One Size *Doesn't* Fit All: Echoing Students and Instructors' Voices for English Course Improvement

Woralan Kongpolphrom[1]

Abstract

The primary aims of the research were, firstly, to explore first-year students' and instructors' opinions on the fundamental English 1 course a university in Bangkok, Thailand, and, secondly, to examine their suggestions for course improvement. The research was conducted employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The secondary data of 3,314 responses of the first-year students from the university's Likert-scale questionnaire survey were analysed using SPSS. Since students were allowed to write their additional comments in the questionnaire survey, thematic analysis was also used to analyse the data. In addition, semi-structured interviews with six course instructors were conducted to obtain instructors' opinions on the course. Thematic analysis was employed for instructors' interviews. The statistical findings revealed that overall, students held positive views of the fundamental English 1 course (Overall course information: $M = 4.27$, Learning Outcomes: $M = 4.11$, Course Objectives: $M = 4.13$, Instructors: $M = 4.49$). However, students' comments provided greater insights of mixed views regarding the course in general, course content and materials, assessment and evaluation, and teaching and learning methods, and these opinions pose challenges for the course providers. In the same vein, the findings from the interviews with the instructors provided positive perceptions towards the course in terms of the course in general, course content and materials, assessment and evaluation, and teaching-learning methods. Useful suggestions were obtained from both students and instructors. The findings demonstrated that there is still some room for course improvement based on the opinions of these two key stakeholders. Based upon the findings, implications and suggestions for the improvement of the fundamental English 1 course are provided.

Keywords: English Course, Fundamental English, Opinions, Course Improvement

[1] Lecturer, Chulalongkorn University Language Institute, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, 10330

[*] Author e-mail: woralan.k@chula.ac.th

Motivation of the study

English language learning is crucial in today's globalised world due to its status as a widely spoken language. Recognising its importance, educational institutions offer English courses from early education to higher levels. The primary objective is to equip students with effective English communication skills. At the studied university, English courses are compulsory from the first year onwards, with a minimum of four courses required for graduation. Initially, students must complete fundamental English courses before advancing to higher-level courses such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in their chosen field of study.

The fundamental English 1 and 2 courses are mandatory for all first-year students, excluding those from the Faculty of Arts. These courses cater to over 4,000 students from various disciplines, involving a diverse mix of abilities. Although the language institution responsible for providing these English courses acknowledges different proficiency levels and mixed abilities, the university maintains a uniform curriculum to ensure equal opportunities for all students.

Despite the attempt to provide equal opportunity and quality English education for all students at the university, the effectiveness and suitability of English courses in meeting the needs and expectation of students is a matter of debate. Some students may find English courses helpful and enjoyable, while others may find them uninteresting and challenging. It is, therefore, crucial to understand students' opinions toward English courses in order to provide the most suitable courses possible for students. This has led to the question of how students can voice their opinions at the end of the courses.

Based upon the students' opinions, it is interesting to discover if there is any room for course improvement. Apart from students' voices, another key stakeholder in the course development is the teachers. Consequently, teachers' opinions and their suggestions for course development are also worth exploring.

Literature Review

Students' Voices towards English Courses through Course Evaluation

Several studies have observed students' opinions towards English language courses. Keddie (2015) believed that student voice can yield a rich and intelligent form of teacher accountability in three ways. The first is to enhance students' understanding and appreciation of teachers, teaching and learning processes. The second is to encourage students to collaborate with teachers to enhance pedagogy and relationships. The last is to increase students' self-confidence as learners. In addition, it was found that both students and teachers had positive views of student voice, and educational institutions were willing to include student voice in school improvement procedures, showing some acknowledgment of the importance of student voice in the implementation of democracy in schools (Jones & Bubb, 2020).

Previous studies suggest that students' hold positive attitudes towards English and the activities conducted in their English courses. They held favourable views when they worked purposefully, in groups, towards common goals in their English courses (Littlewood, 2001). Moreover, Remedios & Lieberman (2006) also found that positive students' ratings of courses depended on how the course was organised and taught. Additionally, from the self-reported survey questionnaire of 453 first-year Vietnamese students of their attitudes towards their intensive college English course, the majority of students had favourable opinions about the course's content, length, instructors, materials, methods of instruction, and facilities (Nguyen et al., 2021). Çelik (2018) employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques to explore students' perceptions through the end-of-course evaluation of the English for Specific Purposes at a university in Turkey. The study claimed that while the quantitative data analysis revealed that students were generally satisfied with the ESP practitioner, course materials, and the course itself, the qualitative content analysis revealed insights into such issues as content-specific instruction and language skills development as course strengths.

However, many former research studies reveal different feelings regarding students' attitudes towards English courses. The research from Coşkun and Taşgin (2018) revealed that some students without preparatory education were more anxious than those who had pre-university experience. The attitudes and anxiety of 700 students at a university in Turkey were observed using surveys of an English Language Attitude Scale and an English Language Anxiety Scale. However, gender, school types, and years of students at the university do not have a direct connection with the level of anxiety in studying English.

Moreover, Ortega-Auquilla et al. (2021) reported that there were mixed feelings while studying English in different courses at a university in the southern part of Ecuador by using both a close-ended and open-ended questionnaire. There were students who clearly demonstrated positive attitudes towards their English classes because they believed that English classes provided them with chances to practice their English language skills and would bring them significant advantages in the future. At the same time, some students were concerned since they felt that their low level of English proficiency might greatly affect their understanding of the courses. In addition, the study reported that many students were satisfied with the instructional process and found it helpful in terms of class participation, motivation, and critical thinking.

According to Sevnarayan (2022), the voices of students who attended online lessons during COVID-19 pointed out the significant needs of students for appropriate pedagogy. Thus, teachers and policy makers should be aware of student voices through their learning outcomes indicated in the evaluation.

Teachers' Voices towards English Courses

In addition to the students' voices, teachers' opinions are significant in course improvement. Both teachers and students, according to Kumaravadivelu (1991), offer their own perspectives on what language teaching and learning entails. In other words, students and teachers individually understand the actions in the classroom from their own viewpoints, which might not always coincide.

One side of the coin is the preferences of the learners which were reported in the former section. On the other hand, instructors' understanding of these preferences has a significant impact on how they make decisions and behave in the classroom (Spratt, 1999). Do (2020) believed that it is important to seriously consider teachers' views, whether positive or negative, because of their critical role in the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom. Therefore, various suggestions coming from different teachers can enrich and give wider perspectives to the actual implementation of the course.

Certain research reported differences in viewpoints between students and their instructors or curriculum specialists. It has been observed that these two groups have different perspectives on the nature of language and language acquisition, as well as on what they want and what learners require (Kern, 1995; Kumaravadivelu, 1991; Nunan, 1988).

Teachers' reflections are significant in course improvements as well as in their professional development in teaching practices. By reflecting on their teaching practices, teachers can identify areas for improvement and adjust better to support student learning. This process can also assist teachers become more aware of their own biases and assumptions, which can impact their interactions with students from diverse backgrounds. Ultimately, teacher reflection can lead to more effective teaching practices and better outcomes for all students (Athanases, 1993).

Moreover, regarding teachers' reflections and opinions, teachers expressed several concerns regarding the challenges of teaching mixed-ability students in English classes; mixed-ability classes can be difficult to manage because of the possible uncooperative nature of the students and the ease with which fast learners become bored, as well as the difficulties in planning lessons for such classes and in producing class materials that are appropriate for them. It can also be frustrating to teach a mixed-ability class because the weaker students sometimes lack motivation (Zakarneh et al., 2020).

Content and materials are of concern according to teachers' voices. Zaghar and Zaghar (2021), found that teachers of English for Specific Purposes in Algeria expressed the view that they required ongoing training and improved teaching practices due to several factors. These teachers also commented that using workbooks and current articles appears to be essential to raising

learners' interest in the target language and fostering their language skills.

