

A Study of Perceptions of English Needs of Business Students and the Faculty of Business at the British University in Egypt

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Abstract

This research was conducted to investigate the perceptions of English language needs of undergraduate business students and their business faculty at the British University in Egypt. Data were drawn from four sources: (1) a student questionnaire; (2) a teacher questionnaire; (3) a round of semi-structured interviews for students and (4) a round of semi-structured interviews for teachers. The findings have shown that there are a number of curriculum components for each language skill that should be incorporated in the syllabus for each English module that students would find interesting and relevant to their needs.

**Keywords:** language needs; second language; curriculum; needs analysis

1. A Study of Perceptions of English Needs

This study investigates the perceptions of English language needs of business students and their business faculty at the British University in Egypt. The purpose of writing and submitting such a paper is that although needs analysis is claimed to be a very important part in the process of curriculum planning in second and foreign language learning, few studies have

been conducted in the Arab world on this topic. Therefore, this paper adds to the findings of studies by presenting evidence to show that besides equipping students with the right skills, English classes should be more specifically related to the degree area. The findings may prove to be beneficial for language teachers, curriculum planners and materials writers in other universities and institutions worldwide.

### *1.1 The British University in Egypt*

At the British University in Egypt English is the medium of instruction in all faculties and departments. The Department of English is unique in that its English language teaching spreads across the entire university. Students in all departments have to take English. The score of the entry Placement Test decides which of the six English levels students will be placed in (Reinforcement comprising beginner and elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, Advanced and Advanced Writing). The Advanced and Advanced Writing modules are compulsory for all students to take. Each module must be successfully completed before moving to the next level. Students must complete the English modules before graduating. It is this university-wide provision of English language support that makes this research into the specific needs of students from different disciplines very important. The research findings will inform curriculum design and materials development.

Students will also require a good command of English language for their work field as English is the lingua franca of the majority of jobs on the worldwide market today, especially in business, medicine, science and technology. In fact, most business English communications are between non-native speakers using 'International English' (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998 p. 53).

## 2. Needs Analysis

Needs analysis is claimed to be a very crucial part of the process of curriculum planning in second language learning (Brown, 1995; Richards, 2001), as it will be the awareness of this

need that will influence syllabus writers or teachers on what components should be included in the content of the language course. Unfortunately, needs analysis in the Arab world has not received adequate attention. The needs of learners are seldom or never analysed but rather perceived for them (Johns, 1991), hence the lack of published studies conducted in the Arab world on this topic.

According to Richterich (1984, p.29) ‘.... a need does not exist independent of a person. It is people who build their images of their needs on the basis of data relating to themselves and their environment.’ In a great majority of cases, usually the teacher, department or sponsor decides what components and skills need to be introduced into the students’ course of study, without taking into consideration the students’ point of view.

Prior to the conduction of this research, needs analysis had not been carried out to determine the key components necessary for designing an English programme at the British University in Egypt. Therefore, in this study, the English language needs of business students and their faculty will be assessed in order to increase teaching and learning effectiveness.

### 3. Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of the current study were: 1) to provide data concerning the academic study needs of undergraduate business students and their faculty at the BUE and 2) to help the Department of English to enhance its current English programme.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. *Participants*

Ninety-eight students learning English as a foreign language from the Faculty of Business comprising three departments: Business Administration 64 (65.3%), Political Science 19 (19.4%) and Economics 15 (15.3%) and 42 teaching staff participated in the completion of the questionnaires. The teaching staff was from the three above named departments: Business

Administration 23 (54.8%), Political Science 7 (16.7%) and Economics 12 (28.6%). The students were from years 1 (after Preparatory Year) 2 and 3.

Fourteen business students and three lecturers participated in the semi-structured interviews. Students were selected according to their faculty, the English module they were in and the grade obtained for English at the end of the first semester. One lecturer from each department in the Faculty of Business (Business Administration, Political Science & Economics) was invited to take part in the interviews. Lecturers were selected randomly. While interviewed students were representing the students in the Faculty of Business, lecturers were speaking on behalf of their departments. It was also possible to compare teacher responses to look for commonalities and compare them with the student findings.

