

Needs Analysis of ELI 72 at UHM

Jeongyeon (Jay) Park

University of Hawaii at Manoa

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Instructor: Dr. Brown

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Introduction

Literature Review

Brown (2009) defines needs analysis, or needs assessment, in educational programs as “the systematic collection and analysis of all information necessary for defining a defensible curriculum” (p. 269). A needs analysis in language programs is essential in the process of gathering information not only about students but also about other participants involved, such as teachers or administrators. Understanding where students are at in terms of language ability is crucial in designing a curriculum in any language program. This understanding will lay the groundwork for the specific goals and objectives, which will further lead to the development of testing, materials, teaching, and evaluation (Brown, 1995).

Several needs analyses in the ELI were conducted as an in-house report by former graduate students at UHM. Whereas Mason (1985) carried out a needs analysis across all four curriculum areas, Kimzin and Proctor (1986) conducted an extensive needs assessment specifically in listening domain. By incorporating diverse ways of gathering sources, including surveys, class observations, and meetings, Kimzin and Proctor provided rich, constructive information that played pivotal roles on the continued development of listening curriculum in the ELI. More in-house needs analyses were conducted in writing domain across different levels: ELI 73 (Lipske, 2002), ELI 83 (Negretti, 2001), and ELI 100 (Sasaki, T., & Goldner, D, 2001). In reading curriculum, Revard (1990) surveyed ELI 72 and 83 students’ needs, particularly focusing on task-based language teaching. The most recent needs analysis was conducted by Ono (2002), and the study provided a very thorough analysis of the ELI reading curriculum, incorporating both student surveys and teacher interviews.

Description of the ELI Program

The mission of the English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) is “to provide English instruction for students who have been admitted to the university and who do not speak English as a native language (predominantly, but not limited to, international and immigrant students), in order to facilitate their academic studies” (English Language Institute, n.d.). As stated, the primary goal of the institute is to foster students’ overall academic English ability, while aiming to aid students in becoming autonomous second language learners in the long term.

All international and immigrant students who have been officially admitted to UHM are required to take the ELI Placement Test (ELIPT), which consists of five separate tests measuring students’ academic English ability. However, students who have received a score of 100 or above on the internet-based TOEFL (or above 250 on the computer-based or above 600 on the paper-based) are eligible for exemption from the ELI. According to the ELIPT scores, students are assigned one or more courses at their proficiency level. The misplacement of students rarely occurs; each instructor implements a criterion-referenced test at the beginning of the semester not only to make sure that students are placed at the appropriate level but also to grasp overall and individual students’ academic English ability.

The ELI has two levels of courses, intermediate and advanced, in the following areas: Listening and Speaking, Reading, and Writing. While classes are offered face-to-face, some sections are also offered online. In addition, the ELI offers hybrid classes, which combine face-to-face and online instruction. The online and hybrid classes are a way of not only giving students more flexibility in terms of their course schedules but also enhancing computer-assisted

online-learning. However, those sections are subject to availability according to the demand of students and teacher availability in each semester. All ELI courses offered are taken for three course credits. With the exception of ELI 100 (Expository writing), all courses are credit and non-credit based. The current courses offered in the ELI are presented below:

Table 1

The Current ELI Courses (Spring 2012)

	Listening/ Speaking	Reading	Writing
Intermediate	ELI 70	ELI 72	ELI 73
Advanced	ELI 80*	ELI 82*	ELI 83** (grads) ELI 100 (undergrads)

Note. * indicates the availability of hybrid courses.

** indicates the availability of both hybrid and online courses

Purpose of the Study

Among the courses offered above, the current study focuses on ELI 72, Reading for Foreign Students. The process of reading itself can be seen as a strategic process since readers make an effort to predict and interpret the information in the text, using various skills and processes (Grabe, 2009). Utilizing effective reading strategies is particularly known to facilitate students' reading comprehension. In line with these views, ELI 72 focuses predominantly on reading skills or strategies, underlying the assumption that these learned skills or strategies would benefit students on their academic reading development. Accordingly, the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) described in the current ELI 72 course syllabus are as follows:

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- describe effective strategies for academic reading comprehension in English.
- apply strategies appropriately in a range of different academic reading tasks.
- recognize text structures at the paragraph level.
- recognize authors' perspectives, techniques, and arguments.
- state a range of strategies for using reading opportunities to develop academic vocabulary (in English) and specify which they have an active command of in their repertoire.

