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Article

Rethinking Oral Communication Materials: Learner-Informed Coursebook Design in EFL Higher Education Contexts

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Abstract
English oral communication is an essential skill for students' academic achievement and social integration. Despite its pivotal role in facilitating academic participation and enabling engagement in global contexts, it remains insufficiently prioritized within general English curricula across expanding-circle higher education systems. This study presents empirical evidence from the development and evaluation of a learner-informed oral communication coursebook designed to address the functional and sociolinguistic needs of Thai university EFL students. To address this gap, the study employed a mixed-methods design guided by the ADDIE model. Data were collected through a needs analysis involving 145 undergraduates and focus group interviews with 12 experienced instructors, aiming to identify learners' necessities, lacks, and wants in language function, linguistic competence, and sociolinguistic awareness. Findings revealed a significant mismatch between students' perceived competence and the importance they attributed to key communicative functions, including expressing opinions, persuading, and giving suggestions. Instructors highlighted the need for communicative strategy training and the use of contextualized content to support student interaction. These insights informed the design of a six-unit coursebook, which was subsequently evaluated by five ELT experts using a structured rubric. Expert evaluations using a structured rubric yielded high ratings (M>3.25) across all five pedagogical dimensions (i.e., learning objectives, content, activities, design, and assessment), with particular strengths in task authenticity, alignment with communicative goals, and inclusion of diverse English varieties. The study contributes a replicable model for localized, needs-responsive materials development that integrates Global Englishes and learner-driven content. Pedagogically, it offers implications for curriculum designers aiming to promote real-world oral communication skills in EFL higher education contexts.

Keywords
ADDIE model, Global Englishes, learner-informed materials, materials development, needs analysis, oral communication

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1 Introduction

English, as a global lingua franca, plays a central role in international business and collaboration (Crystal, 2003), communication (Jenkins, 2000), and academic mobility (Koo, 2025; Li, 2024). However, oral communication remains underdeveloped in many higher education systems, particularly within expanding-circle contexts. In such contexts as Thailand, English has been institutionalized as a compulsory subject in higher education and taught mainly through general courses intended to foster both written and oral competence (Rajprasit & Hemchua, 2015). Despite this objective, oral communication remains a persistently underdeveloped area in EFL instruction (Abdulrazzaq, 2023; He & Salam, 2020; Zheng, 2019). Learners frequently struggle with real-time interaction, strategic expression, and intelligibility, challenges that undermine their ability to participate meaningfully in academic and professional environments (Brown & Lee, 2015; Chuanchaisit & Prapphal, 2009; Reed & Lee, 2020; Yanagi & Baker, 2016).

These challenges stem partly from the reliance on standardized, commercial coursebooks that are poorly adapted to local learner needs (Asi et al., 2022; Yıldız & Harwood, 2024). Such materials typically frame communicative competence narrowly, privileging grammatical accuracy and native-speaker norms while neglecting the strategic and sociolinguistic skills needed for diverse, real-world interactions (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Kiczkowiak, 2024; Saemee & Nomnian, 2021; Tomlinson, 2011). Such coursebooks seldom incorporate English as a lingua franca (ELF) features, address communication strategies for managing breakdowns, or expose learners to non-native accents and culturally variable registers (Byram, 1997; Derwing & Munro, 2009; Vo & Tran, 2025). To elaborate, strategic competence refers to learners' ability to maintain communication through strategies such as paraphrasing, requesting clarification, and using gestures when encountering difficulties (Canale & Swain, 1980), while Global Englishes reflects an inclusive paradigm that recognizes the legitimacy and diversity of English varieties used by speakers around the world, beyond native-speaker norms (Galloway & Rose, 2018). These misalignments widen the gap between classroom instruction and the communicative realities learners must navigate.

Critically, many coursebooks are also developed without little attention to learners' lived experiences or context-specific communicative demands. Although needs analysis has long guided curriculum planning (Brown, 1995; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), conventional approaches offer limited insight into the dynamic, situated nature of learners' communicative needs (Macalister & Nation, 2019; Zhu, 2024). This requires not only identifying gaps in learners' functional abilities but also recognizing their preferences, self-perceived challenges, and affective responses to communicative tasks (Graves, 2000). Moreover, in multilingual EFL environments, material design should also actively incorporate strategic competence (e.g., paraphrasing, clarification requests) and sociolinguistic awareness (e.g., register shifts, intercultural pragmatics) to prepare learners for real-world communication (Canale & Swain, 1980; Chuanchaisit & Prapphal, 2009; Nakatani, 2010; Yanagi & Baker, 2016).

Although needs analysis remains central to materials development, conventional approaches often fail to capture the evolving, situated, and dialogic nature of learner needs in multilingual EFL contexts. Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) tripartite framework of necessities (what learners must be able to do), lacks (the gap between their current and target proficiency), and wants (their personal learning preferences), frames needs as fixed deficits, overlooking the complex, agentive ways learners interpret, negotiate, and prioritize their communicative goals. Such reductive mappings risk reifying learner identities and producing prescriptive materials that assume pedagogical uniformity. In contrast, this study adopts a dynamic, triangulated approach that integrates learner self-reports, instructor perspectives, and expert evaluations to construct a multi-voiced account of needs (Ng, 2021). Here, this triangulation serves not only validation but also dialogue, repositioning learners as co-constructors rather than passive recipients of content. Embedded within the ADDIE framework, this approach reorients coursebook

design toward learner empowerment, ensuring materials reflect both what students need and how they wish to engage, thereby enhancing relevance, ownership, and communicative authenticity.

Therefore, there is a pressing need for empirically grounded and pedagogically responsive materials that reflect EFL learners' communicative realities in EFL higher education. Although the limitations of generic coursebooks and static needs analysis models are documented, few studies systematically develop and evaluate oral communication materials grounded in dynamic, triangulated needs analysis and informed by a Global Englishes perspective, particularly in Thai higher education. This study addresses that gap by examining the oral communication needs of Thai university EFL students in a fundamental English course, framed through the lens of necessities, lacks, and wants. To respond to these challenges, we developed a context-sensitive coursebook using the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) instructional design model. The coursebook's content was informed by student-reported needs and instructor insights and was subsequently evaluated by domain experts. In doing so, this research offers a theoretically informed, methodologically robust contribution to the field of learner-informed materials development.

To this end, two guiding research questions were posed. The first question is diagnostic, tackling the foundational need for a rich, context-specific understanding of learner needs that current commercial materials and simplistic analysis models fail to provide. The second question is evaluative, building directly on the findings of the first to test the real-world impact of a bespoke pedagogical intervention. This two-part inquiry is critical for the field as it connects the entire research cycle, from an analysis to evidence-based practice, addressing the persistent gap between calls for learner-centeredness and its practical implementation. Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the English oral communication needs (lacks, necessities, and wants) of university students?

RQ 2: To what extent does a coursebook developed based on these needs enhance oral communication ability?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Rethinking oral communication competence in EFL higher education

Oral communication is a central yet underdeveloped component of English language instruction in many EFL higher education contexts (Lin, 2024). Broadly defined, oral communication involves both receptive (listening) and productive (speaking) skills alongside the pragmatic and strategic use of language (Bailey, 2005; Brown, 1994; Brown & Lee, 2015; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Specifically, Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence highlights four components (i.e., grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence) that work together to support effective oral interaction. Strategic competence, in particular, refers to the practical skills speakers use to sustain conversation and repair breakdowns, focusing less on perfect grammar than on managing real-time interaction. The importance of strategic competence is highlighted by key empirical studies. For instance, Nakatani's (2010) classroom study with Japanese EFL students, using task recordings and self-reports, found that explicit training in strategies such as clarification requests and paraphrasing improved learners' ability to handle communicative challenges and enhanced their fluency, confidence, and autonomy. This provides strong empirical support for including strategy instruction in oral communication curricula.

Several scholars (e.g., Roever & Ikeda, 2024) emphasize the need to move beyond surface fluency and grammatical accuracy toward sociocultural and interactional dimensions of spoken communication, such as audience awareness, repair strategies, and register adjustment (Rahman, 2010). Rahman (2010) also outlines core elements of oral communication– language choice, eye contact, body language,

audience adaptation, active listening, politeness, and conciseness–that that enable interaction to emerge between speakers and listeners. Similarly, Sakulprasertsri (2014) defined oral communication as the ability to effectively use spoken language across contexts while also adhering to shared sociocultural and pragmatic suppositions. Taken together, these perspectives show oral communication as an integrated set of listening and speaking skills that allow speakers to convey and negotiate meaning effectively with interlocutors.

