Outcome-based College English Teaching: Student Satisfaction with Learning Outcomes

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Abstract: *This study aims to investigate the undergraduates' satisfaction with their EFL learning outcomes attainment regarding the four English skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing; and their perceptions about learning activities and assessment tasks implemented in the classroom. The participants of the study were 391 fourth-year students who took different academic disciplines and completed the five courses of General English (GE) at a university in Vietnam. The instruments employed to collect data of the study were closed- and open-ended questionnaires. Both descriptive statistics and content analysis were employed to analyze data. The findings of the study revealed that about two-thirds of the undergraduates were not very satisfied with their learning outcomes, and that those students did not have positive perceptions about learning activities and assessment tasks implemented in the classroom. The study also made some recommendations to improve the quality of the implementation of the EFL curriculum at the university in particular and at the Vietnamese tertiary level in general.*

Keywords: *Learning outcomes, satisfaction, General English, tertiary level, Vietnam*

1. INTRODUCTION

In non-English speaking contexts like Vietnam, English is taught and learned in all colleges and universities. College English is compulsory in colleges and universities, and it has been given great importance by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. That is why the ambitious Project entitled "Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System, Period 2008-2020" has been ratified and put into force. It is put forward that by the year 2020, Vietnamese workforce will achieve at least level 4 of English competence on the Common European Framework of Reference's scale (CEFR) (2001), demonstrating a strong will of Vietnam to make "foreign languages an advantage for Vietnamese people, serving the cause of industrialization and modernization for the country" (The Government, Decision No. 1400/QĐ-TTg, 2008).

Obviously, in Vietnam English language education has been the major concern of different stakeholders, including managers, teachers, students, parents and employers. Student satisfaction with their learning outcomes has become a measure to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning in language education at tertiary level. It not only enables teachers to obtain information about their instruction, but provides feedback for managers and parents. Student satisfaction is always considered as a hot issue and has been widely discussed and investigated all over the world. So far a variety of studies have been conducted to investigate student satisfaction with training programs at tertiary level, for example, student satisfaction with teaching activities or teaching facilities (Abbasi, 2011); and with the course outcomes (Abidin, Anuar & Shuaib, 2009); or with EFL speaking classes (Asakereh & Dehghannezhad, 2015), and with academic performance (Duraku, 2014), or with college courses (Sinclaire). Nonetheless, so far very few studies have been conducted to determine whether the desired outcomes are achieved, or to what extent the students are satisfied with their achievement of the stated learning outcomes, and whether outcome-based method used in EFL teaching in the context is relevant.

This study was conducted with the aim of investigating the students' levels of satisfaction with their EFL learning outcomes regarding the four English macro skills and sub skills; and their perceptions about learning activities and assessment tasks. The study focused on answering the following questions.

- What are the undergraduates' levels of satisfaction with their English learning outcomes regarding four English macro skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing?

- To what extent do learning activities support the students in achieving the stated outcomes?

- How relevant do the students find the learning assessment tasks to the stated learning outcomes?

It is expected that this paper will partly reflect the current status of employing CEFR in English education at tertiary level in Vietnam and will make a small contribution to the discussion through the investigation of students' satisfaction and the implementation of EFL courses.

2. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in a university in Ho Chi Minh City-Vietnam. This university offers training at undergraduate and graduate levels of a variety of disciplines. It is striving to become one of the multi-disciplinary universities with national-standard education, training and research quality and to catch up with those in the region. At present, it is training more than 20.000 undergraduates. These students major in Tourism management, Business administration, Banking and Finance, Information Technology, Architecture and Art, Civil engineering, Electrical engineering, Food technology, Biology technology, Environmental technology, Laws, Psychology, and Foreign languages. Regarding the training programs for all disciplines, English is taught as a compulsory subject rather than used as a medium of instruction. Accordingly, all undergraduates have to complete five GE courses and they are required to achieve B1-Level of English proficiency according to the criteria based on CEFR. That is why learning outcomes, materials for teaching content; learning assessment tasks; ways of organizing teaching and learning and many other things relating to the teaching and learning of English are selected based on criteria of CEFR.