As illustrated, ELI 72 is designed for both undergraduate and graduate students in order to help them cope with their academic reading difficulties. Thus, one of the primary purposes of this study is to examine whether these stated SLOs are capturing students' immediate reading needs as required in academic settings. Also, the study attempts to report on "what students already know and what they need to learn" (Brown, 1995, p. 35), by conducting a needs analysis survey developed by considering Rossett's (1982, p. 30) five types of questions (Nature of problem? Priorities within problem? Subject matter/ skills? Attitude towards? and Cause of problem?) Eventually, the current study hopes to contribute to the continued development of ELI 72 by identifying any ongoing needs that should be addressed, or addressed in more depth. Accordingly, I will also provide some suggestions, taking into account students' language needs and situation needs.

Research Questions

With the purposes in mind, the current study hopes to answer the following research questions:

1. What kinds of reading difficulties do ELI 72 students experience in general in their content-related courses?
2. Do students think ELI 72 is useful for improving their reading ability?

3. Do the course activities reflect students' academic reading needs and match with the course SLOs?
4. What kinds of suggestions can be made for the continued development of ELI 72?

Method

Participants

Only a small number of students participated, revealing a low response rate of 17 %. A total of 18 students participated in the study; 12 were former ELI 72 students who took the class between Fall 2009 and Fall 2011, and six were current students (Spring 2012). Of the respondents, 11 were male and seven were female. Their ages ranged from 19 to 34 years old with a mean of 24.7. Their ethnicity was quite varied, although most of them were from East Asia, particularly China. Eleven were undergraduate and seven were graduate students, coming from various academic disciplines. The students' biodata is summarized in Table 2 below.

Materials

A self-report survey was the main instrument used for data collection. Student and teacher interviews were also carried out before and after the survey in order to triangulate the data, gathering diverse perspectives from the participants involved. Prior to creating the survey questionnaire, I observed the current ELI 72 class and interviewed ELI reading teachers to obtain better understanding of the nature of the class. These procedures were conducted to form satisfactory survey questionnaire items by collecting all necessary information needed. As a result, my field notes and the teachers' perspectives laid the groundwork in developing the questions. The director, the coordinator, and the lead teacher of the reading curriculum in the ELI

shed light on polishing the questions. Final adjustments were further made with the help of Professor J. D. Brown.

Table 2

Biodata of Student Participants

Characteristics	N(%)
Gender	
Male	11(61.11%)
Female	7(38.89%)
Academic Status	
Undergraduate	9(50.00%)
Exchange undergraduate	2(11.11%)
Graduate M.A	6(33.33%)
Graduate Ph.D	1(5.56%)
First Language	
Chinese	6(33.33%)
Korean	3(16.67%)
Vietnamese	3(16.67%)
Japanese	2(11.11%)
Tetum	2(11.11%)
Arabic	1(5.56%)
Thai	1(5.56%)
Field of Study	
Business	4(22.22%)
Economics	2(11.11%)
Education	2(11.11%)
Sociology	2(11.11%)
Urban and Regional Planning	2(11.11%)
Architecture	1(5.56%)
Geography	1(5.56%)
Music	1(5.56%)
Molecular Biotechnology	1(5.56%)
Law	1(5.56%)
Psychology	1(5.56%)

The survey for students consisted of four sections: (a) biodata, (b) reading experience, (c) usefulness of ELI 72, and (d) suggestions for ELI 72. As presented earlier, Section A, the biodata survey, was first developed to gather individual students' background information, including their cultural background, academic status, field of study, and length of study at UHM. The biodata survey included a total of 11 questions. Section B consisted of questions that asked students' perceived importance of reading ability in academic settings and what kinds of difficulties they faced in non-ELI, or other content, courses. Considering that ELI students come from multidisciplinary academic backgrounds, the required types and the amount of readings in their field of study were asked as well. Next, Section C was designed to assess the students' perceived usefulness of ELI 72. In addition to rating overall usefulness, the students were asked to rate specific class instructions and activities that they liked or disliked. Lastly, Section D intended to gather students' opinions and suggestions for the continued development of ELI 72.