Course Improvement from Students' and Teacher's Voices

Course development is central to the course effectiveness to suit learners' needs. Numerous scholars have placed their attention on the course development as the guideline for stakeholders in the course development processes. According to Diamond (2008), developing a solid course or curriculum is always challenging, time-consuming, and difficult. Theoretically, the process of developing a course appears to be a simple endeavor, involving the collaborative and synchronous efforts of a group. Nonetheless, in practice, this process constitutes an integral aspect of an institution, marked by its organisational structure, culture and consequent idiosyncrasies (Porto & Aje, 2004).

According to Richards (2001), the development of a language course or instructional materials involves several tiers of planning and development, which correspond to the established aims and objectives of the proramme. To achieve this, several dimensions of course development are included: developing a course rationale, describing entry and exit levels, choosing course content, sequencing course content, planning the course content (syllabus and instructional blocks), and preparing the scope and sequence plan. These processes involved in the course development do not have to occur in a linear order. Some elements of course development may take place concurrently, while various facets of the course are responsive to continuous modification each time it is taught. However, this research restricts itself to the context of course improvement of an existing English course at the university under investigation.

Numerous factors contribute to the improvement of English courses, as highlighted by scholarly investigations. Conway's (2022) research findings demonstrated that lecturers' pedagogical approaches, learners' attitudes, and individual learning preferences exert considerable influence on performance outcomes in English courses. Therefore, in order to foster constructive engagement in the teaching and learning process, instructors should actively promote and cultivate an environment that encourages learners to cultivate favourable dispositions. Furthermore, Zhou's (2013) study revealed that college students exhibit a considerable demand for English courses with extended duration, with a specific inclination towards courses that enhance speaking and listening skills and impart practical English knowledge. Additionally, students' academic majors have been identified as a pertinent variable impacting their preferences for different components of English courses. Li and Xu (2020) indicated that among the five aspects of learning attitude, environment, input, motivation, and status in English language learning, learning attitude and input yielded significant positive effects on learning. This lends support to Richards (2001, p. 251) in that '*foreign language instruction would not be feasible without these materials which serve as the basis for much of the language input (...) and the language practice that occurs in the classroom*'.

According to Nation (2000), the process of improving an existing English course includes goals, content and sequencing, format and presentation, and monitoring and assessing. First, the goal or the objective is placed at the centre of the course because it clearly indicates why

a course is being taught. Second is content and sequencing. Content refers to the language items, ideas, skills, and strategies to match the goals of the course, and sequencing is how the content is organised. Next, format and presentation are concerned with how the content is formatted and presented in a manner that fosters learning. Finally, monitoring and assessing is required to ensure that the course achieves its goals and is conducted in an efficient way.

Learning outcomes is another important factor in course improvement. Higher education employs the word "learning outcome" to refer to generic academic outcomes, personal transferable outcomes, and core subject-based outcomes (Allan, 1996). Learning outcomes, as defined by Cedefop (2009), are a 'statement of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do after completion of the learning. Constructing the course's learning outcomes and identifying the skills that students should acquire during the duration of the programme is the first step in identifying the desired outcomes (Wiggins et al., 2005)

According to Beaumont and Spencer (2005), course design and programme assessment should not be separated from the production of learning outcomes in order for them to be created and graded. It is also suggested that learning outcomes should meet the SMART criteria. The SMART criteria can be explained as S: Specific (Specific content of the lessons/courses), M: Measurable, A: Achievable (students can realistically achieve these targets in the lessons/courses), R: Relevant (related to the general objectives of learning), and T: Timed (it is clear when these outcomes will be achieved).

Solikhah and Bodiharso (2019) found that when revisiting the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum for an undergraduate programme based on the Indonesian National Qualification Framework (INQF), though the learning outcomes existing on the ELT curricular tended to be confused, they could still identify that students who underwent ELT curricular did not miss any knowledge of literacy (i.e. grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, and writing), scientific subjects in ELT such as English for Academic Purposes and teaching methodology, and linguistic science courses (general linguistics, pragmatics, semantics, syntax and so forth). The significant point stated here is that developing learning outcomes is challenging and needs to be carefully considered since they can sometimes mislead curriculum developers.

Furthermore, the results of the course outcomes, whether favourable or not, can lead to the improvement of the course in various areas; for instance, the hard and soft skills, the curriculum objectives, activity arrangement, classroom atmosphere, peer interaction with their classmates, and effectiveness of the course (Yu et al., 2022).

In outcome-based courses, assessment is another factor conducive to course improvement. Gan and Lam (2020) discovered that the majority of university English instructors lacked enough assessment training in classroom-based practices to satisfy the standards established by the official papers. The findings were based on the data from 68 questionnaire respondents, eight interviewers, and two national English course syllabi. Despite this, for a number of personal and contextual

reasons, they preferred not to receive advanced training (for example, workshops lasting at least three days) in evaluation.

In restructuring an English course, according to Sosa and Matamoros (2021), the present syllabus was efficiently laid out, but several elements related to content, language level, methodology, and evaluation needed to be amended as suggested by the perceptions of both students and teachers through the analysis of focus group interviews and a qualitative survey with teachers and college students in Colombia.

A review of previous literature in students and instructor's voices and factors used in a course improvement has found that here are still existing gaps in exploring students' opinions and particularly in exploring instructors' opinions towards English courses they have taught. The factors relevant to course improvements have been discussed to provide a foundation for the question of a how course should be improved.

The study, therefore, aims to achieve several objectives pertaining to this fundamental English course. Firstly, it seeks to analyse the opinions of students regarding their perception of the fundamental English 1 course. This objective aims to gain insight into the students' opinions, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of their experiences and thoughts concerning the course. Secondly, the study aims to analyse instructors' opinions on the fundamental English 1 course. This objective intends to provide an understanding of how instructors view the course, thus contributing to a more holistic evaluation of the course. Finally, the research seeks to explore the suggestions put forward by both students and teachers for the enhancement of the fundamental English 1 course. By soliciting input from both sets of stakeholders, the study endeavors to identify potential areas for improvement and generate valuable recommendations for the improvement of the course. This present study was guided by the following research questions.

Research Questions

1. What are the students' opinions towards the fundamental English 1 course?
2. What are the instructors' opinions towards the fundamental English 1 course?
3. What are the suggestive factors from students and instructors for the fundamental English 1 course?

Context of the Study

Fundamental English I

In this present study, the fundamental English 1 course is one of the compulsory General Education courses offered to first year students of 18 faculties and 1 school. According to the course syllabus, the course description identifies that students will have practice in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) for everyday communication and

use them to acquire information from different kinds of sources through various forms of media. The course syllabus also indicates that the learning objectives of the course are for students to communicate effectively in daily life using the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and collect information from various kinds of sources and compare, analyse, and synthesise the acquired information to broaden existing knowledge, and present important issues in oral and/or written form by the end of the course.

The materials in the course consist of a commercial textbook and supplementary materials produced and provided by the academic staff at the university's Language Institute, the institution responsible for all English courses at the university. This fundamental course relies on four selected units from the commercial textbook and also relies heavily on supplementary materials produced by the language institute.

Research Methodology

This research utilised a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the opinions of students and instructors. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting the study.

Students' Opinions

Data Collection

The data for this research was obtained from a university curriculum administration system survey, which served as secondary data. The survey (refer to Appendix 1) was designed to assess four perspectives: general evaluation, university quality assurance survey (QA), learning objectives, and instructors' evaluation. Students were asked to rate their agreement on a 1-5 scale, with 1 indicating the least agreement and 5 indicating the most agreement. Additionally, students were provided with the opportunity to freely express their comments.