Below are the stated learning outcomes of the five EFL courses for both teachers and students to follow:

The university expects that its graduates should have acquired B1-level of English proficiency based on the criteria of CEFR (2001). In terms of reading sub skills, its graduates should be able to read factual texts related to their fields; understand the description of events, feelings, relevant information in everyday materials, instructions and regulations; scan longer familiar texts, and identify significant points in newspaper articles. In terms of listening sub skills, they should be able to understand factual information about common daily or job related topics, the main points of clear speech on familiar topics and simple instructions or detailed directions; and follow the main points of discussion, short talks on familiar topics. In terms of speaking sub skills, they should be able to describe a variety of familiar subjects, experiences, feelings and reactions, events, hopes, and plots of books or films; and give reasons, and explanations or arguments and clear presentations of familiar topics. Moreover, they are required to be able to communicate confidently in different familiar social situation such as checking, exchanging and confirming ideas and information on familiar topics; expressing personal opinions, thoughts or feelings on topics; entering and maintaining conversations on familiar topics; dealing with common aspects of everyday living; and asking and answering questions in a structured interview. In terms of writing sub skills, they should be able to write descriptions of familiar subjects within their field of interest; short, simple essays and reports in about 150-300 words; personal letters expressing experiences, feelings about familiar topics; and messages and notes in daily communication, work and study.

(Extracted from the syllabus of the courses)

Regarding the process of designing the outcome-based EFL courses, the course designer followed important steps including, as Kember (2005) states, after desirable learning outcomes are identified, the course content, learning activities and assessment tasks are designed. However, so far no evaluation has been conducted to determine whether the desired outcomes are achieved. Obviously, it is necessary to gather evidence to ensure whether outcome-based method used in EFL teaching in the context satisfies the students.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Participants

The student participants of the study were 435 four-year students who were in their final academic year and had completed the GE courses at the university. 391 of them (89.9%) returned the questionnaire, which was considered to have a high return rate. The table below demonstrates demographic information of the student participants.

Table1. *Demographic Information of Fourth-Year Student Participants*

Students		N=391	Percentage 100%
Gender	Female	224	57.3
	Male	167	42.7
Faculty / Majors	Business Administration	55	14.1
	Environment & Biology Technology	57	14.6
	Banking & Finance	49	12.5
	Tourism & Hospitality Management	82	21.0
	Architecture & Industrial Art	38	9.7
	Information Technology	30	7.7
	Electrical & Electronic Engineering	41	10.5
	Civil Engineering	39	10.0

3.2. Data Collection

The data for this study were gathered from a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was closed-ended and employed a five-point Liker-scale ranging from "very dissatisfied" (VD), dissatisfied (D), neutral (N), satisfied (S) to "very satisfied" (VS). This part consisted of 25 items belonging to four major categories: reading, listening, speaking and writing. Each category consisted of different features to measure the students' satisfaction with their abilities to use the language (Maki, 2004) after learning the five GE courses at the university. These features were designed based on the criteria of the B1-level of English proficiency stated in the learning outcomes of the courses based on CEFR which all undergraduates had to accomplish. The second part included three open-ended questions asking about what the students thought about the extent learning activities supported them in achieving the stated outcomes; and how relevant they found the learning assessment tasks to the stated learning outcomes.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data gathered from the closed-ended questionnaire were analyzed through the use of SPSS.

Cronbach's alpha reliability calculated index for the questionnaire concerning the students' levels of satisfaction with their learning outcomes ranged from 0.858 to 0.907 and the overall indicator was 0.958 (Refer to Table 2).