The entire survey questionnaire for students included 24 items containing both multiple-choice questions and a Likert scale questions. Open-ended questions were also added across the four sections when necessary, aiming to gather more in-depth opinions from the students. At the end of the survey, I added one more question asking their willingness to participate in a voluntary follow-up interview.

Procedures

Data collection included two steps. To recruit volunteer student participants from previous ELI 72 classes, an online survey was designed with *Qualtrics*, the free online survey program. The survey link was sent out to students who took ELI 72 between from Fall 2009 to

Fall 2011 via ELI listserv with the help of the director. Along with the link, I clearly stated the purpose of this study and their right as participants in the email.

As for the current students, I first contacted the ELI 72 teacher via email for his permission to recruit participants from his class. To ensure that the current students have benefited from ELI 72, the survey was distributed near the end of the semester. I also briefly explained the purpose and procedure of the survey. In addition, it was emphasized that the survey will not affect their final grades for the course, and all the information will remain anonymous. Six students agreed to participate. A paper copy of the survey, containing the same questions with the one for former ELI 72 students, was distributed. Approximately 15 minutes were given to the students to complete the survey questionnaire. Upon completion of the survey, student volunteers for a follow-up interview were also recruited, and one student agreed to have interviews.

Results

In this section, the results of the survey questionnaire, particularly the question items closely related to the research questions, are presented along with interview data. To begin, individual students turned out to have some different reading experiences according to several questionnaire items in Section B. For instance, considering the fact that the ELI students come from diverse academic backgrounds, they were asked what kind of readings were required most in their field of study. Both textbook readings and academic journal article readings are most required (72%), followed by academic magazines (56%) and lab instructions or reports (28%). In addition, their average amount of academic reading was approximately 39 pages per week, showing a wide range of less than 10 pages to over 100 pages.

In order to identify what kinds of reading difficulties that the students faced in their content-related courses (Q 15), they were asked to respond on a four-point Likert scale (*1 = not at all difficult, 2 = not very difficult, 3 = somewhat difficult, and 4 = very difficult*). The two areas that the students perceived most difficult were *knowledge of vocabulary in their field of study* and *reading comprehension* ($M = 3.06$). *Dealing with long, complex texts* came in second with a mean value of 3.00. In contrast, the students on average rated *efficient use of reading strategies* and *reading speed* as *not very difficult*, but the mean scores of both ($M = 2.89$) were still close to 3.00. Table 3 below summarizes the students' responses to Question 15 in order of mean value.

Table 3

Perceived Areas of Difficulty

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Knowledge of vocabulary in your field of study	3.06	0.87	18
Reading comprehension	3.06	1.00	18
Dealing with long, complex texts	3.00	0.77	18
Knowledge of general academic vocabulary	2.94	0.80	18
Efficient use of reading strategies	2.83	0.79	18
Reading speed	2.83	0.79	18

The interview data complied with these survey findings. The two student interviewees strongly believed that their low reading comprehension ability lies primarily in their limited vocabulary size. Aligning with the students' responses, both instructors also mentioned during the interview that ELI 72 students typically show limited knowledge of general academic vocabulary, which mainly causes a great deal of difficulties in understanding academic readings. On the other hand, the third student interviewee stated that despite her adequate amount of

academic vocabulary knowledge, she struggled to make meaningful connections in sentences or paragraphs.