The online survey was conducted from 7 November to 23 December 2022, and participation was voluntary. The author obtained the collected data from the university's online system for research purposes. To ensure the protection of participants' rights and data, the secondary data obtained from the system remained anonymous and did not reveal the identity of individual students, except for their faculty and section information.

Data Analysis

For the close-ended survey section, a quantitative approach employing descriptive statistics was employed. The Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) software was utilised to analyse the data obtained from the questionnaire. The sample consisted of 3,314 responses out of a total of 4,970 students who had taken the fundamental English 1 course. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, and means, were calculated to summarise the opinions expressed in the survey.

Regarding the open-ended questions in the survey, a quantitative content analysis technique was applied to identify recurring themes. The analysis focused on themes related to course objectives, teaching and learning methods, content and material design, learning outcomes, and evaluation (Beaumont & Spencer, 2005; Nation, 2000; Richards, 2001). This approach allowed for the identification of both positive and negative opinions expressed by students in their comments, providing insights into their perspectives on the course.

Instructors' Opinions towards the Course and Suggestions for the Course Development

Participants and Data Collection

To gather instructors' opinions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with instructors of the fundamental English 1 course. The objective of these interviews was to explore the perspectives of instructors, who are important stakeholders in course development. The semi-structured interview questions were validated and approved by experts in qualitative research (refer to Appendix 2).

Data Collection and Inclusion Criteria for the Participants for Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher employed purposeful and convenience sampling methods to select six key participants for the semi-structured interviews. The inclusion criteria required the participants to be highly experienced instructors who had taught the fundamental English 1 course for a minimum of three semesters. The sample included two course administrators who had not only taught the course but also contributed to its development, along with four instructors. All of them were considered highly experienced instructors. The participants were contacted by the researcher and asked to voluntarily participate in the interviews. Before the interviews took place, the research assistant provided detailed information about the study, ensuring that the instructors understood that their decision to participate would have no impact on their teaching performance or evaluation. The interview questions covered various aspects of the course, including objectives, teaching preparation, classroom activities, materials, assessments, and suggestions for course development (Beaumont & Spencer, 2005; Nation, 2000; Richards, 2001).

Data Analysis for Semi-Structured Interviews

Thematic analysis, a method for identifying, evaluating, and reporting data themes, was employed in this research. The analysis began by examining the data at a word level to determine how conceptual categories related to themes. A theme represents key data that is relevant to the research objectives and reflects systematic responses or meanings within the data collection. Initially, the researcher identified themes and then thoroughly examined the data. The participants' data was treated with confidentiality, with labels assigned to each key informant instead of their names. After the completion of data analysis, all files containing the participants' data were securely deleted. The interviews were transcribed and analysed following the six-phase thematic analysis framework of Braun et al. (2016). This involved familiarisation with the transcripts, generating initial codes, organising codes into themes based on their significance, reviewing and refining themes, defining the final themes to capture their essence, and presenting the results.

Findings

The answers to the three research questions: students' opinions, instructors' opinions and their suggestive factors are provided in this section.

Research Question 1: What are the students' opinions towards the fundamental English 1 course?

Students' opinions towards the fundamental English 1 course

The answers to the first research question are demonstrated using descriptive statistics summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: *Results of CU-CAS Questionnaire Survey*

Question Items	N	Min	Max	M	SD
General Course Information					
1. The course syllabus provides useful information for students.	3314	1.0	5.0	4.25	0.87
2. Classroom and equipment are ready prepared.	3314	1.0	5.0	4.34	0.77
3. The topics are suitable for the available time.	3314	1.0	5.0	4.06	0.96
4. The schedule conforms to the course syllabus.	3314	1.0	5.0	4.39	0.76
Learning Outcomes					
5. Student has gained useful knowledge from the course.	3314	1.0	5.0	4.06	0.95
6. Student has practised analytical skills, critical thinking, and creative thinking from the course.	3314	1.0	5.0	4.07	0.91
7. Student has practised communication skills, presentation skills and usage of information technology.	3314	1.0	5.0	4.25	0.85
8. This course promotes life-long learning and learner autonomy.	3314	1.0	5.0	4.06	0.96
9. Learn effectively in daily life using the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).					

Question Items	N	Min	Max	M	SD
10. Learn effectively in daily life using the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).	3314	1.0	5.0	4.10	0.91
11. Collect information from various kinds of sources and compare, analyse, and synthesise the acquired information to broaden existing knowledge, and present important issues in oral and/or written form.	3314	1.0	5.0	4.16	0.87
Instructors					
12. The instructor has properly prepared course materials and provided proper references.	3312	1.0	5.0	4.47	0.76
13. The instructor has teaching skills	3312	1.00	5.00	4.51	0.72

In Table 1, the study's mean score range was a five-point scale measurement: 4.50-5.00 for very high, 3.50-4.49 for high, 2.50-3.49 for moderate, 1.50-2.49 for low, and 1.00-1.49 for very low. Students were asked in the questionnaire if they agreed with 12 statements about general course information, learning outcomes (QA), course objectives, and instructors. The average score of all questions was 4.23, which was high.

In terms of the Likert score for the 12 statements, the average score of four statements for general course information was 4.27, which was high. The average score for each question was as follows: 4.25 for "The course syllabus provides useful information to students." 4.37 for "Classroom and equipment are ready prepared." 4.06 for "The topics are suitable for the available time." 4.40 for "The schedule conforms to the course syllabus."

The average score of four statements for the learning outcomes (QA) was 4.11, which was also high. The average score for each question was as follows: 4.06 for "Student has gained useful knowledge from the course." 4.08 for "Student has practised analytical skills, critical thinking, and creative thinking from the course." 4.26 for "Student has practised communication skills, presentation skills and usage of information technology." 4.06 for "This course promotes life-long learning and learner autonomy."

The mean score of the two statements for course objectives was also high at 4.13. The average score for each question was as follows: 4.10 for "Learning effectively in daily life using the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)", and 4.16 for "Collect information

from various kinds of sources and compare, analyse, and synthesise the acquired information to broaden existing knowledge, and present important issues in oral and/or written form."

Instructors received the highest average score of 4.49, which was close to the very high range. The mean scores for two statements about instructor evaluations were 4.47 for "The instructor has properly prepared course materials and provided proper references", and 4.51 for "The instructor has teaching skills."

According to Table 1, the mean scores were ranked from the highest to lowest as follows: 1. The instructor has teaching skills. (M = 4.51, SD = 0.72); 2. The instructor has properly prepared course materials and provided proper references. (M = 4.47, SD = 0.76); 3. The schedule conforms to the course syllabus. (M = 4.395, SD = 0.7597); 4. Classroom and equipment are ready prepared. (M = 4.35, SD= 0.77); 5. General course information (M = 4.26, SD = 0.72); 6. Student has practised communication skills, presentation skills and usage of information technology. (M = 4.26, SD = 0.85); 7. The course syllabus provides useful information to students (M = 4.25, SD = 0.87); 8. Collect information from various kinds of sources and compare, analyse, and synthesise the acquired information to broaden existing knowledge, and present important issues in oral and/or written form. (M = 4.16, SD= 0.87); 9. Learn effectively in daily life using the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing); (M = 4.10, SD = 0.91); 10. Student has practised analytical skills, critical thinking, and creative thinking from the course. (= 4.08, SD = 0.91); 11. The topics are suitable for the available time. (M = 4.06, SD = 0.96); 12. This course promotes life-long learning and learner autonomy. (M =4.06, SD = 0.96); Student has gained useful knowledge from the course. (M = 4.06, SD = 0.9464).