Table2. *Cronbach's Alpha of Learning Outcomes Evaluation Criteria*

Learning Outcome Evaluation Criteria	Cronbach's Alpha
1. Reading (6 items)	0.907
2. Listening (4 items)	0.871
3. Spoken Production (5 items)	0.858
4. Spoken Interaction (6 items)	0.880
5. Written Production & Written Interaction (4 items)	0.859
Overall indicator of 25 items	0.958

Descriptive Statistics on percentages (**%**), means (**M**) and standard deviation (**St.D**) were summarised so that characteristics of the respondents could be estimated and the level of satisfaction with the learning outcomes were described. The results of the open-ended questionnaire were interpreted in narrative passages. Some parts of the responses were extracted and quoted in this paper to support the analysis of the results.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Students' Satisfaction with Learning Outcomes

4.1.1. Students' levels of satisfaction with their reading skills

This subsection measures six features regarding students' levels of satisfaction with reading sub skills (R) as illustrated in the table below.

Table3. *Descriptive Statistics for Reading Sub skills*

Item	N	VD	D	N	S	VS		
		%	%	%	%	%	M	St.D
R1. Reading factual texts on familiar subjects related to their field	391	10.2	30.7	39.9	17.4	1.8	2.70	0.934
R2. Understanding the description of events, feelings, and the like	391	6.6	23.8	47.8	17.9	3.8	2.88	0.908
R3. Scanning longer familiar texts in order to locate desired information	391	10.2	30.9	43.2	12.0	3.6	2.68	0.938
R4. Understanding relevant information in everyday materials	391	6.9	22.5	46.8	20.5	3.3	2.91	0.912
R5. Identifying significant points in newspaper articles on familiar subjects	391	6.6	26.6	44.8	19.7	2.3	2.84	0.894
R6. Understanding clearly written instructions, and regulations	391	7.9	27.6	43.5	16.6	4.3	2.82	0.950

As indicated in Table 3, data analysis of feature R1 revealed that 19.2% of the students believed that they could read factual texts on familiar subjects related to their field and interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension (M=2.70), and 21.8% of them were sure that they could understand the description of events, feelings, and wishes in personal letters (M=2.88) (R2) . In terms of the ability to scan longer familiar texts in order to locate desired information, only 15.6% of them (R3) were satisfied with this sub skill (M=2.68). Feature R4 obtained the students' highest level of satisfaction, which showed that 23.8% of them could understand relevant information in everyday material such as brochures and documents (M=2.91). With respect to the ability to identify significant points in newspaper articles on familiar subjects (R5) , 22% of them were satisfied with this sub skill (M=2.84). And finally 20.9% of them reported their satisfaction with their sub skill of understanding clearly written instructions, and regulations (M=2.82) (R6). However, nearly half of the students had neutral ratings about the features regarding their reading skills. The percentages are 39.9%, 47.8%, 43.2%, 46.8%, 44.8% and 43.5% respectively. These results might revealed that the course book did not cover different types of authentic reading texts so that the students did not have any chance to read those reading texts. Moreover, students might only study with the course books in their classes and never had any other reading materials to read outside the class.

The results showed that the students' level of satisfaction with reading sub skills was the highest. This result was not surprising because all the students had experienced from 3 to 7 years of learning English in secondary school before they entered university. Meanwhile, in secondary school, the most commonly-taught skill is reading in combination with grammar and vocabulary components. More or less, this skill is considered the easiest skill for the students at university. Moreover, each unit in the course book consists of at least 2 or 3 reading passages which provide opportunities for both the teachers and the students to develop reading skill. The result also revealed that the teachers might place more importance in teaching reading skill to the students.

4.1.2. Students' levels of satisfaction with their listening skill

This subsection measures four features regarding students' levels of satisfaction with listening sub skills (L) as illustrated in the table below.