In section C, Usefulness of ELI 72, Question 19 asked the students how much they think they have improved in the above areas after one semester of ELI 72. They were asked to rate on a 3-point Likert scale (*1 = no improvement, 2 = improved a little, 3 = improved a lot*). Overall, as shown in Table 4 below, the average mean values for all areas were over 2.06. Particularly, *efficient use of reading strategies* reported to be improved most ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 0.62$), followed by *dealing with long, complex texts* ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 0.70$). Interestingly enough, the two areas related to vocabulary learning were identified as more problematic than the other areas. For instance, the students reported that they made little improvement on *knowledge of vocabulary in their field of study*, which was perceived as one of the most difficult areas as seen in Table 3. Also, the students rated that their general academic vocabulary was relatively less improved.

Table 4

Perceived Areas of Improvement

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Efficient use of reading strategies	2.56	0.62	18
Dealing with long, complex texts	2.39	0.70	18
Reading speed	2.33	0.69	18
Reading comprehension	2.33	0.69	18
Knowledge of general academic vocabulary	2.28	0.46	18
Knowledge of vocabulary in your field of study	2.06	0.54	18

In addition to the improvement in the areas above, Question 17 specifically asked the students about how much the reading strategies taught in ELI 72, shown in Table 5 below, helped them understand academic reading texts in other courses. These 13 reading strategies

listed on the survey represent the main strategies that ELI 72 covers, as confirmed by the instructor interviews. The average mean value of the listed reading strategies below turned out to be 3.08 with a standard deviation of 0.78, on a 4-point Likert scale (*1 = not at all helpful, 2 = not that helpful, 3 = somewhat helpful, 4 = very helpful*). The students found *skimming* ($M = 3.28$) most helpful, followed by *scanning* ($M = 3.22$). *Previewing, summarizing the main idea, and recognizing the author's arguments* were also revealed to be helpful strategies for them. Eleven reading strategies out of 13 received an average mean value of 3.00 and above, while the bottom two, *taking notes while reading* and *making inferences*, showed a relatively low mean value of 2.83.

Table 5

Perceived Helpfulness of Reading Strategies

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Skimming	3.28	0.83	18
Scanning	3.22	0.88	18
Previewing	3.17	0.79	18
Summarizing the main idea	3.17	0.79	18
Recognizing text organization	3.17	0.62	18
Recognizing the author's arguments	3.11	0.68	18
Understanding the author's attitude and purpose	3.11	0.68	18
Distinguishing facts from opinions	3.11	0.83	18
Distinguishing the main idea from the supporting details	3.06	0.73	18
Using your background knowledge to understand the text better	3.00	0.77	18
Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar or new words from context	3.00	0.84	18
Taking notes while reading	2.83	0.92	18
Making inferences	2.83	0.79	18

Based on their improvement over one semester, the students assessed ELI 72 as very useful (50%), followed by somewhat useful (33%), not very useful (11%), and not at all useful

(6%) on Question 20 (“Overall, how useful was ELI 72 for equipping you to understand or deal with a variety of academic reading texts?”). Notably, the majority of students are quite satisfied with the class. Furthermore, the students provided some additional comments or reasons for their responses. Those students who rated either *very useful* or *somewhat useful* commented that learning reading strategies helped them a great deal in understanding difficult academic reading texts better; accordingly, their reading rate was also improved. Moreover, the two students reported to have gained confidence in reading in academic English itself.

Furthermore, as an extension of this question, the students were asked to rate on what kinds of specific class activities they found useful in improving their reading proficiency on the same Likert scale point (Q18). As seen in Table 6, the three activities ranked highest were *Reading materials outside of the textbook*, *reading circle activity*, and *extensive reading activity*, all with the same mean value of 3.33. Among the three, *reading materials outside of the textbook* turned out to have the smallest value of SD (0.59), which indicates high agreement among the students.