## 5. Instruments

To obtain a strong overall needs analysis a combination of four information-gathering procedures have been used: 1) a questionnaire for students; 2) a questionnaire for teachers; 3) a semi-structured interview for students and 4) a semi-structured interview for teachers. As stated by Brown (1995, p. 52) ‘multiple sources of information should be used in a needs analysis.’

### 5.1. Questionnaires

Two questionnaire surveys were devised and used in order to obtain data for this study: a questionnaire for students and a questionnaire for teaching staff. The questionnaire for students contained 24 questions divided into six sections. The topics were: background information, importance of English, overall skills level, curriculum components, additional information about the course book, writing components, and contact hours as well as one open-ended question. The teacher questionnaire consisted of 22 questions, which paralleled those of the students’ version with an additional 2 open-ended questions. The student questionnaire was piloted on a group of

Intermediate level Preparatory Students and was modified as required prior to being administered on the subjects for the research.

### 5.2. Interviews

Four interview questions were devised for the selected students and lecturers to help complement the quantitative research findings. The students' questions, which paralleled those of the lecturers, are as follows:

1. What kind of reading material would you find interesting and relevant to your degree area?
2. What kind of writing tasks would you find interesting and relevant to your degree area?
3. What kind of speaking tasks would you find interesting and relevant to your degree area?
4. How can the Department of English help you to make more progress in your degree area?

### 6. Procedure

The investigation consisted of four stages. For the initial stage, the questionnaire was administered to all the students by two of the researchers towards the end of Semester One during their regular English class time. The students who were present on the day the questionnaire was administered took part in the completion of the instrument. For the second stage, the teacher questionnaire was sent electronically to all teaching staff in the three above named departments. Those who were willing to assist completed the questionnaire. The third and fourth stages of data elicitation were completed in Semester 2. Two semi-structured interview techniques were used as a second instrument for the present study. The interviews were conducted during the regular working hours of the university and over the period of three weeks. Students and lecturers were contacted and appointments were made. Individual interviews were audiotaped.

### 7. Data Analysis

### 7.1. Questionnaires

The data obtained from the questionnaires was analysed by means of using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 13.0). The analytical procedure consisted of running frequencies, and descriptive statistics. The Chi-squares test was also conducted whenever appropriate. *P*-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

### 7.2. Interviews

The data collected through interviews was analysed by using content analysis technique. Based on this analysis, responses were categorised according to each question. At the end of the analysis, there was one complete table for each student and lecturer illustrating the responses to the question.

## 8. Results & Discussion

### 8.1. Student & Teacher Questionnaires

#### 8.1.1. How important is English for your degree area and work field?

The student and teacher's questionnaires have two questions concerning the importance of English. Question 1 (Q) concerns the importance of English for the student's degree area, while Q.2 examines the importance of English for the student's work field. With regard to the former question, the majority of students (98%) and teaching staff (97.6%) perceived English to be either *very important* or *important* to the student's degree area. There were similar findings to the latter question as 96.9% of students and all teaching staff believes that English is *very important* or *important* for the students' work field.

#### 8.1.2. How would you rate writing, reading, listening and speaking skills from 1 – 4 to your degree area?

The aim of Q.3 was to determine which of the four language skills is considered by students and teaching staff to be most essential for their faculty. The students and teaching staff were asked to rank the four skills from 1 to 4, where 4 is the most important skill and 1 is the

least important. The results of the descriptive analysis of the data (See Tables 1 & 2) showed that writing and speaking are considered the most important skills for the students of business followed by reading and listening respectively. The findings for the teaching staff reveal a slightly different picture, as they believe that writing and reading should take priority over the other two skills. Both students and teaching staff agree that listening is the least important skill. Specifically, business students are required in their faculty to read articles from academic books written with high standards of professional business English, an ability to write academic reports, research projects and give oral presentations.

