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might require that these courses should be taught as discipline-specific subjects to serve their relevant needs for EAP skills.

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it is the students who learn, and should, therefore, take responsibility for their learning with their teachers to function as facilitators (Boyadzhieva, 2016; Weimer, 2002). Thus, college students could at least collaborate with other stakeholders to determine what is good for them. Second, the integration of technology in education has had far-reaching consequences for the active role of the students in the classroom. In other words, educational resources have become available to students in ways that have taken learning beyond teachers' control. Third, approaching the students as an important source of information for EAP needs analysis – and thus, well-informed courses – gains legitimacy from the theory of rights analysis, which allows students to evaluate their options and to give priority to what they need for themselves. Also, rights analysis supports the students in taking active responsibility for their learning (Hyland, 2006). Indeed, the qualitative data showed that the students were highly aware of the challenges in present and target situations of language use. This finding is consistent with Almudibry's (2022) finding, who reported that his participants faced some challenges when studying in a college where English is used as a medium of instruction.

Conclusion

This study has been an attempt to explore the EAP needs among Majmaah University students who were originally admitted into the Colleges of Medicine, Applied Medical Sciences and Engineering, but were required to enroll in the

Deanship of the Common First Year for a whole academic year to complete the university's required courses, including general English and EAP courses. Needless to say, the EAP component was perceived to serve the academic purposes of the students. Technically speaking, the program administration assumed that the current syllabus, along with the selected instructional materials, could handle the language challenges in the target situation. Thus, they did not follow the standard procedure of needs analysis to discover, among other things, what the students thought about the present and target situations. The data collection instrument revealed a plethora of EAP needs that might not be covered by the course materials selected by the English program at the Deanship of Common First Year. This fact confirms the legitimacy of approaching the participants as the most important stakeholders in the efforts made to conduct a needs analysis.

What is more, the results showed that there were significant differences in the participants' EAP needs. These differences should persuade the program administration to use different course materials to meet the participants' needs, unlike the present situation that allows for the one-size-fits-all principle; i.e., students of different disciplinary backgrounds study the same course material. It is plausible to point out that evidence from general observation suggests that EAP courses should not be confined to the Deanship of Common First Year. In other words, the participants proceed to advanced levels, they

guistic theory that approaches language as discourse, i.e., a level of linguistic analysis beyond the sentence, which people use for communication through the four skills. All the general and EAP courses offered by the Deanship of Common First Years are a case in point. That is, these courses introduce the English language as sets of discourses that students use to achieve communicative purposes in an academic context.

Third, bilingual instruction is not only restricted to the classroom, but also prevails in practical training sites in colleges and professional contexts. It was generally observed that participants from the Colleges of Medicine and Applied Medical Sciences are required to use English in clinics, particularly in the presence of patients, so that communicative medical content would not be shared with them. The multiple academic roles of English in these colleges require the inclusion of more EAP courses in the syllabus so that students could communicate with peers across the globe, write quality term papers and participate in the national students' conference organized by the Ministry of Higher Education annually. These facts are also responsible for differences in the EAP needs in favor of participants from these colleges in contrast to their counterparts from the College of Engineering.

The results of this study are partially consistent with the results of several studies conducted in the Saudi context. Consistency is described because the other studies focused on the needs of students

doing a single major. For instance, Javid (2011) investigated the need for an EAP syllabus among medicine students at Taif University. The findings of the study revealed that the participants needed reading and speaking more than the other skills. Reading was also reported to be the most needed skill among Saudi undergraduate students in Canada and Saudi Arabia (Alkutbi, 2018; Alsamadani, 2017). Other studies focused on the need for terms among college students. For instance, exploring the need for English among medicine students, Ghobian (2014) showed that the study participants needed medical terms. Similar evidence comes from Fadel and Elyas (2015), who concluded that their study participants needed technical terminology for current academic purposes and future professional purposes.

It might be argued that college students are not qualified to determine their EAP needs, since they lack know-how in what constitutes an EAP syllabus; thus, instead of wasting time, effort and resources on needs analysis, it would always be more convenient to rely on instructors and program administration to decide what is best for the students. Such reasoning receives strong support from the general instructional practice of selecting published or tailor-made materials to teach EAP skills in Saudi tertiary institutions. This argument can be refuted on two grounds.

First, researchers have for over half a century focused on learner autonomy, student-centered teaching and learner-centered learning in recognition of the fact that

section.