Table 6

Perceived Usefulness of Class Activities

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Reading activities using materials outside of the textbook	3.33	0.59	18
Reading Circle activity	3.33	0.69	18
Extensive Reading activity	3.33	0.91	18
Reading and Writing assignments	3.28	0.75	18
Vocabulary logs	3.00	0.77	18
Textbook readings and exercises	2.94	0.94	18
Reading logs	2.89	0.83	18

These survey results were closely in line with the interview data. All three student interviewees chose *reading circle activity* as one of their favorite activities in ELI 72. They all commented that reading circle activity not only helped them improve reading comprehension ability but also enhanced their speaking and listening ability through in-depth group discussion. Compared to other class activities, *textbook readings and exercises* and *reading logs* were rated to be less useful, showing relatively low mean values as below 3.00. It is worth to mention that in accordance with the students' survey results, both instructors reflected that their students did not seem to have received sufficient benefits from *reading logs* compared to other activities. However, with regard to textbook readings, the teachers' perception stood in contrast to the students' perceptions.

Lastly, Section D contained questions asking students about their opinions and suggestions for the continued development of ELI 72. Question 21 asked students to rate on a 4-point Likert scale (*1=no need, 2=need to spend less time on this, 3=satisfied with the amount of time spent, and 4=need to spend more time on this*) as to how much time they think ELI 72 should spend on the class activities listed on Table 7. As the average mean score shows, the students were more or less satisfied with the amount of time spent for each activity. The students' suggestions were mostly in line with the instructors' interviews, except the opinions about the textbook. Interestingly, *textbook readings and exercises* was least recommended by students. However, both instructors believed that textbook related activities, such as readings and answering comprehension questions, are as important as other class activities.

Table 7

Suggested Time Allotment for Class Activity

	M	SD	N
Studying useful reading strategies	3.06	0.80	18
Vocabulary learning	3.06	0.87	18
Read-and-Discuss in pairs/ small groups	3.06	0.54	18
Practice with applying reading strategies to texts assigned in other classes	3.00	0.84	18
Reading circle activity	3.00	0.69	18
Teacher-led lecture or whole class discussion	2.89	0.58	18
Extensive reading activity	2.83	0.79	18
Textbook readings and exercises	2.78	0.88	18

Finally, Question 23, a multiple-choice item, asked the students about any lessons that ELI 72 should additionally incorporate into the current curriculum. The students' most frequently suggested addition to the course was *reading skills or tips for on-line reading* (61%), followed by *teacher-student meetings for individual help*, selected by 10 students (56%). Nine students (50%) equally responded that *library research skills (how to use library system)* and *skills or tips to find good and appropriate reading materials for self-study* should be also covered in ELI 72.

Discussion

RQ 1. What kinds of reading difficulties do ELI 72 students face in general in their content-related courses?

In their content-related courses, the students responded that they experienced similar degrees of difficulties in most areas, as presented in Table 3. This finding does not seem surprising, taking into account that all the listed areas generally come into play on overall

reading ability. *Knowledge of vocabulary in their field of study* and *reading comprehension* were perceived to be the most challenging for the students to deal with. However, given the fact that most students take ELI 72 in their first semester at UHM, experiencing substantial difficulties in vocabulary, particularly those used in their field of study, is understandable. During the instructor interviews, they pointed out that limited vocabulary knowledge actually hinders ELI 72 students most in comprehending academic readings.

In addition, as individual differences in terms of reading amount may suggest, some students should be simply more exposed to academic readings. Furthermore, considering that different kinds of readings are required in different fields of study, it is recommended that various kinds of readings should be covered in the curriculum in order for students to be familiar with different types of readings.

RQ2. Do students think ELI 72 is useful for improving their reading ability?

Overall, as indicated by 83% of the students, ELI 72 seems to function as helpful in complying with the students' needs; furthermore, the students were satisfied with almost all class activities geared to improve their reading proficiency (Table 6). Specifically, the survey and interview data support that during *reading circle activity*, the students seemed to not only enjoy presenting the reading article of their own choosing, but they also highly valued the opportunity of exchanging opinions with their group members. Particularly, the discussions with their group members appeared to have helped them arrive at better comprehending the article. In addition, as the student interviews reflected, the dominant reason that *extensive reading* was selected as another useful activity pertained to reading motivation. In other words, some students commented that they enjoyed reading graded readers books due in large part to its easy

readability, which, in turn, motivated them to read more and more books by gradually relieving the fear of reading in English itself.