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics of data for students**

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
How would you rate writing skills to the degree area?	98	1.00	4.00	3.2449	.90885
How would you rate reading skills to the degree area?	98	1.00	4.00	2.8673	.95936
How would you rate listening skills to the degree area?	98	1.00	4.00	2.5155	1.14667
How would you rate speaking skills to the degree area?	98	1.00	4.00	3.1429	.99483
Valid N (listwise)	98				

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics of data for teachers**

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
How would you rate writing skills to the degree area?	42	1.00	4.00	3.6190	.73093
How would you rate reading skills to the degree area?	42	1.00	4.00	3.5476	.70546
How would you rate listening skills to the degree area?	42	1.00	4.00	3.4048	.70051
How would you rate speaking skills to the degree area?	42	1.00	4.00	3.4762	.80359
Valid N (listwise)	42				

### 8.1.3. How satisfied are you with your language level?

In response to Q.4, which asked about the degree of satisfaction with the students' language level, 76.6% of students indicated that they are satisfied to some degree. Specifically there is a significant difference between the findings for students and teaching staff for the category 'satisfied' as shown by the high number of positive responses of students ( $P < 0.0004$ ,  $OR = 3.89$ ). The results of the Chi-square test demonstrate that 35.7% of the teaching staff are not really satisfied and 26.2% are not satisfied at all with the students language level ( $P < 0.000002$ ,  $OR = 34.42$ ) (See Table 3). The findings show that students are more satisfied with their language level than the teaching staff is.

**Table 3. Satisfaction with language level**

Variable	No (%) positive		P value [OR] <sup>1</sup>
	Students (n=98)	Teaching staff (n=42)	
Very satisfied	8.2%	2.4%	NS <sup>2</sup>
Satisfied	68.4%*	35.7%	<0.0004 [3.89]
Not really satisfied	22.4%	35.7%	NS
Not satisfied at all	1.0%	26.2%*	<0.000002 [34.42]

<sup>1</sup>Odds Ratio, <sup>2</sup>Not significant.

### 8.1.4. Does your language level affect your learning in your degree area?

A total of 73.5% of students and 88.1% of teaching staff stated that the language level of the students affects the learning in the degree area to a certain extent. This finding indicates that English is not only extremely important but also even indispensable.

### 8.1.5. How would you rank yourself in the following skills?

Questions 6-12 of the Student's Questionnaire asked students to rank themselves in various skills areas. In addition, the teaching staff, were asked to rate the problems students have with these skills in their faculty (Qs 7-13 of the teacher questionnaire). Differences can be noted in the relative ratings of different skills by students and teaching staff (See Table 4). The results



indicate that with all the skills students perceive themselves to be at a higher level than the teaching staff regards them to be. Along similar lines, in a study conducted by Zaghoul & Hussein (1985) results showed that students tended to overestimate their abilities in the different language skills.

In addition, with regard to Q.6 of the teacher questionnaire, teaching staff were asked to rate the language problems of students in their faculty. Of the 42 teaching staff, more than 50% believe that over 50% of students have problems with English.

**Table 4. A Comparison between students & teaching staff rating of skills**

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Percentage of 98 students' ratings from good to excellent</b>	<b>Percentage of 42 teaching staff ratings of 50% or more students that have problems</b>
Speaking (oral presentations, short talks & group discussions)	72.4%	54.8%
Asking relevant and clear questions in lectures & tutorials	54.1%	64.3%
Listening to academic lectures	78.6%	52.4%
Reading academic texts	67.3%	66.7%
Writing academic English	53.1%	83.3%
Taking notes during academic lectures and tutorials	51.0%	81.0%
Taking notes from reading texts	51.0%	76.2%

*8.1.6. Choose three components for each skill (reading, writing, listening & speaking) which you consider the 'most important' to your academic studies and future profession?*

Regarding the importance of academic skills to the English modules, students and teaching staff were asked to choose three curriculum components for each skill (reading, writing, speaking and listening) which they consider to be the 'most important' for their academic studies and future profession. Results have shown that there is consistency in the responses of students and teaching staff for the majority of these skills components (See Table 5). The results clearly

indicate that students and teaching staff believe that these skills should be incorporated in the syllabus for each English module. In particular, attention should be given to those skills that have been rated by 60% or more of students and teaching staff or in some cases by teaching staff only. For example, giving presentations, listening to course lectures and in-class discussions (students & teaching staff), and reading academic texts and journals and listening to presentations (teaching staff). With regard to giving oral presentations, in a study conducted on public speaking for undergraduate students of business and commerce in Oman, Rizvi (2005) found that 100% of the students stated that business students need the ability to speak English with confidence.

