

# **A students' needs analysis of the English-medium foreign trade operating skills course at Faculty of Foreign Languages – Ba Ria-Vung Tau University – Viet Nam**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Because the primary goal of ESP is to educate students to utilize English in specific job settings, it is critical for ESP course planners to be aware of student needs, conducting a requirements analysis, according to Basturkmen (2010), it can assist curriculum designers in developing effective ESP courses or programs. According to ESP experts, a course without a requirements analysis lacks the specific and explicit goals needed to deliver the attention needed for clear and effective outcomes. They said that ESP courses created without a needs analysis typically have too much or too little teaching to fulfill the needs of the students. To find out the reasons for former student's poor English achievement and what and how the Business English program can be improved in the case of Baria-Vung Tau University, a proper Needs Analysis (NA) is needed. Therefore, the study used a model for Business English courses of Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) and Dudley-Evans (1998) to measure the current students' needs in foreign trade operation skills as well as other stakeholders' needs. The research finds out some valid results to answer the research questions such as, all stakeholders are interested in foreign trade operation skills course. It's a practical subject for English for business program. Although the stakeholders' needs degree for Foreign Trade Operating Skills is not the same (if we consider the needs assessment, the enterprises are the most interested, then teachers, former students and the last is the current students), the gaps between the requirements of the students' needs and other stakeholders are not any differences. However, there is a problem with the current students that they are not really interested in this subject, and their willingness is not high enough to have a plan to study FTOS effectively. The reason may be that the current students have not identified their real goals or have not implemented the study plan in the best way.

**Keywords:** ESP, foreign trade operating skills (FTOS), students' need analysis

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The most essential contribution of requirements analysis to the development of the ESP course is that it aids the course designer in understanding the learners' needs. As a result, course designers may create the best content, resources, pedagogical techniques, assessment criteria, and course evaluation to assist learners achieve their targeted attitude, knowledge, and skills goals. Needs analysis, according to Evans et al (2011), is usually considered as the first step in the process. According to Hyland (2006), requirements analysis is also considered as a continuous activity that occurs as part of the course development process. Important decisions about learning objectives, material selection, instructional tactics, and evaluation may be made by determining the individual requirements of learners in the ESP course (Jin 2014). Therefore, the historical history, techniques, and execution of the requirements analysis process are all important for ESP practitioners to understand (Evans et al (2011).

In today's globalized world, English is extensively used in a variety of situations, from social to corporate, academic, and scientific. For decades, there has been an increasing need for studying English for communication, education, and career. English Language Teaching (ELT) was created in response to this trend to accommodate the ever-increasing demand of learners who desire to perfect their English language abilities for various purposes. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a part of ELT that focuses on the needs of learners in specific circumstances including occupational, scientific, academic, and business. As a result, ESP is viewed as a teaching method that can meet specific demands of learners that General English cannot.

To find out the reasons for former student's poor English achievement and what and how the Business English program can be improved in the case of Baria-Vung Tau University, a proper Needs Analysis (NA) is needed. Iwai et al. (1999, p.6) defined NA as follows: "the term needs analysis generally refers to the activities that are involved in collecting information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the needs of a particular group of students". NA is used to determine "what learners will be required to do with the foreign language in the target situation, and how learners might best master the target language during the period of training" (West, 1994, p. 1). NA is an important method to collect data and help the course designer find out the language learners need in a target situation, making the language program more consistent with actual contexts in a real life. NA may be used to evaluate programs and introduce new ideas to satisfy the requirements of students. It gives insight into how learners, teachers, and businesses think about what can be done to help students improve their English skills. These viewpoints can be used to tailor an English education to the needs of students and to meet the demands of employers. Moreover, because each work entails employing one or more of the abilities more than the others, a NA is also useful in evaluating which skills among listening, speaking, writing, and reading are priority in a certain occupational function. Thus, conducting a NA seems to be an appropriate strategy to find out the type of English students' need for their career in the field of foreign trade.