On the whole, the students and instructors showed more or less similar opinions with regard to the usefulness of ELI 72. For instance, it is intriguing that both the students and instructors showed relatively negative views on *reading logs*. Therefore, further discussion is inevitable to identify fundamental issues it may have so that it can serve as a more meaningful activity for students.

However, in contrast to their agreement on *reading logs* above, their opinions were divergent to a certain degree on *textbook readings and exercises*. Whereas it was ranked near the bottom in the students' survey in terms of its usefulness, the instructors perceived the textbook readings as equally important as other activities in improving reading ability. The current survey did not include questions specifically asking the students' opinions about the textbook itself, so I do not know at this point exactly what kinds of factors led the students to be in less favor of textbook readings and exercises. However, it is probable that the characteristics of different textbooks used between Fall 2009 and Spring 2012 might have resulted in dissimilar opinions between the instructors and the students. In contrast, the majority of students identified that the supplemental materials that the instructors brought were more useful than textbook readings. The student interviews revealed that "interesting topics" in the supplemental materials influenced their response on the survey to a large extent.

RQ3. Do the course activities reflect students' academic reading needs and match with the course SLOs?

Taking the students' survey and interview data together, the course requirements appeared to capture the students' academic needs and guided them to enhance their overall reading ability. Almost all of the class requirements were reported to be helpful (Table 6). The students' overall improvement in reading further confirms that the course requirements are well interwoven with the course SLOs. Specifically, the students responded that their efficient use of reading strategy has improved most, which is one of the primary SLOs of ELI 72.

Another finding that draws attention is the students' progress in vocabulary development (Table 4). Although the course aims to facilitate students' vocabulary learning strategies in addition to reading strategies, most of the students seemed to have had difficulties expanding their vocabulary size while taking ELI 72.

RQ4. What kinds of suggestions can be made for the continued development of ELI 72?

The findings in Section D revealed that ELI 72 met the students' expectations, spending appropriate amount of time for various kinds of course activities (Q 21). However, it is worth mentioning that the formal and current students suggested spending more time on vocabulary learning. Also, the students recommended incorporating more pair or small group discussions than teacher-led textbook activities. This infers that the students are more inclined to collaborative learning among their classmates. This learner-centered approach is expected to encourage every student's participation and facilitate active classroom atmosphere.

Limitations of the Study

The current study revealed some thought-provoking findings with regard to ELI 72; however, it still has some limitations that may require careful consideration. Most importantly, the generalizability of this study is limited due not only to a small number of participants, but

also different conditions surrounding the class. In other words, the students took ELI 72 between Fall 2009 and Spring 2012 with different instructors and reading materials. Therefore, even though all instructors followed the same curriculum and incorporated the same course activities, we cannot rule out interactions among instructors, classmates, and materials, which may have differently shaped individual students' perceptions on ELI 72 to a certain extent. Thus, careful interpretation is required not to misconstrue the data collected.

In addition to a small number of students, a one-time survey may not have provided a thorough picture of the course to make a clear-cut conclusion how well ELI 72 matches with the students' needs. Thus, implementing a more qualitative approach, such as more in-depth interviews with a large number of students and instructors, would have supplemented the lack of data.

Implications of the Study

This study has provided students' perceptions and needs that would be valuable for the continued development of ELI 72. Incorporating students' views into the curriculum is of great importance; however, instructors also should bear in mind that not every student can precisely identify their academic needs. For instance, those who are new to UHM or to academic settings in the U.S. may not recognize what kinds of academic reading abilities are essential. Hence, the instructors should keep alert to what students should learn in order to deal with academic readings considering their academic backgrounds and learning style. The course materials and activities can be agreed upon, between what students want to learn and what they need to learn.