**Table 5. A comparison between students & teaching staff ranking of curriculum components**

Skills	Student (n=98)	Teacher (n=42)
	Yes	Yes
<b>Reading</b>		
Academic reading texts	41%	81%
General reading texts	41%	-
Technical vocabulary	39%	-
Critical thinking	47%	43%
Magazines	-	36%
Journals	-	76%
<b>Writing</b>		
Summarising texts	31%	-
Essays	53%	52%
Research paper	41%	50%
Analysing texts	-	36%
<b>Speaking</b>		
Giving presentations	76.5%	86%
In class discussions	47%	33%
With customers	34%	-
Giving opinions/suggestions/ideas	35%	45%
<b>Listening</b>		
To course lectures	71%	76%

In class discussions	61%	60%
To lectures & TAs communicating	46%	48%
In tutorials	37%	36%
To presentations	54%	60%

Only 30% or more of students & teaching staff who considered these components to be important have been included.

*8.1.7. To what extent do you think your English course has helped you in your degree area?*

Question 17 asked students to rate the extent to which they think their English course has helped them in their degree area. The results showed that only 53.1% believe it has helped them to some degree. Although teaching staff were not asked this specific question only 38.1% stated that, they were satisfied to some extent with their students' language level (See 8.1.3).

*8.1.8. In your opinion, is the content of the course book interesting and relevant to your degree area?*

In response to Q.18, which enquired as to whether or not students think their course book is interesting and relevant to their degree area, the results are shown in Table 6. The selected course books and material do not focus on English for Specific Purposes (ESP), that is, English for Business Students. The Intermediate module was using the course book *Skills in English, Student's Book 4* and the Upper Intermediate module *Focus on IELTS* even though the latter module does not prepare students for the IELTS examination. There are no specific course books for the Advanced and Advanced Writing modules. Therefore, this question relates to the material that is selected and used by the module teams. Although a number of students chose 'Yes' to this question indicating that the course book and materials are interesting to some degree, in contrast to this, others have responded 'No'. Furthermore, some students wrote comments on the questionnaire stating that course books and materials are not relevant to their faculty indicating that they should be relevant to the business field.

**Table 6. Is the content of the course book interesting and relevant to your degree area?**

	No. Students	Yes (%)	No (%)	NA <sup>1</sup>
Intermediate	16	56%	38%	1
Upper Intermediate	35	57%	40%	1
Advanced	19	42 %	58%	-
Advanced Writing	28	78.6%	21.4%	-

<sup>1</sup>No answer

*8.1.9. Are the reading topics in the course book interesting and relevant to your degree area?*

Question 19 of the student's questionnaire concerns the interest and relevance of the reading topics in the course book for the Intermediate and Upper Intermediate modules and the selected reading material by teachers for the Advanced and Advanced Writing Modules. As shown in Table 7, a consistent pattern has emerged with regard to the number of students that responded 'No'. Responses indicate a need for teachers to incorporate reading topics that are relevant to the students' subject-matter studies.

**Table 7. Are the reading topics in the course book interesting and relevant to your degree area?**

	No. Students	Yes (%)	No (%)	NA <sup>1</sup>
Intermediate	16	44.5%	50%	1
Upper Intermediate	35	43.5%	54.3%	1
Advanced	19	32.7%	68.4%	-
Advanced Writing	28	50%	50%	-

<sup>1</sup>No answer

*8.1.10. Are writing paragraphs and essays such as the following interesting and relevant to your degree area?*

Both questionnaires (Qs 18 & 20) elicited opinions from students and teaching staff as to whether they thought the writing components listed for each of the English modules are interesting and relevant to the students' degree area. As shown in Table 8, more than 50% of students and teaching staff have responded positively to the majority of the writing components. However, differences can be seen in responses to the narrative paragraph/essay as less than 37% of the students and teaching staff think that this writing component is interesting and relevant to the needs of students and faculty. Furthermore, although 64% of the Advanced Writing students gave a positive response to the problem and solution research paper, there is a significant statistical difference among students and teaching staff ( $P < 0.0002$ ,  $OR = 22.78$ ) as the latter perceived it to be more relevant to their faculty than the students. One possible reason for this finding is that students look at the 3,000-word research paper as being a lot of extra work since they are also expected to do research projects as part of module requirements in their faculty.