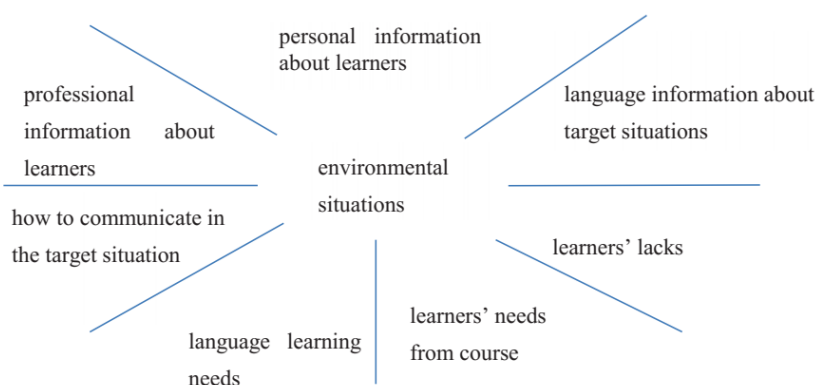
The main goal of this thesis was to conduct a needs analysis in an English for the Foreign Trade Operation Skills (FTOS) context at Baria-Vungtau University (BVU) from April to November 2021. The needs analysis process explored the gap between the learning objectives and real businesses in skills and language used in FTOS course, especially, the English language needs of undergraduates in a Business English program with the aim of providing guidelines for redesigning and developing an appropriate FTOS course. It can help curriculum designers to adjust curriculum design course. Therefore, graduates can better meet the needs of businesses. Using a Needs Analysis (NA) for this study, the research wants to achieve the following goals: (1) Investigate the perspectives of four groups of stakeholders' needs (Present Students of Business English, Business English teachers, Graduates, and Employers) on the Foreign Trade Operating skills teaching and learning practices at the English Faculty of BVU. (2) Suggest some implications and innovative changes based on the outcomes of this study that can be applied to enhance the English proficiency and business knowledge for students at the university.

## II. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the aims of the research, this study will try to answer the following research questions:

- (1) Do the stakeholders have needs in teaching and learning the Foreign Trade Operation Skills course in English for business program at the English Faculty of BVU?
- (2) To what extent are stakeholders' needs for Foreign Trade Operating Skills?
- (3) What are gaps between the requirements of the students' needs and other stakeholders?
- (4) What are the implications and suggestions for Foreign Trade Operating Skills design and teaching?

In this study, the researcher uses the model of Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) and Dudley-Evans (1998) to analyze the current students' needs for studying Foreign Trade Operating Skills.



### ✓ Notes of these factors

- (1) **Professional information about learners:** the tasks and activities that the learners will be using English for. This information links to the target situation analysis approach, which will reveal objective needs.
- (2) **Personal information about learners:** the factors that may affect the way the learners learn such as their previous learning experiences, cultural information, reasons for attending the course and the expectations

regarding it, and attitude toward the English course. This personal information covers the present situation analysis approach, which will reveal wants, means, and subjective needs.

(3) **Language information about the target situations:** what the learners' current skills and language use are. The language information covers the present situation analysis approaches, which will enable the assessment of the learners' difficulties in English.

(4) **The learners' lacks:** the gap between the learners' current skills and the activities that the learners are using English skills. This information covers the deficiency analysis and present situation analysis approaches.

(5) **Language learning needs:** which are effective ways of learning the skills and language that the learners lack. This information covers learning needs approaches such as learning styles and learning strategies.

(6) **How to communicate in the target situation:** refers to communication information about the learners when they use the English language and skills in the target situation. This information covers register analysis, discourse analysis, and genre analysis approaches.

(7) **Learners' needs from the course:** this information covers learning needs approaches.

(8) **Environmental situations:** the information about how and where the course will be run. This information covers the means analysis approach.

The goal of this study was to find out what English language skills participants in the ESP program at BaRia-VungTau University needed in academic and career settings. Current students, former students, ESP instructors, and other teachers were among the participants in the academic setting. With the hope that the study can see a clear picture of the current state of the course whether it is appropriate and meets the needs of the stakeholders.