In expanding-circle contexts like Thailand, oral communication challenges persist due to limited exposure, curriculum priorities, and the dominance of exam-oriented instruction (Chuanchaisit & Prapphal, 2009; Yanagi & Baker, 2016). Thai university EFL students often struggle with fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary retrieval, and turn-taking, and have few opportunities for authentic interaction (Phettongkam, 2017). Despite pedagogical innovations such as project-based learning and communication strategy instruction (Pinphet & Wasanasomsithi, 2022), improvements in spoken interaction remain modest. These challenges reveal a theoretical and pedagogical gap, as strategic and sociocultural dimensions remain underrepresented in coursebook content. By explicitly integrating these components into a localized, learner-responsive coursebook, this study seeks to address that gap.

2.2 Needs analysis as the foundation for learner-informed instruction

Needs analysis has long been recognized as a key step in course and materials design, particularly in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and General English courses (Brown, 1995; Nunan, 1985). It identifies learners' specific needs to ensure that course content is relevant and useful within particular contexts (Huang, 2010; Macalister & Nation, 2019; Yundayani et al., 2017). Traditionally, needs are conceptualized as comprising three interrelated components (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987): *necessities* (what learners must know to function in target contexts), *lacks* (the gap between current and target proficiency), and *wants* (learners' self-identified goals and interests). While this framework remains foundational (Songhori, 2008), more recent perspectives emphasize the importance of affective factors, learning preferences, and perceptions of communicative success (Macalister & Nation, 2019; Sieglová, 2019; Sieglová et al., 2017; Yıldız & Harwood, 2024).

In the context of oral communication, needs analysis should not only identify linguistic gaps but also explore learners' preferred communicative tasks, perceptions of difficulty, and confidence levels, complemented by teacher insights that provide contextual knowledge (Yundayani et al., 2017). In multilingual classrooms, where students engage with diverse English varieties and cultural norms, needs analysis must also incorporate dimensions of strategic and intercultural competence (Byram, 1997). Recent studies confirm the gap between student needs and available materials. For example, Menggo et al. (2019) found that Indonesian university students prioritized higher-level interactional functions such as expressing opinions and offering suggestions to develop 21st-century skills, while commercial materials focused narrowly on basic transactional exchanges. Such mismatches illustrate how standardized curricula often fail to reflect learners' communicative necessities.

Despite widespread endorsement, needs analysis is frequently implemented superficially. This study responds by adopting a dynamic, context-sensitive model that triangulates learner, instructor, and expert perspectives to inform coursebook design. While Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) necessities–lacks–wants framework provides the foundation, needs here are treated as dynamic, negotiated, and shaped by learner agency and sociocultural context. This perspective aligns with Global Englishes, which both challenges native-speaker norms and promotes pedagogical decolonization by validating diverse English varieties and moving away from historically dominant models (Galloway & Rose, 2018). The present study operationalizes this view by positioning learners as co-constructors of content rather than passive recipients.

2.3 Learner-informed materials development for oral communication

Instructional materials are central to shaping language learning, as they provide input, guide output, scaffold practice, and structure reflection. They may take the form of textbooks, workbooks, videos, or handouts (Tomlinson, 2011). However, commercial textbooks often fail to reflect learners' communicative realities or the diversity of English usage in global contexts (Kiczkowiak, 2024; Reich, 2021). This limitation is particularly acute in oral communication instruction, where learners must interact across cultural and linguistic boundaries. As Byram (1997) and Hyland (2022) argue, materials should foster intercultural awareness and dialogic engagement, while Allwright (1981) argues that they should serve as tools for learning–promoting autonomy, relevance, and independence–rather than mere instruments for teaching.

Graves (2000) proposed that materials development must consider multiple dimensions: learner needs, learning processes, the social and cultural context of language use, task types, and the affordances of various materials. This approach is reinforced by Nunan (1989), who stresses the need for communicative tasks that align language content with communicative purpose. For oral communication, this entails integrating functional and strategic language use, real-life engagement, and exposure to diverse English varieties and intercultural pragmatics (Byram, 1997; Galloway & Rose, 2018; Jenkins, 2000). Such exposure supports intelligibility and equips learners to manage communication breakdowns, shifting emphasis away from native-like accent toward effective interaction (Derwing & Munro, 2009). Interactive tasks are particularly valuable: role-plays and collaborative activities have been shown to improve fluency, build confidence, and enhance speaking performance (Homayouni, 2022; Kireeti et al., 2024; Moosa et al., 2024; Rababah, 2025).

To develop materials, materials development frameworks provide structured processes for designing pedagogically sound and learner-centered instructional resources. Tomlinson (2011) highlights iterative design stages from needs identification to post-use evaluation, while the ADDIE model–*Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation,* and *Evaluation*–has become widely adopted in educational contexts (Peterson, 2003; Zou et al., 2024). A key component of effective materials design is the articulation of clear learning objectives. These objectives should be specific and measurable, such as through SMART criteria (Bjerke & Renger, 2017), to guide both instruction and assessment, reflecting principles of learning-oriented design (Carless et al., 2006). The cyclical nature of ADDIE allows for continuous refinement and aligns well with language pedagogy by centering communicative needs. In oral communication, ADDIE facilitates the development of flexible, empirically testable resources. Yet despite these robust models, few studies have systematically applied them to design oral communication materials that integrate Global Englishes and context-specific learner needs in expanding-circle EFL settings.

The literature reviewed reveals consensus on key points: oral communication competence extends beyond fluency, needs analysis must be dynamic, and commercial coursebooks remain inadequate. However, a gap persists between theory and practice. While many studies critique existing materials (e.g., Reich, 2021; Saemee & Nomnian, 2021) or advocate for Global Englishes (Galloway & Rose, 2018), few empirically document the full cycle of designing, developing, and evaluating an oral communication coursebook in direct response to these issues within a specific expanding-circle EFL context. Specifically, few studies have demonstrated how to translate a multi-stakeholder needs analysis, grounded in both learner wants and instructor expertise, into a coherent set of pedagogical materials that operationalize principles of strategic competence and Global Englishes. The present study is situated directly within this gap. It aims to provide a transparent, replicable model that connects the 'why' (the identified needs), the 'what' (the coursebook content), and the 'how' (the ADDIE-based development process), thereby bridging the gap between theoretical calls for change and practical, learner-informed implementation.

3 Methodology

This research employed a convergent mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2022) to investigate learners' oral communication needs and to guide the development and evaluation of a targeted coursebook for a fundamental English course in Thai higher education. This design was selected not merely to triangulate findings across data sources but to facilitate a multi-perspectival interpretation of learners' functional, linguistic, and sociolinguistic needs. Rather than treating quantitative and qualitative strands as parallel lines of inquiry, the study integrated student survey data with insights from instructor focus groups to construct dialogic, context-sensitive understandings of communicative challenges. These integrated insights informed the ADDIE-guided coursebook development process, enabling materials to emerge iteratively from both learner-reported needs and practitioner-informed perspectives. The subsequent expert evaluations and follow-up interviews served not as summative endpoints but as interpretive feedback loops that further refined content, pedagogy, and task design. In this way, data sources did not simply validate one another but collectively shaped pedagogical decisions, enhancing methodological rigor and aligning with calls for contextualized, practitioner-driven approaches to materials development.

To address RQ1 regarding student oral communication needs, a needs analysis was conducted using student questionnaires and instructor focus groups. To address RQ2 concerning the effectiveness of the developed coursebook, a multi-faceted evaluation was performed using expert evaluation forms and follow-up interviews with key stakeholders. The ADDIE model (Peterson, 2003) structured the entire development process, supporting systematic, learner-centered, and iterative design. Needs analysis conducted in the initial phase informed all subsequent stages, including the pedagogical and contextual realization of content and activities.