As shown in this study, a needs analysis can not only work as a useful tool to grasp students' needs at the beginning of a new semester, but it can also be a class-level or curriculum-

level assessment at the end of the semester that can serve as an equivalent to a course evaluation. This, in turn, would provide rich opportunities for the administrators and course instructors to amend, if needed, their current course curriculum. Although satisfying all the needs of the parties involved within a limited time may be challenging, needs analyses can undoubtedly help the instructors cater to the true needs of any language program at any situation, which can be further incorporated effectively into overall development. Most importantly, the instructors should incorporate those identified specific needs as an ongoing process.

Conclusions

Overall, the survey and interview data showed that most of the former and present students were satisfied with the ELI 72 curriculum. Although the students in general bring in various concerns in relation to English academic reading, most of their issues were reported to have improved with the help of ELI 72. Along with the improvement of reading ability, some students responded to have enhanced their speaking and listening abilities through frequent class and group discussions. These findings imply that more integrated learning occurs in the process of learning readings in class, which the ELI fundamentally aims for. Another comment worth mentioning is that the students' interests towards reading itself have increased at a great deal, at least for the three student interviewees. These findings supports that ELI 72 functions beneficially, satisfying the students' needs and leading the students on the right direction with clear goals.

The findings also suggest some areas of improvement. For instance, the students recommended ELI 72 to spend more time on vocabulary learning, which prevented them most from fluent reading comprehension. In addition, the students suggested having more practical

training on how to efficiently apply the learned reading strategies to the readings assigned in other classes. Furthermore, the majority of students' needs suggest that the instructors should think about incorporating lessons about reading skills for on-line reading.

Also, more than half of the students suggested that individual conferences should be incorporated into the curriculum. Having an individual conference is expected to provide ample opportunities for the instructors to recognize each student's academic reading difficulties and needs. Particular attention should also be paid to those areas that had shown somewhat divergent results between the instructors and students (e.g., textbook readings and exercises).

The findings of this study also indicate areas for improvement. Some suggestions are proposed as follows:

1. Spend more time on vocabulary learning. However, encompassing vocabulary particularly used in different fields of study is somewhat impractical since ELI students come from diverse academic backgrounds. Thus, ELI 72 may focus mainly on general academic vocabulary in class as it currently does, but possibly spend more time on it. In addition, the instructors can incorporate lessons dealing with efficient vocabulary learning strategies. In doing so, the students can apply those strategies on their own vocabulary learning.

2. Make the purpose for each activity clear. Since students are required to do a series of various activities in ELI 72, it is essential to let them know the goals of each activity clearly. The explicit purposes or goals can work as a good stimulator for them to accomplish each activity successfully.

3. Bring more diverse reading materials that can interest and motivate students. As the findings indicate, the students seem to be very much in favor of doing activities using materials

outside of the textbooks. Also, the students showed high preference for pair or group discussions. Therefore, using the textbook readings and exercises in the curriculum as a main material, while at the same time integrating various authentic reading materials into group activities, would boost students' participation, collaboration, and creativity.

4. Incorporate mandatory student-instructor conferences into the regular curriculum. As compared to advanced level classes (ELI 82), ELI 72 tends to include a wide range of students in terms of reading proficiency. Moreover, due in part to their limited proficiency, the students have a broad range of weaknesses in different degrees. Hence, short individual conferences, if possible, in the beginning of the semester, would provide an ample opportunity for the instructors to understand where individual students are in their academic reading ability. These, in turn, can further function as insightful resources in designing and implementing class activities and materials.

Suggestions for future study

In order to grasp a more holistic picture of ELI 72, the current study can be extended to a large-scale needs assessment study in the future. Due to a small number of students, the present study could not provide exhaustive information. Therefore, gathering diverse viewpoints from a larger number of students and instructors will furnish more valuable perspectives for the continued development of ELI 72.

Another suggestion for future research may relate to gauging undergraduate and graduate students' needs separately, which the current study did not examine. The ELI reading courses place both undergraduate and graduate students together into 72 or 82 level, according to their

reading proficiency. Thus, it might be worthwhile to look into whether their academic needs differ from each other, and if they do, further investigations will be required as well.

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