Discussion

As mentioned in (1) above, the main purposes of this study were to explore objectively the students' need for English for specific purposes and to persuade Majmaah University authorities that a systematic needs analysis was the only objective procedure to determine the students' EAP needs, and thus to write sustainable EAP courses.

As reported in the previous section, the statistical analysis of the data revealed that there were significant differences in the participants' needs for English for academic purposes in favor of the medical students in the first place, followed by the participants from the College of Medical Sciences, as indicated by their respective mean ranks in the four language skills. In an attempt to interpret the study results, there is a central question to answer:

Why should there be significant differences in the participants' EAP needs despite the fact that all of them, regardless of disciplinary track, were required to successfully complete an English syllabus comprising general English and EAP courses at the Deanship of Common First Year prior to their enrolment in their respective colleges?

In an attempt to answer this question, it should be pointed out that the Colleges of Medicine, Applied Medical Sciences, and Engineering do not prescribe Arabic as the only medium of instruction for all their courses. However, there are at least four reasons that require a working knowledge

of English for the students to function satisfactorily in these colleges. First, the three colleges hired both Arabic-speaking and non-Arabic-speaking faculty, thus creating an educational environment that accommodates bilingual delivery of classes. This situation led the University authorities to establish the Deanship of Common First Year to arm the students with English language skills to facilitate their subsequent academic (bilingual) enculturation in their respective academic programs. Also, owing to the feeling that EAP courses delivered by the Deanship of Common First Year were insufficient to qualify the students for bilingual instruction, the College of Applied Medical Sciences introduced a system of peer instruction, so that the linguistically proficient students could optionally help struggling colleagues. What is more, the College of Medicine requires its new enrollees to achieve at least 6 out of 10 points on an IELTS after completing the English program at the Deanship of Common First Year to qualify for registration as regular medical students. Needless to say, these measures are primarily responsible for the differences in the students' EAP needs, as shown by the statistical analysis in tables 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Second, even when Arabic was the only medium of instruction for some courses, it was generally believed that students should know and use lists of technical terms in English to be able to deal with operation manuals in laboratories. It is unfortunate that this requirement does not match the pedagogical practices that draw on the lin-

Table 3: Need for Listening Skill

Ranks				Test Statistics	
	College	N	Mean Rank		
Listening	Medicine	60	117.22	Chi-Square	40.101
	Engineering	60	61.34	df	2
	Applied Medical Science	60	92.94	Asymp.Sig.	.000
	Total	180			

α ; $0.05 \geq df$ =difference ;Asymp Sig=.Asymptotic significance.

Table 4: Need for Speaking Skill

Ranks				Test Statistics	
	College	N	Mean Rank		
Speaking	Medicine	60	114.62	Chi-Square	34.224
	Engineering	60	63.43	df	2
	Applied Medical Science	60	93.46	Asymp. Sig.	.000
	Total	180			

α ; $0.05 \geq df$ =difference ;Asymp .Sig= .Asymptotic significance.

Table 5: Need for Reading

Ranks				Test Statistics	
	College	N	Mean Rank		
Reading	Medicine	60	113.22	Chi-Square	25.312
	Engineering	60	68.65	df	2
	Applied Medical Science	60	89.63	Asymp. Sig.	.000
	Total	180			

α ; $0.05 \geq df$ =difference ;Asymp Sig=.Asymptotic significance.

Table 6: Need for Writing

Ranks				Test Statistics	
	College	N	Mean Rank		
Writing	Medicine	60	110.40	Chi-Square	22.228
	Engineering	60	69.26	df	2
	Applied Medical Science	60	91.84	Asymp. Sig.	.000
	Total	180			

α ; $0.05 \geq df$ =difference ;Asymp Sig=.Asymptotic significance.

As can be seen in tables 3, 4, 5 and 6 above, the measurement of the participants' responses rejects the null hypothesis that there would be no statistically significant differences in the participants' need for English for academic purposes; thus, confirming the alternative hypotheses that there would be statistically signifi-

cant differences in the need for English for academic purposes among the participants based on their disciplinary track. In other words, test statistics for the four skills in these tables show that the p-value (asymptotic significance) is less than the alpha ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). A detailed interpretation of these findings will be given in the discussion

dents in the college. They were organized into four sections so that each language skill had its statements. For instance, statements such as listening to lectures, conference presentations, and discussions on scientific TV channels and forums could only be subsumed under listening. Likewise, reading subsumed such activities as reading discipline-specific periodicals, reading reference books, reading operation manuals, and understanding the writer's stance. Statements about speaking centered upon contributing to classroom discussions, doing oral exams, contributing to educational programs on radio and TV, giving classroom presentations, etc. Finally, writing statements included writing lab reports, writing exam answers, writing emails, contributing to specialized online forums, and writing assignments. The relevance of the statement to skills defines the validity of the instrument. In other words, the face validity of the instrument was established by seven experts from four Majmaah University campuses.

