated as very important since they deal with the usage of formal and informal forms of English. The knowledge in the distinction between these forms will help students to use the language more appropriately. Moreover, the other five common topics in the subfield are also important. They will show to the students the interesting varieties of the language used by different groups of speakers.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In conclusion, this study investigated the needs of linguistic knowledge for English-major

students. Data were drawn by using a questionnaire collecting opinions and judgments from 123 English majors both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The results revealed the students— needs of linguistic knowledge. Of the seven core subfields, six of them were judged as significantly needed. These included phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics. The other subfield, i.e. semantics, was considered as highly significant. Moreover, in each of these subfields, the topics that were directly related and also easily applied to the study of English were considered more needed by English-major students.

The analysis of the results shows the need of a course in introductory linguistics that is particularly designed for this group of students. The study suggests that the course in introductory linguistics for English-major students should more emphasize the topics with two of the following characteristics. First, they should not deal with very abstract and theoretical concepts and theories because they are difficult to apply to the use of English. Second, they should be directly relevant to the study of English. Topics involving linguistic features that occur in English should be more emphasized while those exploring linguistic phenomena that are not found in the language should be less emphasized. By focusing on the topics with these two characteristics, the study of linguistics will contribute to the

students- better understanding of the English language systems.

Moreover, the results lead to the specification of objectives for a course (Hamp-Lyons 2001). The two characteristics above reflect that the objective of a course in introductory linguistics for English students is not to provide all important information relating to the core subfields of the subject. Instead, the course should aim to introduce to the students the aspects of linguistic knowledge that help increase the students' skills of English. In other words, the objective of the course in introductory linguistics for English-major students is not to familiarize the students with all major concepts and theories relevant to the core subfields in order to gain complete insights of the mechanisms of human language. Rather, the most important objectives of the course in introductory linguistics for English-major students are to enable the students to recognize the close relationship between the study of linguistics and the study of English and to apply what they learn in the linguistic class to improve their skills in English.

The results are useful for the curriculum development and material design for a course in introductory linguistics for English majors. They provide some guidelines for the scope of the course content that matches the needs of this group of students. Moreover, the results of the study reflect the role of learners' needs in designing and developing the materials for a course. By taking into account the needs of learners, educators and teachers can provide appropriate instructional input to foster effective learning.

However, the data in the study were obtained only from a questionnaire. As Richards (2001) suggested, one source of information is likely to be partial and incomplete. The use of other procedures such as an interview and class observation, as a complement to a questionnaire, will give more in-depth details of the needs of the target participants. Moreover, all participants were from Kasetsart University, so they could not claim to be the

legitimate representatives of English majors in Thailand. Therefore, future research that includes both a questionnaire and some other additional procedures and that involves participants from various institutions should be able to find out the needs of English-major students in more precise and specific details.

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