3.1 Participants

In this study, participants were drawn from three key stakeholder groups to ensure diverse perspectives: university student participants, instructor participants, and expert participants. Firstly, the university students were selected through stratified random sampling. A total of 145 university students at the undergraduate level from various disciplines enrolled in a fundamental English course completed the needs analysis questionnaire. In the Thai higher education system, such "fundamental English" courses are compulsory university-wide service courses required for all undergraduate students, regardless of their field of study. Consequently, these classes typically consist of a mixed cohort of students from diverse disciplines, as reflected in the sample of this study. Students are generally placed into these courses based on standardized placement tests, resulting in a group with a baseline intermediate English proficiency. They were recruited to participate in the study voluntarily. Enrollment in this mandatory course presupposes a relatively homogeneous English proficiency level (typically within the A2–B1 CEFR band) as determined by the university's standardized placement procedures. As the study focused on the collective communicative needs of this specific instructional cohort rather than correlating needs with individual proficiency scores, the course itself served as the primary indicator of the participants' general language ability. Furthermore, while direct age data was not collected to minimize participant burden, the 'Year of Study' information indicates the cohort predominantly falls within the traditional undergraduate age range of 18–22. Table 1 summarizes the student participants' demographic information.

The second group of participants consisted of English instructors who were teaching an English oral communication course. They were selected through a purposive-convenience sample (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A total of 12 instructor participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: holding at least a master's degree in English, English language teaching, and related fields, and having experience teaching oral communication for more than 2 years. For this group, professional experience

and academic background were considered more relevant demographic variables than age. Thus, they participated in focus group interviews to provide interpretive insights and validate learner needs from a pedagogical perspective. Table 2 summarizes the English instructor participants.

Table 1

Summary of Demographic Information for Student Participants

Categories	Items	Frequency (Percentages)
Gender	Male	45 (31.03%)
	Female	95 (65.52%)
	Prefer not to say	5 (3.45%)
Years of Study	Year 1	85 (58.62%)
	Year 2	37 (25.52%)
	Year 3	13 (8.97%)
	Year 4	9 (6.21%)
	Year 7	1 (0.69%)
Fields of Study	Sciences	44 (30.35%)
	Health Sciences	19 (13.11%)
	Social Sciences	27 (18.62%)
	Arts and Humanities	41 (28.28%)

Table 2

Summary of Demographic Information for Instructor Participants

Categories	Items	Frequency (Percentages)
Gender	Male	6 (50%)
	Female	6 (50%)
Years of Teaching	1–5	8 (66.66%)
	6–10	2 (16.67%)
	More than 10	2 (16.67%)
Degree	English	2 (16.67%)
	English Literature	1 (8.33%)
	English Language Teaching	5 (41.67%)
	Applied Linguistics	2 (16.67%)
	Linguistics	2 (16.67%)

The last group of participants was five experts in the field of English language teaching, applied linguistics, language education, or language assessment and evaluation. They were selected through the purposive-convenience sample (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A total of five participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: having more than 5 years of experience teaching at the university level, especially for an English oral communication course, and holding a doctoral degree in the aforementioned fields. Hence, they were invited to assess the developed coursebook using a standardized evaluation form and follow-up interviews. Here is the summary.

Table 3

Summary of Demographic Information for Experts Evaluating the Developed Coursebook

Instructors	Years of Teaching English	Years of Teaching Oral Communication Courses	Degree Holding
Instructor 1	15 years	13 years	Applied Linguistics
Instructor 2	12 years	12 years	English Language Teaching
Instructor 3	16 years	13 years	Language Assessment and Evaluation
Instructor 4	22 years	18 years	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
Instructor 5	18 years	18 years	English Language Teaching

3.2 Research Instruments

3.2.1 Needs analysis questionnaire for oral communication coursebook

The student questionnaire aims to investigate the needs (lacks, necessities, and wants) of students, based on Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) typology of target needs, to develop an oral communication coursebook. It was designed on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 4 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) to avoid neutral midpoint. The questionnaire consisted of four main parts: 1) demographic information (6 items), 2) lacks (31 items), 3) necessities (31 items), and 4) wants (2 items). This questionnaire covered three domains: language functions, linguistic competence, and sociolinguistic competence. For example, under the 'language functions' domain, students were asked to rate their self-perceived present ability (lack) and the importance (necessity) of tasks such as 'Expressing opinions' and 'Giving suggestions.'. After development, the questionnaire was validated by three experts in the field of English language teaching. The result yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .94, which indicates high internal consistency.

3.2.2 Focus group interview protocols

In this study, two semi-structured interview protocols were developed: one for instructors and one for experts. To begin with, the interview questions were created to conduct semi-structured focus group interviews with English instructors to investigate more insightful information for students' needs with English instructors. This is to triangulate student data, deepen contextual understanding, and identify pedagogical strategies aligned with student needs. The questions consisted of three domains: 1) lacks, 2) necessities, and 3) wants. Here are some examples of the interview questions:

1. What do you normally teach in your oral communication courses?
2. Why do you choose to teach that aspect? What do you need your students to accomplish?
3. Have you ever considered students' needs to design your lessons? If so, how?

Moreover, the questions for the focus group interview were created to conduct a semi-structured interview for experts. The aim was to gain more informative data for the coursebook's effectiveness to investigate what is outstanding and what should be improved from the experts after completing the evaluation form. To elaborate, this evaluation aims to qualitatively assess the coursebook's content, design, and effectiveness following its implementation. The sample questions are:

1. What is your overall impression of the developed coursebook, and in what ways does the coursebook meet, or fail to meet, the needs of students in Fundamental English?
2. How well do you think the coursebook supports the development of oral communication ability among university students?
3. From an instructor's perspective, how practical is it to implement this coursebook in the classroom, and what kind of support would make it more user-friendly?

In short, the instructor interviews explored perceptions of learners' communicative gaps, preferred activities, and curriculum expectations, and the expert interviews focused on the alignment between learning objectives and real-world communication needs.

3.2.3 Evaluation form for oral communication coursebook

Adapted from Masuhara and Tomlinson (2008), the evaluation form covered five dimensions: *learning objectives, content, activities, design,* and *assessment*. Each dimension included multiple items rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 4 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Additionally, there was one open-ended question for comments and suggestions. To validate the form, the three experts in English language teaching validated using the IOC. In addition, the reliability of the instrument was analyzed using Cronbach's alpha, and the result was .89, which shows strong reliability.

3.3 Data collection

The data collection was divided based on the ADDIE model. The steps are as follows: 1) analysis, 2) design, 3) development, 4) implementation, and 5) evaluation.

3.3.1 Analysis

Since this is the first step, the researchers conducted a needs analysis by administering a questionnaire designed for developing an oral communication coursebook to students. Additionally, the instructors collected the qualitative data for students' needs through focus group interviews. One instructor facilitated the focus group discussion, encouraging collaborative responses from peers, while the researchers observed and prompted as needed. The results are yielded in Table 7.

3.3.2 Design

For the second step, the results from the needs analysis questionnaire and interview protocol were analyzed to design the coursebook. The findings from the needs analysis were interpreted to design a coursebook that covers various aspects, such as language functions, social context, activities, and skills. The development was based on their lacks, wants, and necessities.

In the design phase, the coursebook's structure, content, and pedagogical approach were systematically developed based on the triangulated findings from the initial analysis phase. The process was twofold:

First, the selection and sequencing of the coursebook's six units were determined directly by the quantitative results from the student questionnaire (see Table 7). We prioritized the language functions that showed the highest mean difference scores, as these represented the largest gaps between students' perceived importance of a skill and their self-assessed ability to perform it. This data-driven approach led to the creation of units focused on high-need functions such as 'Discussing topics and ideas' (M Diff. = 1.00), and 'Giving suggestions' (M Diff. = 0.97).

Second, qualitative input from the instructor focus groups was integrated to shape the pedagogical methodology and activity design within each unit. For instance, instructors' strong emphasis on the need for 'strategies for real-world communication' led to the inclusion of explicit instruction and practice on communication strategies like paraphrasing and explaining unknown words. Similarly, the strong preference for peer-based learning, identified by both students in the survey (see Figure 2) and instructors in interviews, informed the design of the core tasks in each unit, which are predominantly based on role-plays, simulations, and collaborative activities.