**Table 8. Are writing paragraphs and essays such as the following interesting and relevant to your degree area?**

Variable	No. of Lecturer & TA's	No. (%) positive	No. of students	No. (%) positive	P-values [OR] <sup>1</sup>
<b>Intermediate</b>					
Descriptive paragraph & essay	42	60%	16	73%	NS <sup>2</sup>
Narrative paragraph & essay	42	36%	16	33%	NS
Classification essay	42	55%	16	60%	NS
<b>Upper Intermediate</b>					
Compare & contrast essay	42	88%	35	77%	NS
Cause & effect essay	42	76%	35	71%	NS
<b>Advanced</b>					
Argumentative essay	42	88%	19	68%	NS
<b>Advanced writing</b>					
A problem + solution research paper	42	98%	28	64%	<0.0002 [22.78]

<sup>1</sup>Odds ratio. <sup>2</sup>Not significant

8.1.11. *Is the vocabulary in the course book relevant and helpful to your degree area?*

The aim of Q.21 of the Student's Questionnaire was to elicit from students whether or not the vocabulary in the course books and from the selected material is relevant and helpful to their degree area. Although a higher percentage of students have responded 'Yes' to this question (See Table 9), it needs to be stated that a number of students wrote comments on the questionnaire stating that the vocabulary is not relevant to their degree area, but is helpful to their everyday life. Sixty-seven percent of teaching staff indicated that technical vocabulary related to argumentation, criticism, negotiation, communication, business deals, political and legal English as well and mathematical terms would be more relevant and helpful to students and their faculty.

**Table 9. Is the vocabulary in the course book relevant and helpful to your degree area?**

	No. Students	Yes (%)	No (%)	NA
Intermediate	16	56%	38%	1
Upper Intermediate	35	66%	34%	-
Advanced	19	58.9%	42%	-
Advanced Writing	28	79.7%	21%	-

NA = No answer

*8.1.12. Is the listening material in the course book interesting and relevant to your degree area?*

Results for Q.22 of the Student Questionnaire deal with assessing the listening material in the course book. The Advanced and Advanced Writing modules have not been included since they do not focus on developing the skill of listening. 63% of Intermediate and 60% of Upper Intermediate students believe the listening material to be helpful for their degree area. It is possible that students perceive different types of listening material to be useful in developing this skill. With regard to the teaching staff, 67% think that listening material should concentrate on watching the news including world business report, presentations, a variety of documentaries, movies, videos, public speeches, a variety of business matters, improving accent and cultural differences.

*8.1.13. In your opinion are the contact hours for this course (i.e. 48) sufficient to help you improve your language proficiency?*

The next question for both questionnaires (Q.23 & 21) concerns the contact hours for the English modules. As many as 81.6% students and 71.4% teaching staff believe that 48 teaching sessions per semester is sufficient to enable students to develop their language proficiency. One possible reason for this finding is that students are expected to study English alongside their degree area modules and would therefore not welcome more contact hours for English. Teaching staff may be concerned that students may take more English sessions at the expense of their degree area modules.

*8.1.14. In your opinion, do you benefit more from the one-hour or two-hour teaching session?*

Both questionnaires (Q.24 & 22) asked students and teaching staff to give their opinions as to whether students benefit more from the one or two hour teaching session. The results demonstrated that 66.3% of students and 45.2% of teaching staff agreed that the one-hour session is preferred. Although a number of teaching staff did not respond to this question, 35.7% were in favour of the two-hour session.

*8.1.15. In your opinion, how can the English Department help students make the necessary progress in their degree area?*

The last consideration of the questionnaires for the needs analysis was to elicit the opinions of students and teaching staff as to how the English Department can help students make the necessary progress in their degree area. Among the responses of 30% or more students were writing paragraphs/essays/academic reports related to their degree area, 44.7%, developing speaking and presentation skills, 45.9% and developing research skills, 36%. With regard to the teaching staff, 31.5% also mentioned developing research skills.