After careful examination of the questionnaire, the TESOL experts approved most of the statements and recommended the addition/deletion of others. On the other hand, Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate the data reliability. Table 2 summarizes the results.

Table 2: Reliability statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.638	7

The alpha coefficient for the seven items is .639, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

Procedure

An official application letter was submitted to the university for permission to conduct the study among their students. It took about one week to receive their positive feedback. An initial visit was paid to meet all the stakeholders in the three colleges to explain the rationale of the study. An arrangement was made to meet the students in the classrooms to distribute the questionnaire, which was translated into Arabic for a better understanding of its items. The statements turned out to be clear. Most participants returned the questionnaire on the same day, while others promised to return it within days.

Results

Kruskal-Wallis Test (a rank-based non-parametric test) was used to analyze the study data. It was suitable for this purpose because, unlike ANOVA, it is used for comparing two or more independent samples of equal or different sample sizes. More specifically, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted to decide if there were statistically significant differences in the need for English for academic purposes among students enrolled in three Majmaah University colleges. Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 below summarize the results.

course designers and policymakers – it can still provide valid data that might be used effectively to design a course in English for specific/academic purposes.

In addition, Cunningsworth (1983) points out that students are usually taught in classes, which are not always homogeneous. Therefore, the needs of the learners in a class may not be the same. A reply to this criticism could be that individual learner differences have been a widely accepted fact in language acquisition research. The available literature abounds with a myriad of antonyms to describe learners, including “good and bad”, “intelligent and dull”, “motivated and unmotivated”, “anxious and comfortable” and “field independent and field sensitive” (Ellis, 2008, p. 643), to mention but a few. These antonyms attest to the fact that individual differences are natural human characteristics that can enrich EAP needs analysis and subsequent syllabus design.

Method

Participants

The study participants were 180 first-level students. They were enrolled in the Deanship of the Common First Year to study both general and discipline-specific English courses. This Deanship was founded to contribute to achieving the university's vision, and bridging the gap between high schools and higher education. Where English courses are concerned, the students were taught two general English courses and two EAP courses. The latter introduces the students to English for health sciences (Medicine and the medical

sciences) and engineering.

All the courses focus on the four skills. The students should successfully compete in these courses before their enrolment in their respective colleges. Except for the College of Medicine, the other colleges – i.e., the College of Engineering and the College of Medical Sciences – offer courses in English and Arabic. The College of Medicine is an English-only zone. In addition to successful completion of the four English courses at the Deanship of the Common First Year, students are required to pass the IELTS exam to qualify for enrolment in the College. Table (1) presents the study participants as per college.

Table 1: Study participants

College	No of participants
College of Medicine	60
College of Medical Sciences	60
College of Engineering	60

About 100 male students were admitted into these colleges in the academic 2019/2020. It was planned to include all of them in the study, but 40 participants did not return the questionnaire.

Instrument

A five-point Likert-type-scale questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. The five points are: very important, important, important to an extent, less important, and not important. The questionnaire consisted of 37 statements distributed as follows: 8 statements for listening, 10 statements for speaking, 10 statements for reading, and 9 statements for writing. The statements centered upon several academic activities experienced by the stu-

termine which of the necessities they lack. Finally, “wants” define learners’ awareness of their own needs. However, Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 56) maintain that “it is quite possible that the learners’ view may conflict with the perceptions of other interested parties: course designers, sponsors, and teachers.”

Although the types of “needs” reported above are perceived to result from the influence of the different ideological perceptions of the analysts (Hyland, 2006, p.79), different researchers still define “needs” and thus “needs analysis” in terms of the purpose it serves in the academic context. That is, a rigorous needs analysis can ensure that EAP students learn precisely what they need (Serafini et al., 2015; Day & Krazanowski, 2011; Hyland, 2006). Hyland (2006, p. 74) proposes three methods for analyzing learners’ EAP needs: present situation analysis, target situation analysis, and rights analysis. The target situation analysis focuses on the learners’ future roles, and the linguistic skills and knowledge they need to perform competently in their discipline. This type of analysis provides answers to the six needs questions raised by Hutchison and Waters (1987, p. 59):

- Why is the language needed?
- How will the language be used?
- What will the content area be?
- Who will the learner use the language with?
- Where will the language be used?
- When will the language be used? Frequently? Seldom?