As for the open-ended section, 384 students provided comments, allowing for a more comprehensive exploration of their perspectives and experiences. A total of 466 open-ended comments were analysed. From the initial five themes identified in this research, four themes emerged from the open-ended findings: Teaching and Learning Methods (7.73%), Content and Material Design (13.73%), Learning Outcomes (5.15%), and Assessment and Evaluation (28.33%). Additionally, three emerging themes were identified, namely Instructors (33.26%), Students' English Language Backgrounds and English Language Proficiency Levels (6.01%), and Facilities (1.72%). These themes were accompanied by other miscellaneous comments (4.08%). This can be seen in Table 2. The following findings are organised by themes, in descending order.

Table 2: *Students' comments from the CU-CAS*

Topics	Positive	Negative	Frequency	Percent
Teaching and Learning Methods				
The teaching and learning methods employed are effective and suitable.	6		6	1.29
There is an excessive number of class activities.		5	5	1.07
The class requires more activities.		8	8	1.72
The class environment is unpleasant.		17	17	3.65
total	6	30	36	7.73
Content and Materials				
The content provided is valuable and appropriate.	4		4	0.86
The content is too easy		12	12	2.58
The content is too challenging.		17	17	3.65
The proposed content is unsuitable.		22	22	4.72
Other content and material design comments		9	9	1.93
total	4	60	64	13.73
Learning Outcomes				
The class is beneficial and applicable to daily life.	12		12	2.58
The class is not applicable to daily life.		12	12	2.58
total	12	12	24	5.15
Evaluation				
The scoring criteria set are excessively high.		35	35	7.51
The assessment and rating scales are unreasonable.		22	22	4.72
Different instructors adopt varying standards and assessment scales.		63	63	13.52
The evaluation components are inappropriate.		12	12	2.58
total		132	132	28.33
Instructors				
The experience with instructors is positive.	123		123	26.39
The experience with instructors is negative.		32	32	6.87
total	123	32	155	33.26
Student Backgrounds and English Language Proficiency Levels				
The class is suitable for students with an English background.	1		1	0.21
The students have diverse backgrounds and varying proficiency levels.		27	27	5.79
total	1	27	28	6.01

Topics	Positive	Negative	Frequency	Percent
The on-site facilities are unsatisfactory.		6	6	1.29
The online tools are inadequate.		2	2	0.43
total		8	8	1.72
Others				
Other positive comments	7		7	1.50
Other negative comments		12	12	2.58
total	7	12	19	4.08
TOTAL	153	313	466	100.00

Table 2 above illustrates students' comments retrieved from the open-ended questionnaire survey and the findings are reported below in descending order. It is noted here that students expressed their concerns regarding the facilities. However, these comments are not reported in the following section since they are not directly related to the improvement of the course.

Instructors

Instructors play a vital role in the classroom, and their performance is crucial for students' learning experiences. The teacher category has the highest percentage total of 33.26, suggesting that students' feedback in this area is extensive. This data allows us to evaluate the experiences students have with their instructors, including both positive and negative aspects.

Out of the 466 students who provided feedback, 123 students (26.39%) expressed positive experiences with their instructors. These students emphasised various aspects of their interactions. Most of the comments highlighted the teacher's kindness, understanding, and ability to create an enjoyable and engaging learning environment. The positive feedback suggests that a significant number of students had satisfying experiences with their instructors, which can contribute to their active participation and overall learning outcomes.

> '*The teacher was excellent, fun, understanding, and had a great sense of humor. They have made me more confident in speaking and expressing myself. I enjoy attending their classes. The teacher teaches writing techniques exceptionally well, focusing on the main points and hitting the mark. I wish I would have a teacher like this again. I really like them.*'
>
> (Student 42)

Out of the participants, 32 students (6.87%) reported negative experiences with their instructors. These students expressed concerns regarding inadequate support, a strict and inflexible teaching style, unclear explanations of assignments and scores, and issues with classroom management.

'The teacher was quite strict with almost everything, which has somewhat diminished my motivation to learn English.'

(Student 151)

'The teacher lacked attention to the entire classroom and often used inappropriate language. They attempt to create humor in inappropriate topics, such as making jokes by name-calling.'

(Student 232)

'The teacher was very strict with grading and scores.'

(Student 276)

Evaluation and Assessment

Assessment and evaluation processes are essential for assessing students' progress and understanding their achievements. The percentage total for the evaluation category is 28.33, indicating a significant focus of students' feedback. It is evident from the data that there are concerns regarding certain aspects of the assessment and evaluation system. These concerns include variations in standards and assessment scales among instructors, exceptionally high scoring criteria, unreasonable assessment and rating scales, and inappropriate evaluation components.

Firstly, different instructors adopted varying standards in assessment and evaluation, accounting for 13.52% of the identified issues. This discrepancy implies a lack of consistency among instructors in terms of the points of view they hold to evaluate students' performance. The most commonly expressed comments suggest that there is a noticeable discrepancy in the scores provided by each instructor from different sections, indicating varying standards. Some sections received higher scores, while others were subject to more rigorous evaluation. The consensus is that there is a desire for a greater level of consistency in the grading criteria across all sections.

'The scoring given by each instructor for different sections tends to have varying standards. Some sections are graded leniently while others are graded rigorously. It is desired to have a more consistent criterion for grading.'

(Student 33)

Secondly, there is a too high grading criteria in the assessment and evaluation criteria, representing 7.51% of the highlighted issues. Students feel that the established benchmarks for evaluation are set unreasonably high, potentially placing undue pressure on their academic performance.

'I would like to suggest adjusting the score range because, based on past observations, it seems that easier textbooks have been used compared to the current ones. Previously, a score of 85 was considered understandable for an "A",

*but now the teaching material has been made more challenging. Therefore,
I believe it is necessary to consider changing the grading criteria.'*

<div align="right">(Student 70)</div>

Thirdly, the assessment and rating scales employed are deemed unreasonable, constituting 4.72% of the identified topics of concern. This observation suggests that students find the existing scales inadequate or unfair in evaluating their progress.

'The course's scoring criteria appear unreasonable, especially regarding the point allocation for writing assignments. While the workload is comparable, writing assignments are worth only 2.5 points, while exams are valued at 15 points. This discrepancy seems unfair, and I suggest increasing the point value for writing assignments to 5 points each.'

<div align="right">(Student 11)</div>

Lastly, the evaluation components themselves are considered inappropriate, representing 2.58% of the concerns raised. This finding indicates that certain aspects of the evaluation process, such as the specific criteria or methods employed, are not suitable for accurately assessing students' achievements.

'For the Midterm and Final exams, it is better to incorporate more of the actual taught content into the multiple-choice questions.'

<div align="right">(Student 97)</div>

'In some cases, certain reading-related questions in the exams can be confusing, and the instructor may not provide enough practice for reading comprehension. However, these questions still carry a significant weight in terms of scoring.'

<div align="right">(Student 101)</div>

Content and Materials

The content and material category has a percentage total of 13.73, indicating that students have provided substantial feedback on this aspect of their learning experience. This data allows us to assess the value and appropriateness of the provided content.

Among the participants, a small percentage (0.86%) expressed positive comments regarding the content provided. These students found the content to be valuable and appropriate for their language learning needs.

For the negative comments, a proportion of students (4.72%) expressed concerns about the suitability of the course content. These students felt that the content did not meet their needs or align with their language proficiency levels. Additionally, 3.65% of students found the content to be

too challenging, while 2.58% considered it too easy. These comments highlight the importance of providing content that appropriately matches the students' language abilities and challenges them at an appropriate level.

> 'The content is too easy for those with a good foundation of the points taught but not suitable for those without a foundation. There were gaps between these two groups.'
>
> (Student 182)

In addition to positive and negative remarks, 1.93% of students made comments about the content and material design. These comments included a wide range of issues, such as requests for more entertaining and exciting materials or recommendations for more resources.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching and learning methods are essential factors in providing effective education and ensuring optimal learning outcomes for students. The percentage total for this category is 7.73. This data sheds light on the effectiveness and suitability of the employed teaching methods, as well as concerns about the number of class activities and the class environment.