### III. RESULTS

#### Current students' needs for Foreign Trade Operating Skills

Table 1. Professional information about learners

N = 65	Professional information about learners (PRO)	Mean	Std.
1	I think English very important for my study and work	2.15	.96
2	I always practice using English with others.	2.88	.89
3	I think foreign trade operation skills course is one of the main subjects in English for business	2.59	.94
4	I always keen on studying major subjects such as foreign trade operation skills, English for business.	2.88	.89
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.62</b>	<b>.95</b>

With the factor of professional information about learners, the results in table 1 show that the current students agree English is very important for their study and work, and foreign trade operation skills course is one of the main subjects in English for business, but they neutrally agree that they always practice using English with others, and they always keen on studying major subjects such as foreign trade operation skills, English for business. The total mean present that they neutrally agree about professional information about learners. The findings mean that the current students think foreign trade operation skills course is necessary and important, but they do not really put in the effort to learn it.

Table 2. How to communicate in the target language

N = 65	How to communicate in the target language (HOW)	Mean	Std.
1	I always use English in foreign trade operation skills with my classmates.	3.51	1.14
2	I always interact with my teacher who teach foreign trade operation skills in classroom and out of class.	3.71	1.16
3	I always discuss with my teacher about the information in this subject.	3.48	1.12
4	I always feel confident to communicate in foreign trade operation topic with others.	3.42	1.15
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.53</b>	<b>1.14</b>

The findings in table 2 show they disagree that they always use English in foreign trade operation skills with their classmates; they always interact with their teacher who teach foreign trade operation skills in classroom and out of class; they always discuss with their teacher about the information in this subject; they always feel confident to communicate in foreign trade operation topic with others. These results talk they are not willing to communicate in their target language.

**Table 3.** Learners' needs from course

<b>N = 65</b>	<b>Learners' needs from course (NEE)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
1	I want to learn full of knowledge about foreign trade operation skills.	2.91	.861
2	I want to learn full of skills in foreign trade operation.	2.91	.861
3	I want to solve problems in foreign trade operation by English environment.	3.20	1.06
4	I want to increase international collaboration improving employment opportunities.	3.20	1.06
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.04</b>	<b>.960</b>

They neutrally agree that they want to learn full of knowledge about foreign trade operation skills; they want to learn full of skills in foreign trade operation; they want to solve problems in foreign trade operation by English environment; they want to increase international collaboration improving employment opportunities. Therefore, their needs in studying foreign trade operation skills are in neutral degree.

**Table 4.** Learners' lacks

<b>N = 65</b>	<b>Learners' lacks (LAC)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
1	I feel lack of knowledge of foreign trade operation skills.	3.08	1.08
2	I feel lack of English competence to understand the subject.	2.91	.931
3	I feel lack of vocabulary in foreign trade operation to express my ideals.	2.92	.989
4	I feel lack of extra materials in foreign trade operation for further and deeper learning.	3.00	1.07
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.97</b>	<b>1.01</b>

It can be seen in table 4, all item results are in neutral degree. So the current students think that they are still lack of knowledge of foreign trade operation skills; lack of English competence to understand the subject; lack of English competence to understand the subject; lack of vocabulary in foreign trade operation to express my ideals.

**Table 5.** Language information about target situation

<b>N = 65</b>	<b>Language information about target situation (LAN)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
1	I can write well the information in foreign trade operation skills course.	2.45	.952
2	I can listen well the information in foreign trade operation skills course.	3.62	1.14
3	I can read perfectly the information in foreign trade operation skills course.	2.22	1.11
4	I can speak clearly the information in foreign trade operation skills course.	3.55	1.14
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.96</b>	<b>1.08</b>

The table 5 presents the current students agree they can write and read well the information in foreign trade operation skills course, but they neutrally agree they can listen and speak well the information in foreign trade operation skills course.