Table4. *Descriptive Statistics for Listening Skills*

Item	N	VD	D	N	S	VS		
		%	%	%	%	%	M	St.D
L1. Understanding factual information about common daily or job related topics	391	9.5	29.4	40.9	17.4	2.8	2.75	0.947
L2. Understanding the main points of clear speech on familiar topics	391	9.7	27.4	42.7	18.2	2.0	2.75	0.932
L3. Following the main points of discussion, short talks on familiar topics	391	11.5	36.6	36.8	12.8	2.3	2.58	0.933
L4. Understanding simple instructions or detailed directions	391	11.8	33.2	39.1	14.1	1.8	2.61	0.930

As indicated in Table 4, data analysis of feature L1 revealed that 20.2% of the students were satisfied with their ability to understand factual information about common daily or job related topics (M=

2.75); the same percentage of them (20.2%) reported their satisfaction with their ability to understand the main points of clear speech on familiar topics in work, school, leisure; however, item LS3 obtained the students' lowest level of satisfaction (L2). Only 15.1% of them (L3) could follow the main points of discussion, short talks on familiar topics (M=2.58). Nearly the same percentage (15.9%) of them were satisfied with feature L4 regarding their ability to understand simple operating instructions or detailed directions (M=2.61). However, more than one-third of the students had neutral ratings about their listening skills. The percentages are 40.9%, 42.7%, 36.8% and 39.1% respectively, which might mean that these students had average listening ability. They were not sure whether they could perform the above-mentioned listening skills. What they could do might be that they could listen to what the teachers asked them to do in the classroom.

The results showed that the students' levels of satisfaction with listening skills were a little bit higher than those with speaking skills. These are not surprising results because there are many listening activities designed in the course book. More or less, the teachers had to cover them during instruction. Another reason might be that listening skill is tested in the achievement tests. In addition, the teachers did not want their students to fail the tests. Therefore, they did not neglect it during instruction.

4.1.3. Students' levels of satisfaction with their speaking skill

This subsection measures 11 features regarding students' levels of satisfaction with spoken production sub skills (SP) and spoken interaction skills (SI) as illustrated in tables 5a and 5b respectively.

Table5a. *Descriptive Statistics for Spoken Production Skills*

Item	N	VD	D	N	S	VS	M	St.D
		%	%	%	%	%		
SP1. Describing a variety of familiar subjects	391	12.0	34.3	39.6	13.3	0.8	2.57	0.895
SP2. Describing experiences, feelings and reactions	391	7.9	31.5	40.7	19.4	0.5	2.73	0.881
SP3. Describing events, hopes, and plots of books or films	391	16.9	41.2	34.5	6.9	0.5	2.33	0.854
SP4. Giving reasons, and explanations or arguments	391	17.4	41.7	30.9	9.7	0.3	2.34	0.885
SP5. Giving clear presentations of familiar topics	391	17.6	33.8	33.8	12.8	2.0	2.48	0.992

As indicated in Table 5a, very few of the students were satisfied with their spoken production skills. Data analysis of feature SP1 revealed that only 14.1% of the students could describe a variety of familiar subjects within the field of interest (M=2.57). Meanwhile 19.9% of them (SP2) reported that they could describe experiences, feelings and reactions in English (M=2.73). This aspect obtained the highest levels of satisfaction of the students; but only 7.4% of them (SP3) reported that they could describe events, hopes, and plots of books or films (M=2.33). This speaking sub skill might be the most difficult for the students. In terms of the ability to give reasons, and explanations for opinions or arguments, only 10% of them (SP4) reported their satisfaction with this sub skill (M=2.34). In terms of feature SP5, 14.8% reported that they could give clear presentations of familiar topics (M=2.48). However, more than one-third of the students had neutral ratings about the five features regarding their spoken production skills; and the percentages are 39.6%, 40.7%, 34.5%, 30.9% and 33.8% respectively, which might mean that these students were not sure about their speaking ability. It might be that their speaking ability was not tested at the end of the five courses.

Data analysis of the five features showed that the students almost had homogeneous view about their spoken production sub skills. Not many of them were satisfied with their speaking abilities, ranging from 7.4% to 19.9%. Most of them were dissatisfied with their speaking ability. It was evident that during class instruction, the students did not have many opportunities to practice speaking skill. The teachers might not require them to prepare presentations relating to these topics. Or, almost no projects were assigned to the students in every unit. Another reason might be that the goals and objectives of the courses were not very clear and sufficient enough. They did not tell them to carry out these activities in the class; and due to time constraints in the class, if there were any difficult tasks, they might ignore them in order to save time. Generally speaking, the curriculum did not meet the students' expectations in terms of spoken production skills.