This two-pronged approach ensured that the coursebook's content (the 'what') was derived from student-reported needs, while its pedagogical methodology (the 'how') was informed by instructor expertise and learner preferences. Therefore, it consists of six main units, which are illustrated as follows:

Table 4

Summary of Units in the Coursebook

Unit 1	Describing routes and locations
Unit 2	Asking and offering help
Unit 3	Giving and responding to suggestions
Unit 4	Telling stories and describing experiences
Unit 5	Discussing different topics
Unit 6	Persuading

3.3.3 Development

For the third step, the researchers drafted the coursebook based on the findings from previous stages, including content, activities, and layout. Then, the developed coursebook was reviewed to check the accuracy of the content and the neatness of the layout.

3.3.4 Implementation

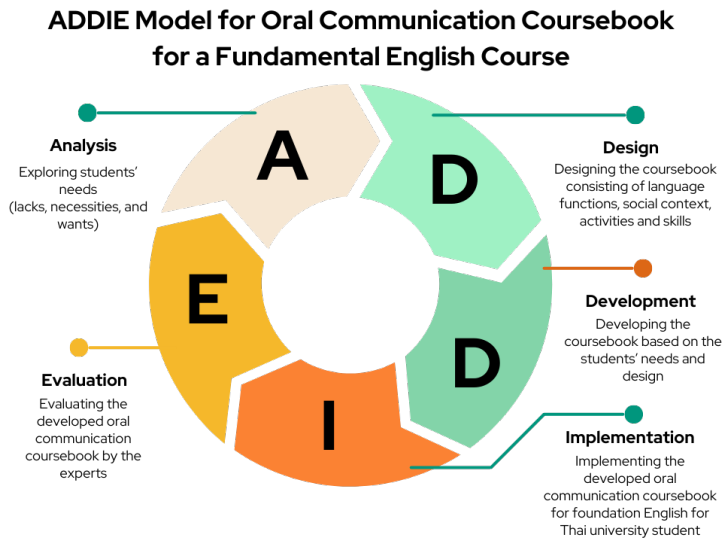
After the coursebook was developed, in this step, the researchers pilot tested it with a small group of 22 students to get their input from them to revise the drafted coursebook. This could help researchers navigate the time spent on each activity in the coursebook and how appropriate it is to utilize it with the students.

3.3.5 Evaluation

After the implementation, the findings found on the stage were applied to revise the coursebook. Once it was revised, it was evaluated by the experts, instructors, and students. For the experts and instructors, the evaluation form adapted from Masuhara and Tomlinson (2008) was administered to them to evaluate following up with a focus group interview. For the students, they were only asked to participate in the focus group interview. Therefore, the summary of the ADDIE model used to develop an oral communication coursebook is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The ADDIE Model for an Oral Communication Coursebook Development



3.4 Data analysis

For the needs analysis, data were collected via student questionnaires and instructor focus groups. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and mean differences). A three-level interpretive scale was used (high, medium, and low necessity).

Table 5

Levels of Interval for Interpretation of Needs Analysis

Levels of Interval	Mean Difference for Interpretation
High necessity	0.76 and above
Medium necessity	0.50–0.75
Low necessity	0.24–0.49

Moreover, the responses from the semi-structured focus group interview with English instructors to investigate the needs were analyzed using content analysis and grouped themes to draw upon the quantitative data.

The effectiveness of the developed material was implemented with 22 non-English major students. Along with the implementation with the students, the researchers also asked the five experts to evaluate using the evaluation form with a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Unacceptable to 4 = Strongly Acceptable. Then, the data was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive analysis and interpreted using four levels of interval as illustrated in Table 6. The next step involved conducting focus group interviews with students, instructors, and experts to explore the effectiveness of the coursebook. The data from the interview were coded and grouped into themes using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes were first developed inductively from the data, then grouped deductively under the NA framework categories. Peer debriefing was conducted to ensure reliability.

Table 6

Levels of Interval for Interpretation of Coursebook Effectiveness

Levels of Interval	Interpretation of Coursebook Effectiveness
Strongly acceptable	3.26–4.00
Acceptable	2.51–3.25
Unacceptable	1.76–2.50
Strongly unacceptable	1.00–1.75

4 Results

The two research questions guide the organization of the study's findings. The first subsection reports on Thai university students' oral communication needs, categorized into lacks, necessities, and wants, based on questionnaire responses and instructor interview data. The second subsection examines the effectiveness of the developed coursebook, drawing from expert evaluations and student feedback.

4.1 RQ 1: What are the English oral communication needs (lacks, necessities, and wants) of university students?

To answer the RQ1 asking about what English oral communication needs (lacks, necessities, and wants) of university students are, the findings gathered from the undergraduate university students were

analyzed quantitatively in three main categories, namely language functions, linguistic competence, and sociolinguistic competence. Table 7 shows the analyzed descriptive data.

Table 7
Descriptive Data of Students' Needs

No.	Items	Self-perceived present ability		Self-perceived importance		M Diff.	Interpretation
		M	SD	M	SD		
Language Functions							
1	Making small talk such as the weather or general news	2.61	.78	3.02	.78	0.41	Low
2	Recounting experiences	2.49	.85	3.09	.81	0.60	Medium
3	Requesting information	2.72	.82	3.30	.79	0.58	Medium
4	Expressing regrets and apologizing	2.91	.78	3.49	.75	0.58	Medium
5	Inviting and declining	2.79	.81	3.31	.78	0.52	Medium
6	Making introductions	3.16	.73	3.40	.70	0.24	Low
7	Asking and answering questions	2.70	.79	3.43	.79	0.73	Medium
8	Expressing opinions	2.43	.81	3.30	.81	0.88	High
9	Agreeing and disagreeing	2.54	.81	3.30	.81	0.75	Medium
10	Giving and receiving directions	2.37	.79	3.28	.83	0.90	High
11	Describing experiences	2.37	.79	3.12	.87	0.76	High
12	Describing people	2.37	.89	2.95	.84	0.58	Medium
13	Describing places	2.42	.78	3.06	.84	0.63	Medium
14	Narrating or telling stories	2.44	.75	3.14	.90	0.70	Medium
15	Giving instructions and orders	2.41	.87	3.05	.83	0.63	Medium
16	Giving suggestions	2.35	.82	3.32	.85	0.97	High
17	Ordering food and drinks at a restaurant	2.97	.79	3.47	.72	0.50	Medium
18	Asking for repetition	2.97	.81	3.21	.80	0.24	Low
19	Simplifying sentences by paraphrasing	2.59	.81	3.27	.85	0.68	Medium
20	Explaining unknown words in English	2.35	.81	3.25	.89	0.90	High
21	Asking and offering help	2.77	.75	3.56	.72	0.79	High
22	Discussing topics and ideas	2.14	.74	3.14	.89	1.00	High
23	Persuading and convincing about something	2.22	.76	3.18	.86	0.96	High
Linguistic Competence							
24	Applying various vocabulary in different contexts	2.32	.84	3.30	.83	0.98	High
25	Orally communicating with various language structures	2.30	.84	3.10	.87	0.80	High
26	Pronouncing English words correctly	2.53	.82	3.22	.89	0.69	Medium
27	Using tones and intonations in a conversation naturally and correctly	2.48	.82	3.19	.84	0.70	Medium

No.	Items	Self-perceived present ability		Self-perceived importance		M Diff.	Interpretation
		M	SD	M	SD		
Sociolinguistic Competence							
28	Understanding and using language that is appropriate in different cultural contexts	2.66	.81	3.33	.80	0.68	Medium
29	Recognizing and using different registers of language (formal, informal, academic, etc.) appropriately	2.50	.78	3.31	.81	0.81	High
30	Understanding and using idiomatic expressions and slang in conversation	2.37	.84	3.26	.77	0.88	High
31	Recognizing different accents of English (such as British English, American English, Australian English, Indian English, Singaporean English, Chinese English, and so on.)	2.52	.78	3.37	.81	0.84	High

According to Table 7, the first category is language functions. The functions rated as high necessity were primarily associated with complex, idea-oriented communication requiring interactional negotiation. These included discussing topics and ideas (M Diff. = 1.00), giving suggestions (M Diff. = 0.97), persuading and convincing about something (M Diff. = 0.96), giving and receiving directions (M Diff. = 0.90), explaining unknown words in English (M Diff. = 0.90), expressing opinions (M Diff. = 0.88), asking and offering help (M Diff. = 0.79), and describing experiences (M Diff. = 0.76). Medium necessity functions included twelve items such as agreeing/ disagreeing (M Diff. = 0.75), asking/answering questions (M Diff. = 0.73), narrating stories (M Diff. = 0.70), paraphrasing (M Diff. = 0.68), describing places (M Diff. = 0.63), giving instructions and orders (M Diff. = 0.63), recounting experiences (M Diff. = 0.60), requesting information (M Diff. = 0.58), expressing regrets and apologizing (M Diff. = 0.58), describing people (M Diff. = 0.58), inviting/ declining (M Diff. = 0.52), and ordering food and drinks (M Diff. = 0.50). By contrast, functions categorized as low necessity were formulaic or commonly practiced in traditional classrooms, including making introductions (M Diff. = 0.24) and asking for repetition (M Diff. = 0.24). Overall, this pattern suggests learners prioritized skills for dynamic, unpredictable conversation over more routine exchanges.