The findings related to teaching and learning methods indicate a predominantly positive response, with 1.29% of participants expressing that the employed methods are effective and suitable. These positive comments suggest that the teaching and learning approaches implemented in the classroom are yielding favorable outcomes.

> 'I really like the atmosphere of teaching and learning environment. It's comfortable and not stressful, but it also encourages students to actively learn and respond, both in active and passive ways.
>
> (Student 281)

However, there are some areas for improvement the teaching and learning methods identified by the respondents. One aspect mentioned is the unpleasant class environment, with 3.65% of students expressing dissatisfaction in this regard.

> 'The practice of participation in learning through answering questions, which affect participation score, can create a sense of pressure.'
>
> (Student 127)

> 'I would prefer if the group presentation tasks were moved to the earlier stages of the course, rather than being assigned closer to the midterm or final exams. Presenting projects when exams were approaching gave challenges for students in managing their time and preparing for exams, leading to increased fatigue and stress.'

Furthermore, 1.72% of participants indicated that there is a need for additional activities in the class. Conversely, 1.07% of respondents expressed concerns about an overwhelming number of class activities. These divergent perspectives shed light on the varying expectations and preferences of students regarding the level of engagement and participation in their learning experiences.

Students' English Background Knowledge and English Language Proficiency Levels

Students' English background knowledge and English language proficiency levels contribute to the diversity within a classroom. With a percentage total of 6.01, feedback in this category sheds light on the suitability of the class for students with different backgrounds and proficiency levels.

While one positive comment acknowledges the suitability of the course for students' backgrounds (0.21%), several concerns were raised regarding the diverse backgrounds and different English proficiency levels of students in the same class (5.79%).

'Personally, I have some basic knowledge and can read and translate to some extent, enough to understand and keep up with the content. I can pass exams to some extent, but I have many friends who have very little English language background and struggle to keep up with the content. In this course, we helped each other study and constantly explained the parts that they didn't understand. I could feel that my friends were very determined, and I was also determined to keep up.'

(Student 207)

'There should be an exemption exam option for those who already have proficiency in the language, as studying the subject becomes boring for individuals who already possess language skills. As for other friends who have limited language abilities, they still feel that they struggle with the exams and have not developed their skills significantly from this course.'

(Student 308)

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are of paramount importance when assessing the efficacy of an English language classroom. The findings from this research, with a cumulative percentage of 5.15, shed light on students' perspectives regarding the applicability and benefits derived from the English language instruction. Approximately half of the participants (2.58%) expressed a positive opinion acknowledging the class as valuable and applicable to their daily lives. Conversely, an equal proportion of respondents (2.58%) held the view that the class did not align with their daily life

experiences. These divergent viewpoints signify the varying perceptions among students regarding the practicality and relevance of the ESL curriculum in relation to their day-to-day activities.

Other additional comments

This last category, with a percentage total of 4.08, includes additional comments that do not fall under the main categories mentioned above. This data represents diverse perspectives and miscellaneous comments provided by the students. In terms of the feedback received, positive comments were limited to simple expressions such as *'good'*, lacking specific contextual details. On the other hand, negative comments touched upon several areas of concern. One aspect was the timing of the study, indicating a desire for a more convenient schedule. Another aspect mentioned was the format of the exams, suggesting a preference for a particular exam format that aligns with their learning style or facilitates a more comprehensive assessment. The feedback also mentioned the better access to the class materials channel.

Research Question 2: What are instructors' opinions towards the fundamental English 1 course?

Based on the semi-structured interviews with the fundamental English 1 instructors, overall, all participants held distinctive views of the fundamental English 1 course regarding the course objectives, teaching and learning methods, content and materials, assessment and evaluation, learning outcomes, the only exception was students' backgrounds and different English proficiency.

Course Objectives

The objectives of the course were found to be broad enough to provide students with opportunities to practice the four skills of English. In addition, the objectives are seen to be appropriate, achievable, and measurable.

> *'What the course can achieve is students being able to communicate effectively in daily life. It is consistent and in accordance with the daily lives of the students.'*

(Instructor 1)

'The course allows students to do some further research on a particular topic, gathering and analysing information before using it to develop a report or to present in front of class. During the process, they might encounter some problems and that stimulates problem solving skills. That is, the course provides the opportunities to learn actively.'

(Instructor 2)

'Learning objectives are understandable which students should be able to do at the end of the course. The objective statements are consistent and related to students' daily lives in everyday communication. According to two learning objectives, they were designed to improve students' English language skills in general not for the specific contents and issues (EAP courses), the objectives can be achievable if teachers follow and cover all the contents in teaching guidance. Moreover, they are measurable using the course criteria and evaluation both from examinations and assignments. Many activities were assigned in class to show students actual performance and their progress during the course. The course objectives are suitable with the students who have some basic knowledge and background in learning English language (college level).'

(Instructor 5)

'The course objectives were in accordance with the daily lives of the university students, and they were understandable. However, it seems to me that the objectives were quite broad, and we may need more specific learning objectives (under these two objectives) to make them measurable and be able to collect evidence to support students' language development.'

(Instructor 6)

Evaluation and Assessment

Most instructors believed that the assessment of the course was effective and the rubrics were clear with explanation.

'All assessments and rubrics are clear. Overall, it was not difficult for teachers to understand the descriptions and use the rubrics.'

(Instructor 3)

'From this course, the assessment and rubrics are provided with clear explanations towards each activity which are helpful for the instructors to evaluate their students. Many criteria and rubrics are designed wisely to measure students' actual ability from that specific assignment. For example, separated scoring (group and individual score) is to evaluate students' real performance in group presentation.'

(Instructor 5)

'The assessment of this course measures the objectives quite well and the rubrics are quite clear…… Graded assignments themselves are useful as they enable the students to learn, but sometimes some students are not willing to complete the tasks. They just did it to get rid of the homework and didn't see the value.'

(Instructor 2)

Nonetheless, there are different viewpoints regarding the assessment of the course. This was because there were many instructors who taught the course and instructors' ideas of assessment might vary despite the same assessment rubrics provided from the course administration team. One instructor pointed out that this has made the course challenging for quality of assessment for all students.

'Our institute provides this course to all first-year students, except for those in the Faculty of Arts. For example, in this academic year, there were around 170 sections, which was quite challenging to ensure the same quality of assessment across the board. Although the same rubric is applied for all sections, to me, there is still some discrepancy among sections. Last term, I got some feedback from my students that their peers in other sections got better scores in Oral Assessment and so on. Sometimes I can't help feeling that it is probably me who may be too tough. I am unsure as to whether I was too strict or if some other teachers were too lenient when grading both assignments and exam papers.'

(Instructor 3)

All instructors explained that when students came and asked for explanation of the scores they received from the evaluation or assessment, they dealt with the situation with explanation from the assessment rubrics.

Content and Materials

As for contents and materials, overall, all six instructors reported that the selected content and materials from both the commercial textbook and supplementary materials were suitable for students in terms of content which is, age appropriate, well-organised, and up-to-date.

'The contents are good and up-to-date, allowing students to learn the language in meaningful contexts and enhance the four language skills.'

(Instructor 2)

'I agree that the content is enjoyable, meaningful, and instructive and can attract the attention of the students. It is clear and understandable. The content also combines the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking). The content is suitable for the students' age levels and has been selected according to the objectives.'