Second, the present situation needs analysis concerns the starting point of where the students are, and refers to information about learners’ current proficiencies and ambitions; what they can do, and what they want at the beginning of the course; their skills and perceptions; their familiarity with a specialist subject; what they know of its demands and genres.

Finally, rights analysis involves evaluating the findings of the needs analysis, recognizing the challenges that students face, and integrating the results to create more democratic and participatory involvement by students in decision-making. The notion of rights, therefore, encourages students to assess their options and prioritize what they need for themselves. It supports them in taking active responsibility for their learning and so resonates with the literature on autonomy in language learning.

Despite the central role played by needs analysis in course design, it is believed to suffer from some challenges. For instance, Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 60) assume that there is a tendency among instructors to exaggerate the need for English. That is, the instructors may have an investment in giving the impression that the level of English needed is high and that more funding and resources should be provided to meet such a critical need. By contrast, the students may give a lower indication of the need for English “because they know or would prefer to believe that is not necessary.” However, since the data for needs analysis comes from other stakeholders – such as administration, sponsors,

ESP syllabus. In other, words, the syllabus is selected in violation of the world practice of needs assessment. Therefore, this study is intended to persuade stakeholders at Majmaah University of the significance of needs assessment as the only objective system that can produce a reliable ESP/EAP syllabus that best serves the students' academic needs.

In this connection, the study sets out to answer four research questions that pertain to the students' EAP needs. These questions relate particularly to the four English language skills:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the participants' needs for listening for academic purposes?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the participants' needs for speaking for academic purposes?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the participants' needs for reading for academic purposes?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference in the participants' needs for writing for academic purposes?

Conceptual background

The term "needs" may both be defined negatively, as a concept fraught with considerable controversy, and positively as an umbrella term. The negative definition emanates from the multiplicity of terms that have to date been introduced to investigate the needs of EAP stakeholders, to the extent that it is conceived to be conceptually ambiguous (West, 1994). The relevant literature abounds in terms such as learner needs, learning needs, target needs, task-

based needs, perceived needs, felt needs, objective needs, subjective needs, product-oriented needs, and process-oriented needs, which are held to represent different philosophies and educational values (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998). By contrast, these very terms are maintained to be nothing more than different realizations of the same umbrella term that embodies the EAP needs of different stakeholders: administration, students, subject-specific faculty, and EAP faculty. Such an understanding of the term "needs" resolves the debate arising from its multiple perspectives. However, a closer examination would show that it does not accommodate stakeholders other than the learner. In other words, Hyland (2006, p. 73) maintains the term "needs" incorporates "learners' goals and backgrounds, their language proficiencies, their reasons for taking the course, their teaching and learning preferences, and the situation they will need to communicate". As such, it involves what a learner knows, does not know, or wants to know. This explanation emanates from the classical view of "needs" as proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). They maintained that, as an umbrella term, "needs" subsumes three distinctions: necessities, lacks, and wants. These will be discussed in turn below.

To begin with, "necessities" are need types determined by the demands of the target situation. In other words, it is what the learners have to know to be able to function properly in the target situation. On the other hand, "lacks" inform us about what learners know already, in order to de-

Introduction

English is not just the world's lingua franca; it is also widely acknowledged as the language of science, technology, and international business. Technically speaking, the language variety needed for this kind of training is known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The relevant literature argues that the necessity for ESP emanates from foreign learners' need to study English in order to overcome academic problems caused by the use of English as a medium of instruction (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Strevens, 1988; Dudley-Evan et al., 1998). It also suggests that the ESP syllabus not only equips students with the language skills needed for academic success, but also socializes them into the discourse of the relevant academic community, i.e. they will be introduced to the academic discourse used by doctors, engineers and programmers so that they become successful future professionals (Duff, 2007, p. 3).