**Table 6.** Personal information about learners

<b>N = 65</b>	<b>Personal information about learners (PER)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
1	I like to study foreign trade operation skills.	2.57	1.04
2	It is the main subject for my future career.	2.57	1.04
3	I always spend much time for studying it.	2.98	.893
4	I see I have much effort to study it.	3.00	.884
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.78</b>	<b>.964</b>

When we ask them about their personal emotion and willingness, the results in table 4.6 show that they agree they like to study foreign trade operation skills, and foreign. However, they neutrally agree they always spend much time for studying it, and they have much effort to study it.

**Table 7.** Language learning needs

<b>N = 65</b>	<b>Language learning needs (LLN)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
1	I want to take part in this course by English writing.	2.45	.952
2	I want to take part in this course by English listening.	3.62	1.14
3	I want to take part in this course by English reading.	2.22	1.11

4	I want to take part in this course by English speaking.	3.55	1.14
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.96</b>	<b>1.08</b>

Also, we ask them what English skills they want to study in this course, the findings in table 7 show that they agree they want to take part in this course by English writing and reading, but they neutrally agree they want to take part in this course by English listening and speaking.

Table 8. Environmental situation

<b>N = 65</b>	<b>Environmental situations (ENV)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
1	The teacher has professional knowledge about the subject.	1.97	.918
2	The teacher always uses English in classroom.	3.17	1.15
3	The teacher has a great teaching method in this course.	1.91	.964
4	The teacher shares many experiences in foreign trade operation skills.	1.88	.960
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.23</b>	<b>1.04</b>

The results in table 8 show that the current students agree their teacher has professional knowledge about the subject, a great teaching method in this course, and he/she shares many experiences in foreign trade operation skills. However, they said that they neutrally agree their teacher always uses English in classroom.

### Compare means of eight factors for the current students' needs

In table 9 below, the results show that these factors are no difference among their means because the sig. (2-tailed) = .000 smaller than .005. Therefore, the research states that these factors have a close relationship and there are no factors rejected.

Table 9. One-Sample Test

	Test P-value					
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
PRO	29.577	64	.000	2.62	2.15	2.88
HOW	24.649	64	.000	3.53	3.42	3.71
NEE	27.227	64	.000	3.04	2.91	3.20
LAC	22.975	64	.000	2.97	2.91	3.08
LAN	20.706	64	.000	2.96	2.22	3.62
PER	19.815	64	.000	2.78	2.57	3.00
LLN	20.706	64	.000	2.96	2.22	3.62
ENV	17.294	64	.000	2.23	1.88	3.17

### Teachers needs for Foreign Trade Operating Skills

From the result in table 10, the teachers agree that foreign trade operation skills course is necessary; the syllabus of this course is good enough; this course within 3 credits is enough and suitable, but they neutrally agree the materials for this course are good and updated.

Table 10. Curriculum

<b>N = 12</b>	<b>Curriculum (CUR)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
1	I think foreign trade operation skills course is necessary.	2.00	.739
2	I think this course within 3 credits is enough and suitable.	2.42	.669
3	I think the syllabus of this course is good enough.	2.25	.754
4	I think the materials for this course are good and updated.	3.25	.753
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.48</b>	<b>.728</b>

All teachers surveyed in table 11 agree that the teacher who teaches foreign trade operation skills has a lot of teaching experiences; much knowledge, practical knowledge, and inspires students well to participate in foreign trade operating skills.

Table 11. Teachers teaching this course

<b>N = 12</b>	<b>Teachers teaching this course (TTC)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
1	I think the teacher has a lot of teaching experiences for this course.	1.92	.669
2	I think the teacher has much knowledge in foreign trade operating skills.	1.92	.669

3	I think the teacher has practical knowledge for teaching this subject.	1.83	.718
4	I think the teacher inspires students well to participate in this subject.	1.67	.778
<b>Total</b>		<b>1.84</b>	<b>.708</b>

As you see in table 12, all teachers strongly agree the teacher teaching this subject is properly trained to teach this subject; has high qualification to teach this subject; has perfect English communication skills. However, they agree that he/she uses 100% English in this course.