(Instructor 4)

'The updated version (1/2022) is a more appropriate level of students' English proficiency level (xxx book 3 to book 5). The content provided is in general English which can be applied with the students from the different fields. The content from the commercial book and supplementary materials are consistent. Teachers may discuss the topic related to the book first, then introduce and let students study more from the supplementary materials. The subjects are ordered from general to specific and simple to complex which is easy for the students to follow. Coursebook and supplementary materials are categorised by skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) which are meaningful for the students. They may select and focus only for specific parts if they are interested. Moreover, vocabulary and reading texts that the materials include are suitable for the students' linguistic levels. Due to teaching duration, vocabulary and reading texts in the materials are enough for the students.'

(Instructor 5)

However, one instructor made a remark about different contexts and culture which students might not be familiar with.

'Four units from each course book were selected based on the course objectives. In particular, all are geared towards the writing outcomes of the students. Basically, the content is suitable for the students' age levels. In my opinion, most of the content can attract the attention of students. However, students may need extra background information when they come across different or new contexts, for example, a specific culture, or a particular context of some countries.'

(Instructor 3)

One instructor also commented that although the content is suitable, the topics chosen from the core textbook may not be particularly interesting for all the students.

'The content is suitable for students to some extent. According to the course objectives suggested, the course content was general and covers all four language skills. The tasks and practices provided in the supplementary materials reflected a certain degree of authenticity and provided more practices for the students. However, as the selection of the topics was based on the textbook, some content was not attractive for the students.'

(Instructor 6)

One instructor preferred to have additional materials for students to practice. That is to say, students should have more practices as well as for what they are expected to achieve in the exams.

'For all students, another important thing that I think they should know is additional resources for their further study. So, if possible, I will always give them a few links for extra practice.'

(Instructor 3)

'Some students have asked me how they can improve their reading scores and where they can find reading materials to practice on, so if the supplementary material book provides more reading practices that are in a similar format and level to the exams' reading part, I think it will be very helpful.'

(Instructor 4)

Another instructor was concerned with how much consideration should be given to the materials in the commercial textbook. Perhaps the In-house materials which produced by the language institute team should be used instead while incorporating speaking and listening activities.

'The textbook should be reconsidered whether to use it or not as the course seems to pay more attention to practices in the supplementary material.'

<div align="right">(Instructor 6)</div>

Teaching and Learning Methods

According to the instructors, they were very well-prepared and highly devoted to their teaching the course. This can be seen through their teaching preparation, instructional activities and teaching and learning processes in the classroom, and additional materials provided to assist students to gain more practices.

'I made PowerPoint slides by myself and I followed all the content on my slides. I may or may not use all of them, but I wanted to feel secure that they were there. I provided additional materials especially those about grammar. This was because the book assumed students learned the form already and jumped to the usage right away. I felt like they needed to be accurate first when it comes to grammar.'

<div align="right">(Instructor 1)</div>

'Additional materials are provided sometimes if the students need more practice.'

<div align="right">(Instructor 4)</div>

Two instructors felt that due to time constraint and course hours, instructors need to manage time well in order to make sure that all content was covered as stated in the course syllabus.

'Sometimes it was just difficult to cover all the required content within the time limitation. Still, I managed to cover everything. The students sometimes felt fatigued and discouraged as it seemed like they had to do many activities (such as 1-hour listening and speaking, 1-hour reading, and 1-hour writing) within a 3-hour class.'

<div align="right">(Instructor 6)</div>

Students' English Background Knowledge and English Proficiency

Moreover, students' English language background and different levels of language proficiency tend to be an issue for instructors of the course. All participants made a real attempt to ensure that

all students in the class understood the lessons thoroughly because of the mixed-ability of the students in each class.

> *'There is a big gap in students' proficiency, making it difficult to manage class when students with a big difference study together. While fast learners can go very quickly and get bored to wait, slow learners struggle a lot and cannot keep up with their friends.'*
>
> (Instructor 2)

> *'Overall, students are able to develop their English skills from the course. However, we can't deny that those who are quite proficient in English may not develop much because they tend to find the course materials far too easy.'*
>
> (Instructor 3)

> *'Due to the condition of the course (required course for first year students), students from different schools may have different learning backgrounds and English language proficiency. A placement test is not required at the beginning of the course in order to indicate the English proficiency level of the students. Some teachers encountered the difficulty of discussing some lessons or topics throughout the class. Some learning contents and activities may not be appropriate for some student's proficiency level.'*
>
> (Instructor 5)

> *'In mixed-ability classes, I often randomly assign the students to work in small groups and let them complete tasks together. The tasks require different abilities and need collaboration to finish the tasks in time. So, the students have to help each other. I also walk around the class and help, when necessary, needed, and/or requested.'*
>
> (Instructor 6)

This section has provided the answers of instructors' opinions towards the fundamental English 1 course in the aspects of the course objectives, teaching and learning methods, content and materials, evaluation and assessment, learning outcomes, and students' English backgrounds and different English language proficiency. Overall, the course instructors had positive opinions

about several topics. However, there are mixed views of the course which should be taken into a careful consideration. The next section provides the answers to the research question 3.

Learning Outcomes

Furthermore, all instructors agreed that the course is useful to students since the course allowed students to practice multiple skills, besides all four English skills. Students had opportunities to use their critical thinking skills.

'The content and the book guide students to be critical thinkers. I mean if we focus on 'studying' in class, yes it promotes critical thinking.'

(Instructor 1)

'The course allows students to do some further research on a particular topic, gathering and analysing information before using it to develop a report or to present in front of class. During the process, they might encounter some problems that stimulate problem-solving skills. That is, the course provides the opportunities to learn actively.'

(Instructor 2)

'Certainly, the fundamental English I course is aimed at promoting students' critical thinking as well as problem-solving skills. Also, students are encouraged to be active and express ideas in the written and spoken form. As far as I can remember, in each unit in the coursebook, there are many questions that teachers can use to engage students. I really like those questions because they promote them to give opinions based on their experience and extra research.'

(Instructor 3)

'According to learning objectives, this course is to let students compare, analyse, and synthesise the acquired information to broaden existing knowledge so students practice their critical thinking and problem-solving skills while doing their activities in the class. Many tasks and assignments in this course are designed to think critically, solve problems, to produce and be active in the process of learning the language at the same time.'

(Instructor 5)

One interesting comment from instructor 4 is that the course not only offered students an opportunity to learn other skills, but also helped the instructor learn more about the students' abilities.

'The presentations help students learn various skills which they can use for

presentations in other subjects as well. Some of my students rarely spoke in class but did very well on presentations, so as an instructor, these particular tasks helped me learn more about my students' abilities as well.'

<div align="right">(Instructor 4)</div>

Research Question 3: What are the suggestive factors which are from both students and instructors towards the fundamental English 1 course?

The findings revealed that both students and instructors identified areas for improvement in the fundamental English 1 course. While there were shared viewpoints, there were also differences in their suggestions. These findings highlight both areas of agreement and areas of disagreement between students and instructors. Acknowledging these perspectives can assist curriculum developers in making changes that address the identified differences while leveraging areas of agreement to enhance the learning experience and effectiveness of the course.

Content and Materials

Regarding the content and materials, a notable segment of students (constituting 4.72%) voiced apprehensions regarding the appropriateness of the course content. These students expressed the view that the content failed to cater to their requirements or correspond to their language proficiency levels. Furthermore, 3.65% of students deemed the content excessively demanding, whereas 2.58% considered it insufficiently challenging. These comments underscore the significance of furnishing content that adequately corresponds to the linguistic aptitude of students, thereby presenting them with appropriate challenges commensurate to their abilities. However, students' voices are contradictory to instructors' opinions in that the content is age-appropriate and suitable, despite some challenges for lower proficiency level students.

Some instructors found that some grammar points needed to be improved due to its content in the selected unit from the commercial textbook.