4.1.1 Activating students' background knowledge

In addition to the mean difference of necessity, the majority of instructor participants reported in the focus group interview that expressing opinions is the most important aspect to students because they can express their opinions and preferences using their experiences and prior knowledge. It is also aligned with the quantitative data showing the high necessity of the language function.

> "When I teach speaking, I believe that everyone can speak English, even just a word, but we need to activate their background knowledge, such as teaching them to express their opinions."
>
> "The function, like telling their past experience, would be beneficial and encouraging. Based on my teaching experience, students love to share their experience if teachers encourage them to use learners' background knowledge."

Instructors view this not just as a language function but as a critical pedagogical strategy. They believe that tasks requiring students to express opinions or share past experiences are highly effective because they "activate students' background knowledge". This approach is seen as encouraging and beneficial because it allows learners to speak about topics they are already familiar with, which boosts their motivation and willingness to participate in oral communication.

4.1.2 Strategies for real-world communication

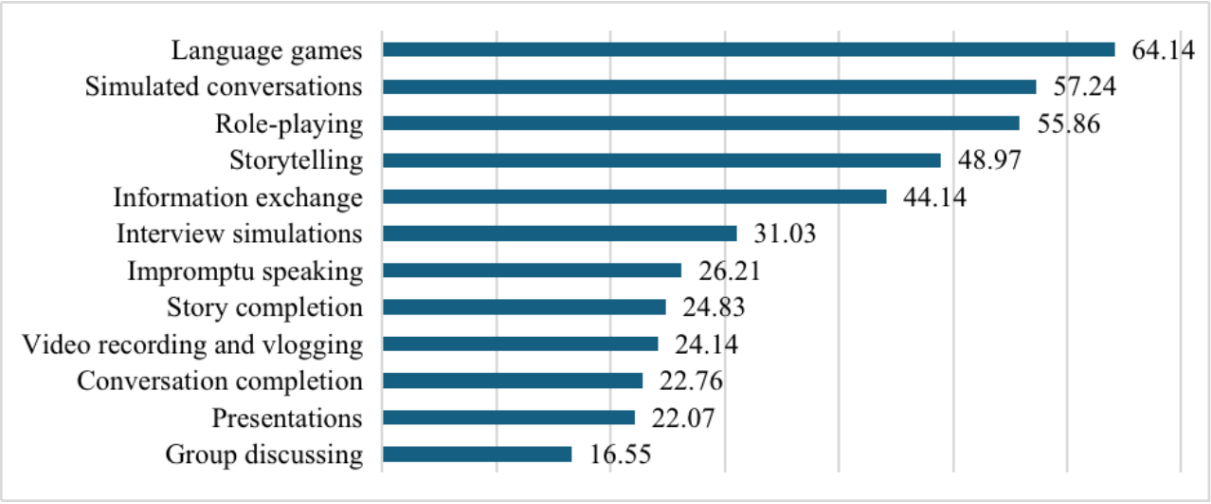
The answers from the semi-structured interviews with most instructors revealed that one of the most vital aspects they identified is the use of strategies for real-world communication. The instructors perceived the functions, such as asking for repetition, simplifying sentences by paraphrasing, and explaining unknown words, as crucial for students to cope with communication breakdowns. Moreover, the strategies can enhance students' confidence.

> "Most of my students always struggle with circumlocution, explaining words they don't know. I mean, they need the skill to keep their conversation going."
>
> "In English, I think students should learn to ask for repetition or ask the speakers to paraphrase things they don't understand. It happened a lot; for example, I asked them about a picture of a pig, and they answered it was a butterfly. They need to learn to comprehend questions using that skill or strategy."

Figure 2 shows the types of students' preferred activities in an English oral communication course. The graph illustrates that interactive and engaging activities such as learning language through games (64.14%), simulated conversations (57.24%), and role-playing (55.86%) are the top three ranks among undergraduate university students, which indicates that they are the most favored to learn with such activities, whereas more structured tasks such as group discussions (16.55%) and presentations (22.07%) are less favored.

Figure 2

Types of Activities Students Want to Learn



The synthesis of these two findings between instructor interviews and students' perspective offers a clear pedagogical insight, that is, the interactive formats that students enjoy are the ideal context for teaching the real-world communication strategies that instructors deem essential. For example, simulated conversations and role-playing activities can be designed to include moments of misunderstanding,

providing a practical and engaging way for students to practice the exact skills of asking for repetition or paraphrasing that they need for authentic communication.

4.1.3 Activities with peers

Based on the answers from the interview questions, most instructors agreed that incorporating activities such as role-play and simulated conversations would be beneficial. Allowing students to work with their peers could enhance students' confidence and language competence through peer assessment so that they could monitor each other and correct mistakes through the activities. This is also in line with the students' self-reported quantitative results.

> "From my past experience teaching speaking or oral communication, my students told me that they love doing role play because they feel more confident when they need to use English in the real world."
>
> "In my class, my students and I enjoy group activities because they once told me that they could improve their speaking and English because of their friends. I asked them why, and they answered that the checklist I gave them helped them monitor their own language and peers' language too; they even corrected their mistakes sometimes."

In short, the key mechanism behind this improvement is peer assessment and monitoring. The instructor quotes reveal that students learn effectively from their friends by monitoring, correcting, and providing feedback on each other's language use during these activities. This process can be guided by pedagogical tools, such as a checklist, to structure the peer feedback and make it more effective.

4.2 RQ2: To what extent does the effectiveness of a developed coursebook enhance oral communication ability?

After the developed coursebook was implemented with a group of student participants, including 22 non-English major students, the researchers also administered the evaluation form for the coursebook adapted from Masuhara and Tomlinson (2008) to the five experts to investigate the effectiveness of a developed coursebook to enhance oral communication ability, focusing on five key aspects: learning objectives, content, activities, design, and assessment. Table 8 reveals the descriptive results.

The results revealed a consistently strong level of acceptability across all components. Learning objectives were rated strongly acceptable (M = 3.64, SD = 0.49), suggesting that clear objectives and observable indicators of achievement support both students and instructors. In content, it also scored strongly positively (M = *3.63*, SD = 0.48), indicating that there is an alignment between learning objectives and the content in the developed coursebook. In addition, it promotes cultural awareness with the reflection of English as a global language and students' interests in the real-world use of the English language. Activity was also rated as strongly acceptable (M = 3.63, SD = 0.38). It indicates that the activities in the coursebook are appropriate and able to encourage students to speak and develop their English oral communication ability. The design was uniformly rated as strongly acceptable (M = 3.60, SD = 0.55), suggesting that the visual and layout elements of the coursebook are effective and accessible. Assessment was also considered strongly acceptable (M = 3.60, SD = 0.67) since it enables students to gain feedback on the effectiveness of their use of English and align with the learning outcomes.

In sum, based on the expert evaluations, the developed coursebook is considered highly effective and pedagogically sound. The quantitative data shows that all five core dimensions of the coursebook–learning objectives, content, activities, design, and assessment–received an overall rating of "Strongly acceptable".

