



Students and Teachers' Perception of the Adequacy of the Preparatory Year English
Language Course for Medical Specialisations

تصور الطلاب والمدرسين لمدى كفاية برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية التحضيرية للتخصصات الطبية

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Abstract

This paper reports on an evaluative study, which aimed at assessing the adequacy of the English language programme taught to medical students at the PYP, Jazan University in KSA. The study attempts to explore the extent to which the course was adequate in preparing the students for academic studies based on their needs. The study adopted a mixed method research design whereby a quantitative survey method was complimented by qualitative interviews in obtaining all the data from the study participants. About 227 male and female students from different medical departments within JU participated in the study. Moreover, a pre/post-test was used in the present study to find out the extent to which the participants' proficiency in English significantly changes from before the course to after the course. The test included written and oral questions designed to measure the course competencies that were stated by the ELC. As for data analysis, the data gathered by means of a questionnaire were analysed using SPSS 17.0 to produce descriptive statistics. The interview questions were analysed according to the theme and the categories. The overall results revealed divergent views as to the adequacy of the PYEL course. That is the students seemed to have positive attitudes towards the course whereas their teachers tended to be less positive about it. With all these in mind, it could be argued that the course under investigation might be in need of some modifications. Accordingly, some recommendations were made to increase the course efficacy.

Keywords: Curriculum Evaluation, English for Medical Students, Needs Analysis, Preparatory Year Programme

المستخلص:

تقدم هذه الورقة ملخص دراسة تقييمية ، تهدف إلى تقييم مدى كفاية برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية الذي يتم تدريسه لطلاب التخصصات الطبية ضمن برنامج السنة التحضيرية بجامعة جازان في المملكة العربية السعودية. تسعى الدراسة لفهم مدى ملائمة البرنامج لإعداد الطلاب للدراسات الأكاديمية بناءً على احتياجاتهم. وقد اعتمدت الدراسة على أسلوب البحث المختلط حيث تم إجراء المسح الكمي والنوعي للحصول على جميع البيانات من المشاركين في الدراسة. وقد شارك في الدراسة حوالي 227 طالب وطالبة من مختلف الأقسام الطبية داخل الجامعة. علاوة على ذلك ، تم عمل اختبار قبل / بعد البرنامج في هذه الدراسة لمعرفة مدى تغير مستوى كفاءة اللغة عند الدارسين قبل الدورة إلى ما بعد الدورة. وجدير بالذكر ان الاختبار تضمن أسئلة كتابية وشفوية مصممة لقياس كفاءات البرنامج. أما فيما يخص تحليل البيانات ، فقد تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها عن طريق الاستبانة باستخدام برنامج الحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS) لإنتاج إحصاءات وصفية. كما تم تصنيف و تحليل أسئلة المقابلة وفقاً للموضوعات والفئات. كشفت النتائج الإجمالية للدراسة عن وجهات نظر متباينة فيما يتعلق بكفاية برنامج اللغة الانجليزية للتخصصات الطبية، حيث يبدو أن



الطلاب لديهم مواقف إيجابية تجاه البرنامج في حين أن آراء مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية تميل إلى أن تكون أقل إيجابية حول البرنامج. مع وضع كل هذه الأمور في الاعتبار ، يمكننا القول بأن برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية المقدم لطلاب التخصصات الطبية قد يحتاج إلى بعض التعديلات. وفقا لذلك ، تم تقديم بعض التوصيات لزيادة فعالية البرنامج. الكلمات الدالة: تقييم المناهج ، اللغة الإنجليزية لطلاب الطب، تحليل الاحتياجات ، اللغة الإنجليزية التحضيرية

Introduction

Although there is no statistical evidence, there is still worldwide recognition of arising trend towards English-medium instruction in higher education¹ (Coleman, 2006). It is believed that the number of tertiary-level students studying their subject courses through the medium of English as a second/foreign language continues to increase (Coleman, 2006, Evans & Green, 2007). It could be said that the adoption of English as medium of instruction in higher education has become an issue of universal interest and there is a considerable concern over it in educational research nowadays. According to Kourilova; (1979: 431) English Language is now much in demand for those who plan to join the medical field. However, using English in medical fields is not limited to countries where it is spoken as a native language; it is also used in regions where English is used as a second or a foreign language. In other words, English is considered the lingua franca between health care providers in non-English-speaking countries.

To that end, the ministry of higher education in Saudi Arabia recognises the importance of internationalisation and its potential impact on modernisation on the quality of the students learning experience. Hence, having a good English Language curriculum is one of the major steps for achieving high quality language instruction. Consequently, English became the main medium of instruction in many Saudi Universities.

The Preparatory Year English Language (PYEL)

The Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) is a global system; and in many countries, it is considered as one of the best practices in higher education. It is however, a relatively new experience in Saudi universities (ALageeli, 2014).

In Saudi Arabia, the PYP has been initiated by the ministry of higher education as an academic programme offered to freshmen. The aim of the programme is to guarantee that the university new entrants be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge needed for their academic studies and professional life in the future. (<http://www.mohe.gov.sa>).

Additionally, PYP is expected to enable students to have a proficient knowledge of English so that they can follow their major courses in their departments effectively. Owing to its vital role, it is essential that the English curriculum used in PYP, be evaluated to perceive its strengths and weaknesses.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

According to Robinson, (1991) and Widdowson, (1983), English for specific purposes (ESP) is specially designed for non-native English speakers who need specific knowledge of English in their field of study or profession. In a general sense, ESP focuses mainly on applications of English in specific fields.