'The grammar taught is not really useful. For example, they studied differences between the past perfect and the past perfect continuous. But in reality, more than 80% of my students could not yet tell difference between the present perfect and the past simple. The root of the problem might have been the particular units that we chose, so it was difficult to arrange the content from simple to more difficult.'

<div align="right">(Instructor 1)</div>

In addition, one instructor suggested extra reading materials should be added in the supplementary material provided by the language institute so that the students have more opportunities to practice their reading skills as well as for the exams.

> *'For all students, another important thing that I think they should be aware of is additional resources for their further study. So, if possible, I will always give them a few links for extra practice.'*

<div align="right">(Instructor 3)</div>

> *'There can be more reading materials for students to practice and prepare themselves for the reading part on the exams. Some students have asked me how they can improve their reading scores and where they can find reading materials to practice on, so if the supplementary material book provides more reading practices that are in a similar format and level to the exams' reading part, I think it will be very helpful.'*

<div align="right">(Instructor 4)</div>

Learning Outcomes

The efficacy of the course in benefiting students is affirmed by both instructors and students. Quantitative data analysis reveals that students, on the whole, expressed positive viewpoints regarding the learning outcomes of the foundational English 1 course, as evidenced by average scores of 4.11. Furthermore, from the open-ended section, students reported acquiring valuable knowledge that can be applied in their daily life. These findings align consistently with the feedback provided by instructors, who unanimously concurred that the course is advantageous for students. Notably, the course enabled students to practise a variety of skills, encompassing all four English language competencies, while also affording them opportunities to engage in critical thinking. However, it is worth noting that among all the scores of the positive views, learning outcomes obtained the lowest mean scores. This points out that learning outcomes need to be reconsidered for more favourable outcomes in the future.

Evaluation and Assessment

Both students and instructors acknowledged that the assessment and evaluation processes employed in the course can differ depending on the individual instructors. Students expressed concerns regarding the presence of inconsistent standards among instructors, excessively stringent grading criteria, unreasonable assessment and rating scales, assessment rubrics and inappropriate evaluation components. These findings underscore the necessity for greater uniformity in grading criteria and a reassessment of the assessment methods employed within the course.

Furthermore, the instructors noted that due to the course being taught by multiple instructors, there existed a divergence of opinions regarding assessment despite the provision of identical assessment rubrics by the course administration team. One instructor specifically highlighted that this has posed challenges in maintaining consistent and high-quality assessment for all students.

Students' English Background Knowledge and English Language Proficiency Levels

Students expressed the influence of their diverse backgrounds on their English language proficiency levels. The backgrounds included factors such as native language, educational systems, and prior exposure to English. These variations resulted in a wide range of proficiency levels within the same classroom.

Instructors acknowledged the existence of diverse proficiency levels among students and recognised that these differences were influenced by their backgrounds. However, they emphasised the importance of individual effort and practice as key factors in improving language proficiency.

The differing levels of language proficiency posed significant challenges for instructors. They encountered difficulties in ensuring that all students comprehensively understood the lessons due to the mixed-ability of the students in class. Some students found the lessons easy, while others struggled to grasp the same concepts.

Although the study did not identify specific results regarding the opinions of instructors about facility and perceptions of instructors, it is important to note that these topics are not directly comparable. Nonetheless, a comprehensive summary of the overall findings can be presented as follows:

'If possible, I think we should divide students by proficiency. Low proficiency and high proficiency students should not study the same book. It does not reflect anything.'

(Instructor 1)

'In terms of students' proficiency, is it possible to group students with similar proficiency in one section?'

(Instructor 3)

'A placement test or a proficiency test should be evaluated at the beginning of the course in order to design the most appropriate course for the students. Students with lower proficiency levels may take basic courses or additional tutoring before taking this course. If they are at the appropriate level, students would have gained useful knowledge from the course and have practised analytical skills, critical thinking, and creative thinking from the learning content and activities in this course.'

Instructors

The role of instructors in the course is crucial. According to the quantitative findings, instructors received the highest average score of 4.49, indicating a positive overall evaluation. Students generally provided favourable feedback about their instructors, emphasising attributes such as kindness, understanding, and the establishment of an engaging learning atmosphere. However, a small percentage of students reported negative experiences with instructors, citing concerns about inadequate support, strict teaching styles, unclear explanations, and challenges related to classroom management. Nonetheless, the high average score in the student survey indicates an overall positive perception of instructors.

Teaching and Learning Methods

During the open-ended section, students raised concerns regarding an unfavourable classroom environment. Their assessment of class activities also indicated the necessity for revising appropriate activities tailored to each student group. Conversely, students who held a positive perception of the teaching and learning methods implemented in the fundamental English 1 course expressed the view that the teaching and learning activities conducted in classes were effective and suitable in cultivating an engaging and comfortable learning atmosphere. Ultimately, these findings emphasise the significance of maintaining a positive and interactive classroom ambiance.

From the instructors' perspectives, they demonstrated exceptional preparedness and ultimate dedication to teaching the course. This is evident through their meticulous lesson planning, instructional activities, teaching and learning processes within the classroom, as well as the provision of supplementary materials to facilitate additional practice for students.

'I prepared my lessons by studying both the core course books and the supplementary materials. First, I always tried to fully understand everything in both types of materials. The main visual aids are PowerPoint slides as well as audio and video files. Then, I usually read or listen to extra resources and select some materials for my class, depending on the level of my students. Furthermore, I tend to follow the content provided by the Academic Affairs Department, but sometimes I just use a video clip as a lead for my reading lesson or as a substitute for a particular lesson or exercise.'

(Instructor 3)

'I study the unit materials and mark which parts I want to explain in more detail. I use the PowerPoint slides provided by the commercial textbook teacher's manual. However, I need to comment that there are always errors on the answers that they put on the PowerPoint, so every slide needs checking and correcting before it can be used.'

(Instructor 4)

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this present study reveal that from the university's questionnaire survey, overall, students were satisfied with the fundamental English 1 course. However, in addition, students' additional comments did show that students held both positive and negative views towards the course.

Based on the presented data, it can be argued that a universal approach to the fundamental English course may not be appropriate for all students. The research findings emphasise the importance of acknowledging and accommodating the diverse needs and language proficiency levels of students to establish an inclusive and effective learning environment. Acknowledging and accommodating the diverse needs and language proficiency levels is line with Coşkun and Taşgin (2018) in that students without preparatory English courses may feel more anxious than those who are equipped with preparatory English.

The evidence from the research indicates that students possess different English background knowledge and varying English language abilities. For instance, some students may require additional support and resources to enhance their language skills. The data also suggests that students have different preferences and expectations regarding class activities and participation, implying that a single lesson plan may not cater to the individual needs and interests of all students. Tailoring the lessons to suit students' abilities and needs confirms the significance of needs analysis in the process of course design and improvement (Nation, 2000).

Additionally, the research findings underscore the significance of customising course content and materials to suit the abilities and needs of all students. Students have expressed the need for challenging and engaging content that aligns with their language proficiency levels. Adapting the content based on individual student requirements can contribute to a more effective learning experience. This aligns with the findings of Sosa and Matamoros (2021) that in improving an English course, things that need to be changed include the content, language level, teaching technique, and assessment to suit students' and instructors' needs.

Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of fostering positive interactions between instructors and students, as this significantly influences students' confidence and participation in the learning process. However, the quality of these interactions may vary depending on the instructor and their ability to create an engaging learning environment. This further supports

the notion that a standardised lesson plan may not be sufficient to address the unique dynamics between instructors and students. A plausible explanation is in line with the study of Ortega-Auquilla et al. (2021), which claims many students were satisfied that the instructional process was helpful in terms of class participation, motivation, and critical thinking.

Implications and Suggestions for Fundamental English 1 Course Improvement

The findings can be categorised into two categories: strengths to retain for the course improvement and areas for improvement of the fundamental English 1 course which can provide implications and suggestion for the fundamental English 1 course.