Table 8

Descriptive Data for Coursebook Effectiveness

Aspects of Evaluation	Items	M	SD	Meaning
Learning objective	The learning objectives are aligned well with the topics of each unit.	3.80	0.45	Strongly acceptable
	The learning objectives are suitable for the learners' level.	3.60	0.55	Strongly acceptable
	The learning objectives are suitable for the course description.	4.00	0.00	Strongly acceptable
	The learning objectives support language learning.	3.80	0.45	Strongly acceptable
	The learning objectives are measurable.	3.00	1.00	Acceptable
Total average for learning objective		***3.64***	***0.49***	***Strongly acceptable***
Content	The content is suitable for learners.	3.40	0.89	Strongly acceptable
	The content is aligned with the learning objectives of each unit.	4.00	0.00	Strongly acceptable
	The content presents language in contexts that reflect real-life communication.	3.40	0.55	Strongly acceptable
	The content likely interests the learners.	3.40	0.55	Strongly acceptable
	The content treats English as an international language.	3.80	0.45	Strongly acceptable
	The content provides opportunities for cultural awareness.	3.80	0.45	Strongly acceptable
Total average for content		***3.63***	***0.48***	***Strongly acceptable***
Activity	The activities are appropriate for the topics of each unit.	4.00	0.00	Strongly acceptable
	The activities could encourage learners to speak.	3.80	0.45	Strongly acceptable
	The activities are suitable for the learners' levels.	3.00	0.00	Acceptable
	The activities are relevant to the real-world situation.	3.80	0.45	Strongly acceptable
	The activities provide the target learners with exposure to English in meaningful ways.	3.40	0.55	Strongly acceptable
	The instructions for each activity are clear.	3.60	0.55	Strongly acceptable
	The activities are aligned with the learning objectives of each unit.	3.80	0.45	Strongly acceptable
	The activities provide opportunities for learners to make discoveries about how English is used.	3.60	0.55	Strongly acceptable
Total average for activity		***3.63***	***0.38***	***Strongly acceptable***
Design	The layout is neat and user-friendly.	3.60	0.55	Strongly acceptable
	The font size and style are suitable for the material.	3.60	0.55	Strongly acceptable
	The pictures used are appropriate.	3.60	0.55	Strongly acceptable
Total average for design		***3.60***	***0.55***	***Strongly acceptable***
Assessment	The assessment is appropriate to the learning outcome.	3.80	0.45	Strongly acceptable
	The coursebook provides opportunities for the learners to gain feedback on the effectiveness of their use of English.	3.40	0.89	Strongly acceptable
Total average for assessment		***3.60***	***0.67***	***Strongly acceptable***

4.2.1 Practical use of speaking activities

The experts harmoniously agreed that the activities in the coursebook serve various purposes in real-world communication. Importantly, they enable students to practice using the target language in different but related topics connected to their daily lives.

> "What is good about this book is the activities. I love that students can practice their speaking skills through different kinds of activities that are associated with their level and real-world communication."
>
> "I couldn't agree more. The coursebook really serves students' needs in real-world communication. For example, after they learn persuasion, they should be able to give persuasive presentations."

Apparently, the experts unanimously praised the coursebook's activities for their strong connection to real-world communication. The tasks were seen as practical and relevant to students' daily lives, enabling them to directly apply classroom learning to functional communication needs.

4.2.2 Self-assessment opportunities

The experts also reported that the developed coursebook provides opportunities for students to assess themselves based on their listening and speaking skills in every unit. This helps students use their learning logs to monitor their learning development.

> "We usually depend on summative assessment; however, this book surprises me because it includes a section for self-assessment." I believe that it will help students monitor their learning and spot the room for their development."
>
> "I am not sure if students can really self-assess. However, this practice is beneficial for them. They can see what they should improve and what they did well in their listening and speaking. Training them to assess themselves would be recommended."

Thus, the inclusion of self-assessment opportunities was identified as an innovative and beneficial feature that distinguishes the coursebook from more traditional, teacher-centered models. These sections encourage students to monitor their own progress and take ownership of their learning development.

4.2.3 Exposure to different varieties of English in listening activities

They also positively underscored the benefits of exposing varieties of English. They believe that students should be encouraged to listen to and comprehend various English accents, especially those from Asian countries.

> "Another aspect I am really impressed with is that there are different accents in the audio tracks. Students can also be exposed to those accents to comprehend the speech, especially the ones in Chinese and Indian accents."
>
> "The coursebook could not only raise awareness of Global Englishes but also equip students to comprehend different accents beyond native-speaker accents since English is a lingua franca."

With this, the experts were particularly impressed with the coursebook's deliberate inclusion of diverse English accents, especially from familiar Asian contexts. This was seen as a crucial feature that raises students' intercultural awareness and better prepares them for the reality of using English as a global lingua franca, moving beyond a sole focus on native-speaker models.

5 Discussion

This study investigated the oral communication needs of Thai university students and evaluated a learner-informed coursebook designed through the ADDIE model to address those needs. The discussion of the findings is organized into three sections. The first two sections address the primary research questions concerning learner needs and coursebook effectiveness, respectively. The final section synthesizes these findings to propose a replicable framework for learner-informed materials development.

5.1 Learners' oral communication needs (RQ1)

In response to the first research question, the needs analysis revealed several crucial gaps in students' oral communication ability, particularly in areas associated with language functions, linguistic competence, and sociolinguistic competence, which are components frequently neglected in commercial textbooks yet essential for authentic communication in multilingual higher education contexts. The triangulation of data from students, instructors, and experts was central to enhancing the validity and depth of the findings. This multi-perspectival approach strengthened the conclusions of the study in three key ways. First, it provided convergence, where quantitative student data and qualitative instructor insights pointed to the same conclusions. For instance, students' high-rated need for functions like "expressing opinions" was directly corroborated by instructors, who identified this as a critical area for activating learner knowledge. Second, the data offered complementarity, creating a more holistic picture. While students identified what activities they wanted (e.g., role-plays), instructors explained the pedagogical why (e.g., to build confidence and enable peer monitoring), and experts later validated the practical relevance of the resulting coursebook design. Finally, triangulation revealed important divergences that added subtleties, such as when students rated communication strategies like 'asking for repetition' as low-necessity, while instructors framed them as vital for real-world interaction. Thus, triangulation did not merely confirm data points; it constructed a more robust, credible, and multi-dimensional understanding of learner needs.

The present study highlighted significant gaps between learners' perceived current abilities and the importance they place on various oral communication functions. The largest mean differences occurred in language functions related to *expressing opinions*, *giving suggestions*, *persuading*, and *discussing topics*, which indicates strong learner demand for communicative competence in idea expression and negotiation, and these are functions closely associated with interactional negotiation and pragmatic fluency. This supports calls to embed strategic competence, defined by Canale and Swain (1980) as the ability to manage breakdowns and maintain communication flow, in speaking instruction. Furthermore, these findings are consistent with previous needs analysis studies that highlight the mismatch between learner proficiency and their desired communicative functions. For instance, Menggo et al. (2019) found that Indonesian university students also prioritized speaking components such as expressing opinions and providing suggestions, but commercial materials did not adequately address these areas. Similarly, studies focusing on ESP speaking courses (e.g., Rahman, 2010) have noted a lack of tasks aligned with academic interactional functions like negotiating meaning and clarifying viewpoints. The alignment of the findings of this study with such research further emphasizes the necessity for context-sensitive, function-based materials in EFL higher education. Adding the quantitative data, instructors also identified the need to activate learners' background knowledge as a catalyst for meaningful speaking, particularly in tasks involving some functions such as expressing opinions and recounting experiences. Notably, instructors corroborated this by emphasizing the importance of activating background knowledge to support functional expression. These findings confirm that aligning language content with communicative purpose (Nunan, 1989) enhances learner engagement and prepares students for the spontaneous demands of real-world interaction. In addition to language functional gaps, linguistic needs, particularly vocabulary expansion and syntactic range, were also highly highlighted. However, such needs must be understood not as isolated deficits but as interdependent with communicative purpose.

Learners may have lexical or structural limitations, but these only become problematic when they hinder meaning negotiation, which is a key insight that supports a meaning-before-form approach to materials design (Graves, 2000; Tomlinson, 2011). Without addressing these linguistic needs, learners may struggle to express themselves clearly and comprehend others, leading to misunderstandings in communication (Reed & Lee, 2020).