Regarding students' levels of satisfaction with spoken interaction sub skills (SI), table 5b below shows the results.

Table5b. *Descriptive Statistics for Spoken Interaction Skills*

Item	N	VD	D	N	S	VS	M	St.D
		%	%	%	%	%		
SI1. Communicating with some confidence on familiar routine matters	391	22.8	41.4	25.3	8.7	1.8	2.25	0.963
SI2. checking, exchanging and confirming ideas and information on familiar topics	391	12.3	34.5	41.7	10.5	1.0	2.53	0.876
SI3. Expressing personal opinions, thoughts or feelings on topics	391	10.5	35.5	39.6	12.0	2.3	2.60	0.911
SI4. Entering and maintaining conversations on familiar topics	391	14.6	35.3	37.6	11.0	1.5	2.50	0.925
SI 5. Dealing with common aspects of everyday living	391	17.1	33.0	36.1	11.0	2.8	2.49	0.992
SI6. Asking and answering questions in a structured interview	391	16.1	35.3	36.6	10.5	1.5	2.46	0.935

As indicated in Table 5b, very few of the students were satisfied with their spoken interaction skills. Regarding the first feature (SI1), only 10.5% of the students reported that they could communicate with some confidence on familiar routine matters related to their interests and professional field (M=2.25); 11.5% of them (SI2) were satisfied with the abilities to check, exchange and confirm ideas and information on familiar topics in everyday situations (M= 2.53); feature SI3 obtained the highest levels of satisfaction of the students. 14.3% of them (SI4) reported that they could express personal opinions, thoughts or feelings on topics such as films, books or music (M=2.60). With respect to the ability to enter and maintain conversations on familiar topics, 12.5% of them (SP9) were satisfied with this ability (M=2.50).

With respect to the ability to deal with common aspects of everyday living such as travel, lodgings, eating, shopping, 13.8% of them (SI5) reported their satisfaction with this feature (M=2.49). In terms of the last feature (SI6), 11.5% of them were satisfied with their ability to ask and answer questions in a structured interview (M=2.46). From the above results, it seemed that the teachers were not successful in teaching spoken interaction skills to their students.

However, like spoken production skills, over one-third of the students had neutral ratings about the features regarding spoken interaction skills except feature SI 1. The percentages are 41.7%, 39.6%, 37.6%, 36.1%, and 26.6% respectively, which might mean that these students were not sure about their ability; and they might not have any chance to interact with other people in English.

Obviously, most of the students were not confident in the use of English to interact with other people. The results could be ascribed to the students' lack of speaking practice in pair work or group work and to the teachers' lack of motivating and encouraging the students' to speak English with each other. These low levels of satisfaction might indicate that the teachers were not very successful in teaching speaking skills.

4.1.4. Students' levels of satisfaction with their writing skills

This subsection measures four features regarding students' levels of satisfaction with writing sub skills (W) as illustrated in the table below.

Table6. *Descriptive Statistics for Writing Skills (Production and Interaction)*

Item	N	VD	D	N	S	VS	M	St.D
		%	%	%	%	%		
W1. Writing descriptions of familiar subjects within their field of interest	391	12.0	42.5	34.8	9.5	1.3	2.46	0.870
W2. Writing short, simple essays and reports in about 150-300 words	391	16.9	44.2	32.0	5.4	1.5	2.30	0.866
W3. Writing personal letters expressing experiences, feelings about familiar topics	391	14.3	39.9	35.3	10.0	0.5	2.42	0.873
W4. Writing messages and notes in daily communication, work and study	391	13.0	33.5	41.7	11.3	0.5	2.53	0.876