The Strengths of the Fundamental English 1 Course

The first strength is positive views towards the effective teaching and learning methods employed by the instructors. The findings demonstrate that instructors possess high teaching skills with preparation and appropriate teaching methods. Students generally responded positively to their instructors as well as the teaching and learning methods employed. Retaining these effective methods can enhance the learning experience and promote student engagement. This aligns with the idea of Sevnarayan (2022) that appropriate pedagogy is highly needed in class.

The second strength is the interaction between instructors and students. Students value instructors who demonstrate kindness, understanding, and the ability to create an engaging learning environment. Retaining instructors who foster positive interactions can enhance students' confidence, participation, and overall learning outcomes.

The third strength is suitable learning outcomes. This present study reveals that the course mainly ensures that learning outcomes align with students' daily experiences, are relevant to their lives, and can enhance their motivation and engagement. The course also focuses on practical applications of the language, which can make the learning outcomes more beneficial and meaningful for students. This can corroborate Beaumont and Spencer's (2005) concept of course design and programme assessment that the fundamental English 1's learning outcomes meet the SMART criteria. The SMART criteria can be explained as S: Specific (Specific content of the lessons/courses), M: Measurable, A: Achievable (students can realistically achieve these targets in the lessons/courses), R: Relevant (related to the general objectives of learning), and T: Timed (it is clear when these outcomes will be achieved).

Areas for Improvement

The first area of improvement is that of assessment and evaluation practices. Students addressed their concerns related to variations in standards, grading criteria, and evaluation components, which is crucial. Working towards consistency in grading, establishing reasonable benchmarks, and incorporating fair evaluation methods can enhance the assessment process. While the instructors believed that they followed the criteria, the high number of students' voices regarding the inconsistency still prevail. One plausible explanation of this may come

from the lack of language assessment literacy (Coombe et al., 2020; Tsagari & Vogt, 2017). To address this issue, both intensive and extensive training for assessment are highly recommended to improve the course's strength and minimise students' concerns. In addition, assessments should be monitored to ensure that the same criteria and rubrics are adopted across the entire course.

Another area for improvement is the course content and materials. Consideration of students' language abilities and needs is essential for selecting appropriate content that effectively challenges and engages them. Incorporating a variety of resources and adjusting the content based on students' requirements can enhance the course's effectiveness. This is similar to the findings that lead to a consideration of students' English background knowledge and English proficiency in order to make successful improvements for the fundamental English 1 course. This is the case even though providing the same course content is one way to create student diversity and inclusivity, which contributes to an inclusive and supporting learning environment. However, the voices of students and instructors echoed that there were some challenges for both students and instructors. As for instructors, this corroborative evidence supports Zakarneh et al. (2020) concerning the challenges encountered by instructors which may greatly impact the students with a high proficiency level. Moreover, the discussion agrees that teaching and learning should be tailored to the learners' needs. Many students voiced that when the content was no longer challenging or engaging for them, they preferred to be exempt or to be placed in a course which would enhance their skills. Consequently, a careful consideration should be made to ensure quality education is equal for all levels of English proficiency.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has some limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, the study's design was cross-sectional at a certain period of time. A longitudinal design should be used in future research to investigate the similarities and differences between the voices of the students and instructors. Second, interviewing students in a focus group could be conducted in future research for in-depth information. Finally, an identified constraint of this research pertains to the absence of intercoder, which could have been employed to augment the validity of the obtained outcomes.

Overall, this research highlights the importance of understanding and addressing students' perspectives to enhance the quality of English language education. The findings can guide educators and institutions in making improvements in areas such as teacher support, evaluation processes, content and material design, teaching and learning methods, classroom environment, accommodation of diverse student backgrounds, and facility conditions. By considering and incorporating student feedback, English language courses can create more

engaging, effective, and inclusive learning environments that promote positive learning outcomes.

Author

Woralan Kongpolphrom is an English language instructor at Chulalongkorn University Language Institute. She obtained her B.A. from the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University and her M.A. in English Language Methods and Studies from Warwick University. She is a PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics at Birkbeck College, University of London.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1
The University's Questionnaire Survey
Student Evaluation Form

</div>

Course _____

Academic Year_____ Semester _____

1. General Course Information

    1. Course Syllabus provides useful information to students.
      ☐ strongly disagree ☐ disagree ☐ neutral ☐ agree ☐ strongly agree

    2. Classroom and equipment are ready prepared.
      ☐ strongly disagree ☐ disagree ☐ neutral ☐ agree ☐ strongly agree

    3.The topics are suitable with the time.
      ☐ strongly disagree ☐ disagree ☐ neutral ☐ agree ☐ strongly agree

    4. The schedule conforms to the course syllabus.
      ☐ strongly disagree ☐ disagree ☐ neutral ☐ agree ☐ strongly agree

    5. Comments and suggestions for this course.
      ☐ strongly disagree ☐ disagree ☐ neutral ☐ agree ☐ strongly agree

2. Learning Outcomes

    1. Student has gained useful knowledge from the course.
      ☐ strongly disagree ☐ disagree ☐ neutral ☐ agree ☐ strongly agree

    2. Student has practised analytical skills, critical thinking, and creative thinking from
      the course.
      ☐ strongly disagree ☐ disagree ☐ neutral ☐ agree ☐ strongly agree

    3. Student has practiced communication skills, presentation skills and usage of information
      technology.
      ☐ strongly disagree ☐ disagree ☐ neutral ☐ agree ☐ strongly agree

    4. This course promotes lifelong learning and autonomy.
      ☐ strongly disagree ☐ disagree ☐ neutral ☐ agree ☐ strongly agree

3. Course Objectives

1. Learn effectively in daily life using the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

☐ strongly disagree   ☐ disagree   ☐ neutral   ☐ agree   ☐ strongly agree

2. Collect information from various kinds of sources and compare, analyse, and synthesise the acquired information to broaden existing knowledge, and present important issues in oral and/or written form.

☐ strongly disagree   ☐ disagree   ☐ neutral   ☐ agree   ☐ strongly agree

4. Instructor(s)

Instructor.

1. The instructor has teaching skills.

☐ strongly disagree   ☐ disagree   ☐ neutral   ☐ agree   ☐ strongly agree

2. The instructor has properly prepared course materials and provided proper references.

☐ strongly disagree   ☐ disagree   ☐ neutral   ☐ agree   ☐ strongly agree

Appendix 2
Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Instructors

There are 15 questions in total.

1. What are your opinions on the objectives of the fundamental English 1 course?
2. Does the course enable the students to think critically, to solve problems, to produce and be active in the process of learning the language? How?
3. What are your opinions on the content of fundamental English 1 course'? Do you think the content is suitable for students in the course? Why? Why not?
4. How do you prepare for your lesson? What materials or visual aids do you use?
5. Do you follow all the content provided?
6. Do you provide additional materials for your class besides the core materials?
7. What are your opinions on the assessment of the course? (The assessments include homework, assessment rubrics, assessment tools and procedures and any other assessment methods you can think of.)
8. What are the positive aspects of the course?
9. What are the problems and difficulties? In your opinion, what problems were experienced regarding the fundamental English 1 course?
10. What are your solutions to these problems and difficulties?

11. Do you have difficulty teaching the course?

12. How do you manage your class when there are students with mixed ability?

13. How do you manage your class when there are different proficiency levels in the same class?

14. What can be done to improve the fundamental English 1 course?

15. What are your suggestions for the fundamental English 1 course development in the following aspects?

- Have students gained useful knowledge from the course?
- Have students practised analytical skills, critical thinking, and creative thinking in the course?
- Have students practised communication skills, presentation skills, and usage of information technology?
- Does this course promote lifelong knowledge and learning autonomy?