In response to Q.24 of the teacher's questionnaire which enquired about how students' language development is picked up and reinforced in their faculty, a total of 40.5% of teaching staff stated that students are encouraged to communicate in English and give presentations, while 31.5% mentioned writing essays, projects and academic reports.

## 9. Student & Teacher Interviews

*9.1. What kind of reading material would you find interesting and relevant to your degree area?*

*9.1.1. Students' perspective.* The next consideration for the needs analysis is what reading material should be emphasised in the English modules. In accordance with the findings of Table 7, the responses to Q.1 of the interview clearly demonstrate that the majority of students (85.7%) believe that receiving topics related to their degree area would be interesting and relevant for them. This is how one student responded to this question: *"Teachers should introduce topics related to the degree area. This would help students."* In addition, a number of students (42.9%) stated that receiving interesting and age appropriate topics would help motivate them. Students preferences for reading topics were: authentic material focusing on worldwide issues to increase general knowledge, as well as topics related to fashion, selling products, successful companies (local & international), human resources, entrepreneurs, the economy, ethical leaders, organisational behaviour, politics, sports, newspaper, historical and research articles. In accordance with the above findings, Edwards (2000) ESP case study demonstrates that authentic materials are appreciated by students and instrumental in motivating them. The teachers' findings concur with the results of the students as all teachers claim that reading material relevant to the degree area should be introduced in the English modules. This is what one teacher had to say about the reading material: *"Teachers should introduce updated and interesting material which is relevant to our degree area."*



9.2. *What kind of writing tasks would you find interesting and relevant to your degree area?*

With regard to writing tasks, 71.4% of students mentioned the need to develop their overall writing skills, which includes essay writing, 57.1% developing research skills, 50% academic reports, 35.7% research projects and CV writing. In agreement with these findings, 66.7% of teachers mentioned developing writing skills by focusing on essays and academic reports while 100% believe developing research skills are important components for their faculty. These findings concur with those found in 8.1.15 above as 44.7% of students stated that writing paragraphs, essays and academic reports relevant to their degree area would help them make more progress in their degree area. In addition, both students' (36%) and teaching staff (31.5%) responded developing research skills (See 8.1.15). One student mentioned when research skills should be introduced. *"Introduce research skills from the first English module not just on the Advanced and Advanced Writing modules."* This interviewed teacher's response is in accordance with the student. *"Students in the Preparatory Year need to know research skills."*

9.3. *What kind of speaking tasks would you find interesting and relevant to your degree area?*

The emerging patterns for Q.3 of the interviews indicate that there are a number of speaking tasks that students would find interesting and relevant to their degree area. Amongst these giving oral presentations have been rated highly by students (71.4%) and teaching staff (100%). This student's comment helps us to understand when oral presentations should be introduced in the English programme: *"Oral presentations should be introduced from the first English module."* Similarly, the interviewed teachers also believe that English modules should *"help students develop their oral presentation skills."* This finding is in accordance with the results of a study conducted in the US where East Asian students considered formal oral presentations to be one of the most important skills for academic success in graduate studies

(Kim, 2006). Whereas all teaching staff has rated class discussions, developing communications skills and debates highly, 50% of students stated class discussions, 42.9% developing communication skills and 35.7% debates.

Also, in response to the last question of the student questionnaire 45.9% of students, stated that developing speaking and presentation skills would help them make more progress in the degree area (See 8.1.15 above). Furthermore, 55.6% of teaching staff expressed that students have problems with oral presentations, short talks, and group discussions (See Table 4). Along similar lines, Schleppegrell and Royster (1990:12) suggest that English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP) courses should provide learners with ‘opportunities to role play, discuss business cases, and participate in business situations.’

*9.4. How can the English Department help you to make more progress in your degree area?*

Question 4 of the interview attempted to elicit what students think the Department of English can do to help them make more progress in their degree area. The results show that there are similarities in perspective between the students and teachers as both groups have identified four important factors which are: 1) develop speaking skills in all English modules; 2) motivation; 3) placement test; and 4) develop research skills from the first English module in the preparatory year.