Ezza and Al-Jarallah (2015) conducted an exploratory study on the significance of English for academic purposes (EAP) from the perspective of several stakeholders in medical studies at Majmaah University (MU), i.e. academic administration, subject-specific faculty, EAP faculty, and students. Stakeholders were interviewed, the EAP classes were observed, and the EAP syllabus and materials were examined. It was concluded that EAP was a matter of heightened significance, as evidenced by the attempts made to improve literacy at advanced academic levels. For instance, because many courses were taught through

the medium of English, the College of Applied Medical Studies has introduced a peer-teaching program to encourage students with advanced EAP skills to teach their underachieving counterparts on a voluntarily basis. In addition, the College of Medicine stipulated that its entrants should pass IELTS to be enrolled as second-year medicine students even if they had passed the EAP syllabus-based exams taken at the stage of Preparatory Year Deanship.

This study is an attempt to assess the need for English among Majmaah University students doing medicine, medical sciences, and engineering. Most of the courses attended by these students were taught through the medium of English. Even when some courses are taught bilingually (i.e., in Arabic and English), the students are expected to consult references written in English. The motivation for the study is twofold. First, the fact that there are no ESP units in the Saudi tertiary institutions is indicative of a lack of recognition of the vital role of ESP as a means of academic success and an enculturation strategy to integrate graduates of hard and applied sciences into the relevant professional communities. Unfortunately, this negligence of ESP has a negative bearing on research to inform decision makers of its importance. The second motivation for this study is a corollary of the first one: the lack of recognition of ESP in Saudi tertiary institutions has resulted in a simplistic approach to the way it is taught, in that the relevant decisions are determined by the teachers' impression of what constitutes an

The Need for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) among Saudi University Students

الحاجة إلى اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الأكاديمية بين الطلاب السعوديين في المرحلة الجامعية

Dr. Khaled Almudibry
Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics
Majmaah University, KSA
College of Sciences and Humanities Sciences at Alghat
k.almudibry@mu.edu.sa

د. خالد المضييري
أستاذ اللغويات التطبيقية المشارك بكلية العلوم والدراسات الإنسانية
في الغاط - جامعة المجمعة - المملكة العربية السعودية
البريد الإلكتروني: k.almudibry@mu.edu.sa

<https://doi.org/10.56760/DEHP1052>

Abstract

This research explores the need for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) among Majmaah University students admitted into the Colleges of Medicine, Applied Medical Sciences, and Engineering. The purpose of this study was to persuade Majmaah University stakeholders that a needs analysis was the only objective method to inform the course design process. Data were collected from 180 participants using a questionnaire. The participants came from the Colleges of Medicine, Applied Medical Sciences, and Engineering. Data analysis revealed that there were significant differences in the students' EAP skills. An interpretation of the results showed that these differences were attributable to the role of EAP in the academic activities in the three colleges. Based on the study findings, it was recommended that EAP courses should not be confined to the Deanship of Common First year. That is, colleges should consider adding more advanced courses to serve the students' academic purposes at advanced levels. It was also recommended that a series of needs analyses should be conducted to update stakeholders' perceptions of what constitutes a relevant EAP syllabus at advanced levels.

Keywords:

EAP, EAP skills, EAP syllabus, ESP, needs assessment, syllabus design.

ملخص البحث

يتناول هذا البحث الحاجة إلى اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الأكاديمية بين طلاب جامعة المجمعة والمقبولين في كليات الطب والعلوم الطبية التطبيقية والهندسة. حيث هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى إقناع المستفيدين في جامعة المجمعة بأن دراسة تحليل الاحتياج هي الطريقة الموضوعية الوحيدة لتوجيه عملية تصميم المنهج. ولتحقيق ذلك تم استخدام استبان لجمع البيانات من ١٨٠ طالباً للإجابة على تساؤلات الدراسة. وكان الطلاب المشاركون في هذه الدراسة من كليات الطب والعلوم الطبية التطبيقية والهندسة. وقد أظهرت نتائج تحليل البيانات عن وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في مهارات مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الأكاديمية للطلاب. وأكد تفسير النتائج بأن هذه الاختلافات تعزى إلى دور اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الأكاديمية في الأنشطة الأكاديمية في الكليات الثلاث. وبناءً على نتائج الدراسة، تمت التوصية بعدم حصر مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الأكاديمية في عمادة السنة الأولى المشتركة، بل يجب على الكليات بحث إضافة المزيد من دورات اللغة الإنجليزية المتقدمة للأغراض الأكاديمية للطلاب في المستويات المتقدمة. كما تمت التوصية بإجراء سلسلة من دراسات تحليل الاحتياجات لتحديث انطباعات المستفيدين تجاه ما يشكل منهج اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الأكاديمية المرتبط في المستويات المتقدمة.