As indicated in Table 6, data analysis of feature W1 revealed that 54.5% of the students were dissatisfied with the ability to write descriptions on a range of familiar subjects within their field of interest, and events or narration of a story (M=2.46). Feature W2 obtained the students' lowest level of satisfaction; only 6.9% of them reported that they could write short, simple essays and reports in about 150-300 words (M=2.30). In terms of feature W3, 10.5% of them reported they could write

personal letters expressing experiences, feelings, thoughts, opinions about familiar topics (M=2.42) ; and with respect to the last feature (W4), 11.8% of them were satisfied with the ability to write messages and notes conveying a little complicated information related to daily communication, work and study (M=2.53). Nonetheless, more than one-third of the students had neutral ratings about the features regarding writing skills. The percentages are 34.8%, 32.0%, 35.3% and 41.7% respectively, which might mean that those students were not sure about their writing ability. They might be right in this case because as revealed by classroom observations rarely did the teachers teach the students how to write the above-mentioned topics. The results showed that writing skill obtained the students' lowest level of satisfaction. Obviously, the teaching of writing skill was the least successful among the four macro skills covered in the curriculum.

The reason explaining the above problems may be because the achievement tests did not measure the students' writing skill. Consequently, both the teachers and the students did not use much effort for this skill both in the class and at home. The results also revealed that the five courses did not bind the teachers to the achievement of the curriculum goals and objectives. Although the series of American Headway course books cover a wide diversity of writing topics, it seemed that these topics were very strange to the students.

From the above analysis, it was found that most of the students were not satisfied with their learning outcomes in terms of the four macro skills. Obviously, the EFL students of the university encountered challenges to have proficiency over the four English language skills.

4.2. Students' Perceptions about Learning Activities

Research question two aimed to find out the extent learning activities supported the students in achieving the stated learning outcomes. Data analysis of the open-ended questionnaire revealed that very few of the students thought that learning activities supported their achieving learning outcomes.

For example, 15 students expressed:

> "…....during the lesson, the teacher sometimes asks us to work in pairs or groups to discuss or share ideas about a topic in the reading text, or after listening to a story, we also talk about the content of the text….."

Or, the students also expressed similar opinions that they were taught all the four skills. For example, ten students answered:

> ".... the teachers followed the course book carefully. We study listening, reading speaking in class and do writing exercises at home. ….." or " ...we feel relaxed when learning English in the classroom."

Obviously, the results of the study showed that during the implementation of the course, at least some students were able to understand what was taught. Nonetheless, those students who had positive perceptions about the teachers' instruction might be more able students, and who might find that the activities were relevant to their level of language proficiency. They could understand the texts and discuss the topics and they could obtain their learning outcomes. This result was consistent with the findings of the closed-ended questionnaire which showed that about one-third of the students were satisfied with their learning outcomes and that with higher levels of satisfaction, those students tended to have higher grades and were more likely to have completed their program. Students can be considered to be satisfied if they feel that the lesson meets their needs and expectations (Gecer, 2013).

Nevertheless, nearly two-thirds of the students did not think that the learning activities implemented in the classroom supported their achievement of the learning outcomes. For example, several students expressed:

> ".....Learning activities should focus more on the students, not the teacher. The teacher works more than the students. The teacher only follows the course book. ...."

It was evident that the teachers did not modify more activities. They had to depend on the course book too much. Some other students expressed:

> "...Teaching methods should be more interesting. Don't follow the same pattern of the course book. The teacher should combine different teaching methods to motivate the students to learn English……"

The results revealed that the teachers followed the course book and that demotivated the students because in the course book, not all the tasks or activities were relevant to all students' levels. In addition, it might be because the students did not have sufficient time practicing skills, or many students were less able ones, and therefore they could not understand what were taught during class. What is more, many students thought that the activities implemented in the classroom were not real-life. For example six students expressed:

> "...The teacher should focus on topics which are closely related to real-life and work situations. The students need to be comfortable in the class and free in communication...."; or " .....not many teachers designed activities for real-life situations. ..."; or ..."no real-life situations are created for the students to use English...."

Based on the learning outcomes stated in the syllabus, it could be inferred that all the students were expected to be able to use English in real-life situations which were stated in the learning outome statements. How could the students be satisfied with their learning outcomes if learning activities carried out in class did not meet the requirements and expectations? Obviously, student satisfaction reflects the effectiveness of instruction. If the teachers focused on high quality instruction and created opportunities for students to develop their English skills, they could help maintain high levels of student satisfaction.