*9.4.1. Speaking Skills.* The responses of students and teachers are in accordance as they both mentioned that all English modules should allocate sufficient time to develop speaking skills. While students rated speaking skills to be the second most important skill for students of business (See Table 1), more than half the number of teaching staff (that took part in the completion of the questionnaires) stated that over 50% of students have problems with this skill (See Table 4). This student’s comment helps us to understand why speaking skills are important for business students: *“Speaking is one of the most important skills for business students. All*

*English modules must focus on it.*” Another student expresses concern with this language skill by saying: *“Students at the BUE have problems with speaking skills.”* Along similar lines, this is what one teacher had to say: *“Students have problems with speaking skills. They need to express themselves in Arabic.”*

9.4.2. *Motivation.* An important factor that can have a detrimental affect on the motivation of a student is the Module Specific Components, which are related to the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching method and the learning tasks. 50% of students and 66.6% of teachers mentioned that the English modules are not interesting, useful or beneficial and do not meet the needs of students in the faculty. One student illustrates this by saying: *“Students feel English modules are not interesting as they do not meet students’ needs. Students attend only to pass the module.”* In accordance with this, one teacher stated: *“There is a huge gap between what the faculties teach and what is taught in the English department. Students don’t see relevance in what they are doing.”* Among the motivational factors elicited from the students and teachers were: To make the classes interesting, meaningful and relevant to the degree area by incorporating reading material, speaking and listening tasks as well as writing topics that are appropriate to student and faculty needs. In addition, to introduce a balanced selection of activities, such as games, competitions, videos, news, documentaries, online interactive material, and role models.

9.4.3. *English Placement Test.* Fifty percent of students and 66.7% of teachers raised concern over the English Placement Test, which students sit upon entry to the BUE and places them in one of the English levels according to the score they obtain. The English Placement Test consists of two components: Listening and Grammar. Both students and teachers believe that writing and speaking components should be added to the test to determine the students’ overall language proficiency and to ensure proper placement at the outset. One student expresses her concern on this issue by saying: *“I am not satisfied with the Placement Test. It should also focus*

*on writing and speaking.*” The same concern is also illustrated in this teacher’s comment: *“a more adequate Placement Test is required.” Students are misplaced. There are students in higher levels that should not be there. The levels of students should be distinguished.*”

#### *9.4.4. Develop research skills from the first English module in the Preparatory Year.*

Since students are expected to do research projects in the Preparatory Year in the Faculty of Business, both interviewed students and teachers believe that research skills should be an integral part of the syllabi starting from the first English module in the Preparatory Year, rather than being introduced in the last two English modules only. The following comment highlights the importance of developing research skills from the outset: *“Most things in business depend on research.”* Similarly this teacher states that: *Students should be taught how to develop research skills and know how to write a research paper.*” In addition, cooperative teaching between teaching staff in the Faculty of Business and Department of English will reduce the workload of students, as less writing will be required of them, which in turn should result in a higher standard of written work. One teacher explains how this can be done: *“The English Department can focus on the language while teachers in the Faculty of Business focus on degree area content.”*

### Conclusion

This needs analysis research paper has been an attempt to describe the perception that business students and their faculty have of the English language needs of students. It draws the attention of syllabus writers and language teachers of not only equipping students with the right language skills, but also to support the need for English modules to be more specifically related to the degree area. The findings have shown that there are a number of curriculum components for each skill that should be incorporated in the syllabus for each English module that students would find interesting and relevant. Language teachers can select interesting and subject-related material from a variety of course books, authentic online material, ESP and ESL materials as well as teacher-generated materials. Teachers in the Faculty of Business can also help select

content-based reading material and topics, vocabulary, writing tasks and research projects to ensure relevancy. Relevance to the students' needs and interests is paramount, as this will have an important influence on their motivation.

#### Limitation of the Study

Although this study invited all teaching staff (i.e. lecturers and teaching assistants) to take part in the completion of the questionnaire survey, only one lecturer from each department in the Faculty of Business took part in the semi-structured interviews. The teaching assistants who give the tutorials and assist students by giving individual conferencing are an important source of information and should have been involved in the interview sessions.

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