Apart from the linguistic needs, crucially, both student and instructor data emphasized sociolinguistic competence, especially difficulties in understanding diverse English accents and idiomatic expressions. This corresponds with previous studies highlighting that training learners to understand varying accents prepares them for authentic global interactions (Jenkins, 2000) and helps them cope with communication breakdowns (Derwing & Munro, 2009). Also, this aligns with Global Englishes research that urges pedagogical responsiveness to linguistic diversity and intercultural pragmatics (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Jenkins, 2000). Those aspects suggest a need for integrated instruction that goes beyond grammar and vocabulary drills to functional and strategic language use. These findings are consistent with the instructors' qualitative input, where they emphasized the importance of real-world communication strategies, such as paraphrasing and asking for clarification. Those strategies would assist learners in dealing with struggles during communication. Learners' desire for exposure to non-native accents challenges the dominance of native-speakerism in coursebook content and demonstrates the value of materials that reflect the realities of ELF. Thus, the coursebook's inclusion of Indian, Chinese, and other global English accents was a direct response to this need, and experts praised this feature as socially and professionally relevant in an increasingly internationalized academic context. The incorporation of strategic communication training (e.g., paraphrasing and asking for clarification) also reflects the shift toward teaching learners how to communicate, not merely what to say. This resonates with Nakatani's (2010) findings that EFL learners who develop communication strategies report increased fluency, confidence, and autonomy. Also, these findings offer a clear critique of dominant coursebook paradigms in EFL instruction, particularly those rooted in native-speakerism and standardized language models. Most commercial textbooks adopt an idealized version of English that centers on native-speaker norms, both linguistically and culturally, often marginalizing the diverse realities of English use in global academic and professional contexts (Kiczkowiak, 2024; Galloway & Rose, 2018). In contrast, the coursebook in this study incorporates Global Englishes, simulated communicative breakdowns, and multilingual speaker models, thereby challenging assumptions that intelligibility, credibility, or pedagogical value must be tied to native-speaker accents and interactional norms. In this study, the triangulated evidence from learners, instructors, and experts converges on the importance of equipping students with the tools to manage unpredictability and maintain interactional flow, which are hallmarks of communicative success in higher education and beyond. Therefore, the coursebook's emphasis on treating English as an international language and promoting cultural awareness is not only pedagogically relevant but also socially and professionally necessary.

The instructor interviews provide nuanced insights into learners' oral communication needs (RQ1) and the pedagogical strategies required to meet them (RQ2). Instructors emphasized that activating students' background knowledge, through opinion-sharing and recounting experiences, is not merely a functional goal but a motivational strategy that increases willingness to communicate, aligning with research on learner engagement and affect (Graves, 2000; Nunan, 1989). They also identified strategic competence (e.g., paraphrasing, asking for repetition, circumlocution) as vital for sustaining communication, echoing Canale and Swain's (1980) model and empirical evidence that strategy training enhances fluency and confidence (Nakatani, 2010). Importantly, instructors linked these needs to interactive, peer-based activities such as role plays and simulated conversations, which not only provide authentic contexts for practicing strategies but also enable peer monitoring and feedback, thereby fostering autonomy and collaborative learning (Carless et al., 2006). These perspectives underscore that effective coursebook design must embed functional and strategic needs in engaging, peer-supported tasks that reflect authentic communication demands, moving beyond the narrow, accuracy-driven focus of commercial materials.

These findings advance the field of applied linguistics and TESOL by providing fine-grained empirical evidence of learner needs within a specific expanding-circle context, moving beyond traditional deficit-based analysis. By triangulating student-reported wants with instructor-identified pedagogical necessities, this study offers a more holistic model of needs analysis. Crucially, the identification of divergences, whereby instructors prioritized communication strategies that students undervalued, challenges the notion of learner needs as a monolithic concept. This advances our understanding by demonstrating that an effective needs analysis must not only capture learners' expressed desires but also uncover the implicit, strategic competencies required for real-world interaction, which learners themselves may not yet recognize as priorities.

5.2 Effectiveness of the learner-informed coursebook (RQ2)

Regarding the second research question, the expert evaluation of the coursebook, from the interview, confirmed its pedagogical value, particularly in its coherent structure, relevance to learner needs, and interactive activity design. In addition, activities such as simulations and peer role-plays were singled out as highly effective in promoting fluency and learner confidence, and these findings are consistent with prior research on collaborative learning and peer interaction (Homayouni, 2022; Kireeti et al., 2024). These formats create spaces for learner agency and situated meaning-making, both of which are critical in contexts where English is learned primarily in the classroom. Importantly, the success of these tasks demonstrates that learner-informed materials not only reflect learner preferences but can transform classroom dynamics through authenticity and interaction. As pointed out by Graves (2000), developing materials should help learners meet the objectives and achieve the goals of the course. The activities that reflect real-world communication were also highly valued, especially in supporting language functions previously identified as high-need areas among students. The coursebook's activities were praised for their practical nature and ability to engage students in meaningful communication. Additionally, the expert feedback echoed the student survey results, which showed a strong preference for interactive and engaging formats such as language games, simulations, and role-plays. Such activities not only support fluency development (Rababah, 2025) but also contribute to learner confidence (Moosa et al., 2024), especially when conducted in peer-based formats. Both student and teacher data affirm the value of interactive, collaborative learning environments. Students reported improved engagement and performance when participating in those peer activities. Instructors also noted that such tasks encourage peer assessment and support spontaneous language use. Hence, this reflects a well-considered pedagogical design that emphasizes student interaction, authenticity, and relevance.

The findings from the expert interview revealed that Thai EFL learners face persistent gaps in oral communication, particularly in higher-order functions (e.g., persuasion, opinion-giving), vocabulary and syntactic range, and sociolinguistic adaptability where needs are often overlooked in commercial textbooks. By triangulating perspectives from students, instructors, and experts, the analysis demonstrated that learner needs are not fixed but negotiated, with divergences (e.g., undervaluing of repair strategies) highlighting the importance of multi-voiced approaches to needs analysis (Macalister & Nation, 2019). The learner-informed coursebook addressed these needs through practical speaking tasks, self-assessment opportunities, and exposure to diverse English varieties, which experts praised for fostering real-world applicability, autonomy, and intercultural awareness. At the same time, their caution regarding self-assessment and the need for scaffolding highlights that pedagogical innovation must be critically supported to ensure impact. Overall, the study shows that linking dynamic needs analysis to systematic coursebook evaluation provides a replicable model for designing materials that move beyond native-speakerist norms and narrow linguistic focus toward communicatively authentic, socially inclusive, and context-responsive pedagogy.

While expert evaluations affirmed the strengths of the coursebook, one area identified for improvement was the measurability of learning objectives, which received relatively lower ratings. This highlights the importance of articulating specific, observable outcomes that allow both learners and instructors to track progress. Future revisions should consider incorporating SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to ensure that learning objectives are not only pedagogically sound but also practically assessable (Bjerke & Renger, 2017), as the criteria are key principles of learning-oriented design (Carless et al., 2006). Thus, these findings validate the coursebook's design in prioritizing learner interaction and authenticity.

Significantly, the findings also add to current debates on pedagogical decolonization in English language instruction. The coursebook consciously contrasts against the native-speaker-centric standards that predominate in mainstream ELT materials by including a variety of English variations, including Indian, Chinese, and other Asian accents. The approach, which emphasizes the need to educate students about real-world, intercultural communication rather than idealized, monolithic standards, was appreciated by both professionals and students. This change is in line with the Global Englishes paradigm, which encourages linguistic equity in EFL courses and opposes the preference for inner-circle norms. The coursebook challenges deficit models of English learning and affirms the legitimacy of diverse speaker identities by prioritizing intelligibility, strategic competence, and sociolinguistic awareness over native-likeness. This is a crucial step in decolonizing pedagogical assumptions in materials design.