More surprisingly, many students complained that the teachers only read or explained and asked the students to copy what was considered to be necessary. Not much time was spent on skills development activities. For example, two students expressed:

> "....The teacher should use interactive teaching method, avoid explaining. The time for listening should be increased and there must be topics for the students to practice speaking....., or "....The teacher should be more dynamic in the class. The teacher should organize activities for the students to communicate with each other in English...."

The above opinions might prove that not many speaking activities were provided for the students to improve their speaking skill and that not much time was spend on the development of English skills. It seemed that the teachers still prefered traditional methods which mainly focused on explanation.

The results also implied that the teachers might not clearly understand about the CEFR, or that they did not clearly understand the stated learning outcomes of the courses. It was evident that most of the learning activities did not match the stated learning outcomes.

Another issue was that if the teachers only focused on "teaching to the test", how could they provide the students with more interesting activities like games or discussions? Meanwhile, as stated by the students, the final tests were designed in the form of multiple-choice items. Consequently, many students would learn nothing during a lesson. For example, two students expressed.

> ".....The teachers only teach the students how to do multiple choice tests so that the students can pass the final test. They should teach language skills to the students...."

> Or, ".....I really feel bored with the teachers" teaching methods. I learn nothing new.

> No interesting activities are organized for the students. We do lots of grammar exercises that we learned in secondary school...."

Based on the students' responses of the open-ended questionnaire, it can be inferred that most of the learning activities implemented in the classroom did not very much support the students in the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The results might explain the reasons why the students' levels of satisfaction with their learning outcomes were not very high. It can also be inferred that most of EFL instructors at the university might not receive thorough in-service-training in terms of outcome-based teaching and learning principles in EFL education. The finding of a study conducted by Schlebusch and Thobedi (2004) revealed that the problem with some of the instructors is that they have not received advanced training on how to elevate the level of ESL teaching and learning with relevant strategies.

4.3. Learning Assessment Tasks

Research question 3 aimed to discover how relevant the students found the learning assessment tasks to the stated learning outcomes.

4.3.1. Formative Assessment Tasks

According to Brookard (2009), successful formative assessments focus student work clearly on learning targets or learning outcomes; allow students and teachers to measure progress against the goal; and offer information useful for improvement. Nonetheless, the students' responses of the open-ended questionnaire revealed that most of the learning assessment activities implemented in class were not relevant to the learning outcomes. For example, about twenty students expressed:

"……in our classes the teacher employed assessment methods such as multiple-choice, true-false and yes-no questions, gap-filling for checking grammatical structures, vocabulary, listening and reading comprehension….", or " ...teachers should concentrate on developing students' English skills instead of only doing exercises to pass the tests…", or "….instead of doing multiple choice tests, the students should write short essays every week. The teachers can ask the students to write at home and later correct in the class…."

Learning outcomes describe what students should know and be able to do (Maki, 2004). That means both language knowledge and skills should be assessed during instruction. Nonetheless, it was evident that the teachers only assessed the students' English knowledge like vocabulary or grammar structures. For example several students expressed:

".....we rarely practice speaking skill in class. During the lesson, the teacher only nominates some students sitting in the front rows to answer the questions. Especially, we have no discussion so the teacher doesn't call us to go to the front to speak. Most of the time in class is for us to do grammar exercises in the course book after that we go to the board to write the answers…."

These results of the study revealed that the teachers did not employ relevant formative assessment techniques to measure students' performance instead of students' knowledge or only receptive skills. Obviously, various techniques or instruments for formative assessment such as observation of performance, questions and answers, discussion, learning logs, self-assessment, peer-assessment, presentation, ideas sharing, quizzes, journals, tests, practical exercises, tutorials and assignments (Angelo & Cross,1993; Irons, 2008) were not employed during instruction. No matter how much the learning outcomes were attractive, comprehensible, attainable, and coherent (Baume, 2005), the course could not be implemented successfully without the teachers' relevant assessment tasks. Outcomes assessment improves student learning so it is essential to systematically evaluate student performance on specific learning outcomes (Cartwright, Weiner, & Streamer-Veneruso, 2010).