Table 12. The teachers' background

<b>N = 12</b>	<b>The teacher's background (TTB)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
1	I think the teacher is properly trained to teach this subject.	1.75	.754
2	I think the teacher uses 100% English in this course.	2.00	.739
3	I think the teacher has high qualification to teach this subject.	1.80	.718
4	I think the teacher has perfect English communication skills.	1.67	.778
<b>Total</b>		<b>1.80</b>	<b>.747</b>

Glance at table 13, the research sees that although all teachers agree the students are good at English, they disagree the students have no difficulty study this course; the students are active to study this course; the students are interested in studying this course.

Table 13. The teachers' emotion about the students

<b>N = 12</b>	<b>The teachers' emotion about the students (TTE)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
1	The students are good at English.	3.33	1.15
2	The students have no difficulty study this course.	3.58	.669
3	The students are active to study this course.	3.67	.888
4	The students are interested in studying this course.	3.50	1.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.52</b>	<b>.926</b>

### **The former students' needs for Foreign Trade Operating Skills**

As seen in table 14, the former students agree they are working in the foreign company; they agree they see knowledge of foreign trade operation skills useful for my work; they always use English at work; they feel satisfied with what I have studied about this course. However, they disagree that listening and speaking skills are more important than writing and reading when working in the issue of foreign trade operation. It means that writing and reading is used in their work.

Table 14. Using foreign trade operation skills in working environment

<b>N = 20</b>	<b>Using foreign trade operation skills in working environment (FS)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
1	I work in the foreign company.	2.50	.946
2	I see knowledge of foreign trade operation skills useful for my work.	1.85	.813
3	I always use English at work.	2.70	1.03
4	I think listening and speaking skills are more important than writing and reading when working in the issue of foreign trade operation.	4.10	.788
5	I feel satisfied with what I have studied about this course.	2.10	.787
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.65</b>	<b>.872</b>

### **The enterprises' needs for Foreign Trade Operating Skills**

The results in table 15 show that the enterprise think positively about the program of English for business as well as foreign trade operation skills. They strongly agree foreign trade operation skills and English for business program are important for their company. Also, they agree their working environment uses English. However, they neutrally agree that they feel satisfied with their staff's knowledge and skills of foreign trade operation and English competence when they start working at their company. In addition, they usually use English writing and reading in their work.

Table 15 Using foreign trade operation skills in working environment

<b>N = 10</b>	<b>Using foreign trade operation skills in working environment (ENT)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
1	We use English at work.	2.30	1.16
2	Foreign trade operation skills are important for our company.	1.40	.516
3	We feel satisfied with our staff's knowledge and skills of foreign trade	3.30	1.25

	operation when they start working at our company.		
4	Listening and speaking skills are more important than writing and reading when working in the issue of foreign trade operation.	3.40	1.43
5	We are willing to hire students who graduate English for Business course.	1.80	.789
6	I find the students' English competence meets the company's job needs.	3.20	1.22
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.56</b>	<b>1.06</b>

**The gaps between the requirements of the students' needs and other stakeholders**

From the means analyzed between table 16 the research sees that the stakeholders have needs in teaching and learning Foreign Trade Operation Skills course in English for business program at the English Faculty of BVU. However, is there any difference among stakeholders' needs? The study uses Pearson Correlation to measure and the results in table 4.14 show that these factors are no difference among their means because the sig. (2-tailed) = .000 smaller than .005 or .001. Therefore, the research states that these factors have a close relation and there are no factors rejected. They mean that all stakeholders see the need of foreign trade operation skills in teaching and learning for English for business students.

Table 16. Correlations among stakeholders

		<b>Correlations</b>			
		Teachers	Former students	Enterprises	Current students
Teachers	Pearson Correlation	1	.123	.351**	.211**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	12	12	10	65
Former students	Pearson Correlation	.123	1	.044	.124**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	12	20	10	65
Enterprises	Pearson Correlation	.351**	.044	1	.161*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	10	10	10	65
Current students	Pearson Correlation	.211**	.124**	.161*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	65	65	65	65

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**IV. Discussions**

Based on the results of the analysis, the researcher found that all stakeholders believe that the foreign trade operation skills course is necessary because all of them consider its importance in the professional language even though their recognition and performance results are not similar completely. We will discuss why there is such a difference and where the difference comes from as followings.