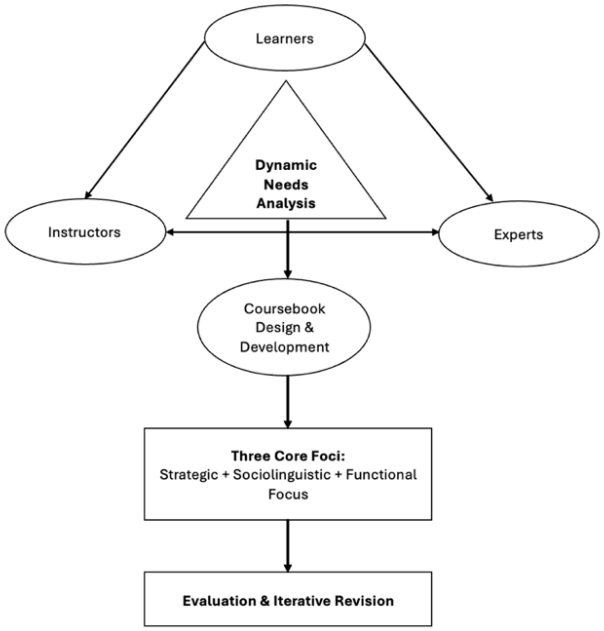
These results make a significant contribution by moving beyond the common critique of commercial textbooks to present an empirically-validated alternative designed from the ground up. This study advances the field by demonstrating how theoretical principles of Global Englishes and strategic competence can be successfully operationalized in instructional materials that are judged to be highly effective by experts. The positive evaluation of features such as the inclusion of diverse English accents provides concrete evidence that materials can be designed to challenge native-speaker norms and promote pedagogical decolonization. This offers a practical response to theoretical calls for more inclusive ELT resources, showing that such materials are both viable and effective.

5.3 A framework for learner-informed materials development

Overall, this study highlights the critical role of learner-informed, needs-responsive coursebook development in enhancing oral communication ability in EFL higher education (see Figure 3). This Learner-Informed, Agentive Framework (LIAF) Coursebook Development Model proposes a dynamic, cyclical approach to materials design grounded in input from learners, instructors, and experts. Through integrated needs analysis, the model informs coursebook development that centers on three core foci–strategic, sociolinguistic, and functional communication. It emphasizes learner agency, real-world relevance, and iterative refinement, offering a scalable framework for responsive, context-sensitive EFL instruction. This study emphasizes methodological reflexivity by acknowledging the researchers' positionality as situated practitioner-scholars in Thai tertiary education. Local pedagogical experiences, institutional constraints, and sociolinguistic realities all had an impact on how learners' demands were interpreted, and instructional resources were designed. Rather than restricting the study's usefulness, this contextualization emphasizes the necessity of regionally responsive education in EFL. Importantly, we do not present the generated coursebook as a finished product but rather as a scalable framework for learner-centered, functionally oriented oral communication resources. The triangulated, iterative paradigm (see Figure 3), centered on dynamic requirements analysis and Global Englishes-informed design, provides a reproducible solution for expanding-circle contexts looking to advance beyond native-speaker norms and meet their learners' real-world communicative demands.

Figure 3

LIAF Model – Learner-Informed, Agentive Framework for Coursebook Development



The coursebook designed and evaluated here offers a practical model for integrating functional language use, strategic communication, and Global Englishes into oral instruction. Grounded in empirical learner data and instructor insights, its development process reflects a commitment to contextualization without sacrificing transferability, which provides a blueprint for materials design in other expanding-circle contexts facing similar pedagogical challenges. Moreover, the findings yield several implications for instructional materials development. First, course designers should initiate the process with a rigorous needs analysis, which ensures that content aligns with learners' communicative realities and expectations. Second, materials must incorporate authentic, context-rich tasks that reflect students' everyday and academic communication experiences. Third, clearly measurable learning objectives are essential for aligning instruction, assessment, and learner progress, ideally framed using SMART criteria. Finally, embedding diverse English varieties and intercultural elements within materials supports learners' development of global communicative competence and challenges persistent native-speaker biases in mainstream coursebooks. While the current coursebook provides a strong foundation, ongoing revision and iterative evaluation are needed to ensure continued responsiveness to learners' evolving needs, local instructional contexts, and broader trends in English language use. As such, this study offers both a practical pedagogical artifact and a replicable design framework for EFL contexts striving for inclusivity and relevance. In sum, this study challenges conventional textbook models by centering learner-informed, context-responsive pedagogy that reflects the linguistic realities of EFL learners rather than idealized native norms.

Clearly, the development of the Learner-Informed, Agentive Framework (LIAF) Model represents a key theoretical and practical contribution of this study. It advances the field of materials development by offering a systematic, replicable process that formalizes the integration of multi-stakeholder needs analysis within a structured design model like ADDIE. Unlike generic design processes, the LIAF model is explicitly grounded in contemporary language pedagogy, bridging the gap between a dynamic needs analysis and the core communicative foci (i.e., strategic, sociolinguistic, and functional) that are essential for real-world competence. By positioning learners as "co-constructors of pedagogical content," the framework provides a practical blueprint for other expanding-circle contexts seeking to create authentic, context-sensitive instructional materials that move beyond the limitations of commercial textbooks.

5.1 Implications for pedagogy and materials development

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for curriculum designers, materials developers, and language instructors in other EFL contexts. To begin with, the significant mismatch found between commercial coursebooks and the specific needs of Thai learners underscores the necessity of conducting a rigorous, multi-perspectival needs analysis before curriculum design or material adoption. Other institutions can adopt the triangulated model (surveying students, interviewing instructors) to ensure that their pedagogical materials align with learners' actual communicative realities rather than relying on generic, one-size-fits-all solutions. In addition, the strong demand from both students and instructors for exposure to diverse Englishes and the explicit teaching of communication strategies (e.g., paraphrasing, asking for clarification) is a key takeaway. Materials developers should actively incorporate listening tracks with non-native accents and design tasks that require learners to manage communication breakdowns. This directly addresses the needs of learners who will use English as a global lingua franca. Significantly, the ADDIE model, guided by the Learner-Informed, Agentive Framework (LIAF) proposed in this study, serves as a transferable blueprint for creating context-sensitive materials. Educators in other expanding-circle contexts can use this systematic process–moving from analysis to design, development, implementation, and evaluation–to produce their own localized coursebooks that are empirically grounded in learner data. Finally, the expert feedback highlighting the need for more measurable learning objectives provides a crucial lesson. Curriculum designers should use frameworks like SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to articulate clear outcomes, which aids in aligning instruction, activities, and assessment.

6 Conclusion

This study provides evidence that investigates the English oral communication needs of university students, including lacks, necessities, and wants, using a needs analysis questionnaire and utilizes the results of the needs analysis to develop a coursebook of oral communication as a part of a fundamental course at a university using the ADDIE model. According to the results of the needs analysis, the top six units were chosen as the main language functions of the coursebook's content. The linguistic and sociolinguistic domains are also integrated into each unit. Moreover, the instructor interview data was also utilized to be part of the coursebook development, such as activating students' background knowledge, communicative strategies, and peer activities. After the development, the coursebook was evaluated for its effectiveness by five experts using the evaluation form consisting of five dimensions, namely learning objective, content, activity, design, and assessment. The results of all dimensions showed that the developed coursebook is strongly acceptable. Additionally, the qualitative data provided by the experts highlight the coursebook's usefulness regarding practical speaking activities, self-assessment tasks, and exposure to various English accents.

7 Limitations and Recommendations

While this study provides a robust model for learner-informed materials development, its limitations point to important avenues for future research. The sample size was limited, and the findings are context-specific to Thai university students although the insights from this study may be transferable to similar higher education contexts. As insiders in Thai higher education, our familiarity with institutional culture and learner profiles informed both instrument design and interpretation. While this insider knowledge enhances contextual validity, it may also shape the framing of learner needs. Moreover, the developed coursebook was evaluated by experts and pilot-tested with a small group of students (n=22) rather than being implemented over a full semester with pre- and post-testing of oral proficiency. To build on this study, in future research, longitudinal research is needed to track student performance over an entire

course, using standardized oral proficiency measures to provide more comprehensive data on the long-term effectiveness of the coursebook. Moreover, the findings regarding specific language functions are derived from a single institutional context in Thailand. Although the methodological framework is transferable, the specific needs identified may not be universal. Future research should involve replication studies in diverse EFL contexts (e.g., in other countries or different types of institutions) to explore how student needs vary and how the LIAF model can be adapted to different sociocultural settings. Ultimately, learner-informed materials development represents a critical pedagogical shift toward inclusive, contextually grounded English language education in the global era.

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