Summative Assessment

After the students completed one course, they had to take the final exam called "the-end-of-term exam". Giving responses to the open-ended questionnaire, most of the students expressed:

".....for the final exam of the course, we all take a multiple choice exam on the computer…",

or *"....the teachers should often assess the students so that they can understand the students' ability. For the end-of-term test, the university uses an unsuitable testing method. The university does not test writing and speaking skills. That is why in the class we rarely learn speaking and writing. I see that we only learn reading and listening……"*

or *".....we think the end-of-term tests are not based on the objectives of the course. As I know only grammar and vocabulary and reading and listening skills are measured in the tests. Multiple choice tests cannot measure the students' language competence. The four skills should be tested…."*

As a matter of fact, multiple-choice items do not require students' performance. The ability to answer multiple-choice items is a separate ability. The students were not required to perform their skills using the language. The results of the study revealed that the use of multiple-choice tests for testing students' achievement at the end of each course was inconsistent with the learning outcomes; and that students' performance was not measured at the end of the course; as a result, during instruction the teachers did not focus on teaching skills. For example: some students expressed:

" ...the teacher should focus on organizing activities for the students to interact with each other to develop language skills instead of only doing grammar exercises in order to pass the

test…..", or " My English lessons are really boring. We only do grammar exercises. We rarely learn listening, speaking, reading and writing. The teacher usually shows grammar exercises on the screen for us to do individually. And then he explains the rules…."

Undoubtedly, multiple-choice items used for the end-of-term exams had negative impact on the teachers' instruction. It was tantamount to the fact that summative assessment did not match the learning outcomes and the students' expectations. Moreover, the results of the study were consistent with the findings of ***Nguyen's study (2017)*** which revealed that the current assessment practice should be aligned with the CEFR, and with <u>Brindley</u>'s study (1998) which revealed that educators encountered difficulties in combining formative and summative assessment.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that the students' level of satisfaction with the learning outcomes or their English proficiency in relation to the four skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing was not very high. Among the four skills, the students' satisfaction with the two receptive skills, listening and reading is higher than that with the two productive skills. It was evident that the teaching of the four skills was not effectively implemented and that most of the class time was spent on grammar exercises and on preparation for the tests. Learning outcomes are part of an instructional course or curriculum. They should be included in and are seen as the focus of the implementation of the curriculum (Gallavara & Suominen, 2008) and are related to and consistent with the stated mission and purposes of the university (Hamp-Lyons, 2014). The results of the study also revealed that learning activities and assessment tasks including formative and summative assessment did not support the students in the achievement of their learning outcomes. Learning activities and assessment tasks should be consistent with learning outcomes. As a result, high level of student satisfaction could be obtained. The results of the current study were consistent with Jun' study (2015) that showed that the students were not quite satisfied with the current college English course. It can be said that the students' low level of satisfaction with their learning outcomes partly resulted from the implementation of the EFL curriculum.

5.2. Implications

Concerning the results of this study, several notifying recommendations are given to EFL course designers and teachers. First, for the course designers, it is recommended that the course designers should familiarize teachers with CEFR and outcome-based teaching and learning approach through workshops, talking about how to apply CEFR in the context in terms of teaching, learning and assessment; learning outcomes should be relevant to and consistent with learning activities and assessment. Requirements and criteria for learning assessment based on the learning outcomes should be designed and introduced to both teachers and students at the beginning of each course. In addition, the study strongly recommends that multiple-choice exams be replaced with performance assessment.

Testing students' abilities to use the four skills in real-life context is necessary.

Second, for EFL teachers, it is recommended that the teachers who implement the course should have sufficient knowledge about CEFR and outcome-based approach. They should understand clearly about the learning outcomes of the course and know how to combine instruction and assessment during class hours. By doing so, both learning activities and assessment tasks may support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

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