Their opinions (seen in table 17) about the importance of foreign trade operation skills, the research states that the enterprises are people who think it is very important (mean = 1.40), next, the former students with the mean = 1.85, then, the teachers with the mean = 2.00, finally, the current students with the mean = 2.15. With this result, although all stakeholders show its importance, the current students who are the most important people our study cares about have the lowest agreement. This means that the current students are not really interested in this subject yet.

Table 17. Stakeholders' opinions about the importance of FTOS

No.	Stakeholders' opinions	Questionnaire	Mean
1	Current students	I think English very important for my study and work	2.15
2	Teachers	I think foreign trade operation skills course is necessary.	2.00
3	Former students	I see knowledge of foreign trade operation skills useful for my work.	1.85
4	Enterprises	Foreign trade operation skills are important for our company.	1.40

However, how do these results above affect the current students' study and action plans? The findings in table 18 show the current students' willingness is not high enough to study well FTOS because they disagree (mean = 3.51) they usually use English in FTOS. And the teacher also thinks the current students are not interested in studying this course with the mean of 3.50. If they have a clear plan to study it, they will not reject any opportunities to exchange or share its knowledge and skills with others. On the contrary, the former students agree (mean = 2.10) that they are satisfied with what they have studied and performed at working context. This proves that the previous course has better goals and plans than this one. Also, if we look at the enterprises' satisfaction, we see that they neutrally agree (mean = 3.30) their staff's knowledge and skills of foreign trade operation are good enough to start working at their company.

Table 18. Stakeholders think about the practice of FTOS

No.	Stakeholders' opinions	Questionnaire	Mean
1	Current students	I always use English in foreign trade operation skills with my classmates.	3.51
2	Teachers	The students are interested in studying this course.	3.50
3	Former students	I feel satisfied with what I have studied about this course.	2.10
4	Enterprises	We feel satisfied with our staff's knowledge and skills of foreign trade operation when they start working at our company.	3.30

In addition, the researcher hopes to know what language skills are important when teaching and learning foreign trade operation skills, the results in table 19 show although the teachers can use 100% English in this course, the current students think they can read and write well in this aspect. Also, with the former students and the enterprises, all of them disagree listening and speaking skills are more important than writing and reading when working in the issue of foreign trade operation. Hence, the stakeholders have the same thinking that writing and reading are more important than speaking and listening when studying FTOS.

Table 19. The needs of language skills for FTOS

No.	Stakeholders' opinions	Questionnaire	Mean
1	Current students	I can read and write perfectly the information in foreign trade operation skills course.	2.33
2	Teachers	I think the teacher uses 100% English in this course.	2.00
3	Former students	I think listening and speaking skills are more important than writing and reading when working in the issue of foreign trade operation.	4.10
4	Enterprises	Listening and speaking skills are more important than writing and reading when working in the issue of foreign trade operation.	3.40

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The research that have employed the Dudley-Evans and St. John's (1998) needs analysis paradigm have seen the knowledge base for the current students. The results stated that all aspects in a requirements analysis model should be considered while making course selections. The researcher discovered that all components are required throughout the data analysis phase.

Especially, the study shows some reliable findings to answer the research questions such as, all stakeholders are interested in foreign trade operation skills course. It's a practical subject for English for business program. Although the stakeholders' needs degree for Foreign Trade Operating Skills is not the same (if we consider the needs assessment, the enterprises are the most interested, then teachers, former students and the last is the current students), the gaps between the requirements of the students' needs and other stakeholders are not any differences. However, there is a problem with the current students that they are not really interested in this subject, and their willingness is not high enough to have a plan to study FTOS effectively. The reason may be that the current students have not identified their real goals or have not implemented the study plan in the best way.



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