Thus the learners' language expectations and needs drive the course or curriculum design process (Hutchison & Waters, 1987). The basic principle of ESP is that "all language teaching should be tailored to the specific learning and language needs of identified groups of students - and it should also be sensitive to the sociocultural contexts in which these students will be using English" (Johns & Price-Machado, 2001, p.43). Robinson (1991) pointed out that ESP is a means for achieving the necessary communicative competence. Therefore, it could be argued that ESP is goal-oriented and is based on needs analysis investigation.

Broadly speaking, there are two main types of ESP, namely: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). That is to say, ESP learners either are engaged in studying a particular subject in English, or are doing a particular profession for which they need English, or both (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Robinson, 1991; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998; Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001).

2.2 English for Medical Purposes (EMP)

English for Medical purposes (EMP) historically appeared in 1960 as a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (McDonough, 1988; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998). According to Maher (1986: 112), English for medical purposes is 'the teaching of English for doctors, nurses, and other personnel involved in the medical professions.

Although there are many intersections between the various medical fields, language needs for each group can still easily be described. For example, Adams-Smith (1980) investigated the language needs of paramedical students in Kuwait

University, and arrived to a conclusion that they had very different needs from those of medical students.

Moreover, the needs of learners taking EMP in a non-English-speaking country might be different from those studying it in an English-speaking country. Munby (1978: 2), in this regard, asserts that 'there should be important differences in the English course for a non-native requiring English in order to study medicine in his own country as opposed to England'.

In Saudi tertiary milieu, freshman students are expected to attend the preparatory year programme (PYP) during which they take intensive English courses in addition to pre-medical requirements and basic sciences such as Biology, Physics, and Chemistry. On completion of the PYP, students have to enrol in colleges of Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, or Medical Applied Sciences based on their GPA in the preparatory year.

However, the related studies conducted in Saudi contexts revealed that the English language curriculum in most medical departments were totally problem-based with only limited sessions delivered as interactive lectures (AlKabbaa et al., 2012). That is, the syllabi mainly followed the traditional methods of language teaching. In other words, they were teacher-centred, rather than being discipline-based. That is to say, teaching methods comprised lectures and tutorials where the teacher played the main role in the whole learning process. (Al-Hazimi et al., 2004)

There is a consensus among academicians that an EFL teacher must have a content knowledge of the conceptual framework of the subject area of his students. Although the teacher might show interest in that area, yet he needs not to be professional in that context

area. Nevertheless, this is also true that although he is not a subject specialist but to certain extent if he is familiar with that area of specialisation, he will certainly be more creative.

In the light of this background, this study attempts to weigh the adequacy of the existing preparatory English language programme based on the needs of the medical students attending the PYP, at JU.

3. Method and Materials

3.1 Research Questions

Considering the main purpose of the study, the following questions have been formulated as follows:

- To what extent does, the English language course offered at the PYP, Jazan University

adequately prepare the medical students for academic study.

- What are the students and their teachers' perceptions of the importance of the main language skills for academic study?

3.2 Hypotheses

The study assumes that the preparatory English language course has no significant impact on the students' level of proficiency in English language. Moreover, the Students and their teachers view the main language skills as equally important for academic study.

3.3 Participants of the Study

Two hundred-twenty seven students responded to the questionnaire; 195 students from male campus representing 85.9 % of the total respondents and 32 students from female campus representing 14.1% of the sample population (figure 1).

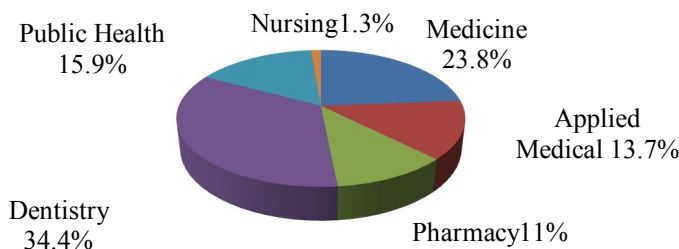


Figure1: Distribution of Participants by Area of Specialisations

As for the interview, thirty-Seven male teachers from the ELC at Jazan University with different qualifications participated in the study through structured interview.

Twenty-four teachers (64.9%) were master holders and 13 (35.1%) with Ph.D. degree (figure 2).

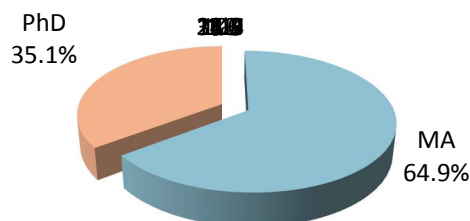


Figure 2: Distribution of Language Instructors by Qualifications



On the other hand, it was vitally important for the present study to understand subject specialists' opinions of the students' level of proficiency in English and to what extent they were able or unable to understand their major courses in English. For this purpose, 10 male professors from different medical departments namely; medical biology, Health Education, Epidemiology, biophysics, medicine, dentistry and pharmacy were invited to participate in the study. It is worth noting that, the subject-specialist participants were of different nationalities such as Bangladeshi, British, Indian, Pakistani, Sudanese, and Turkish.

3.4 Procedures for Data Collection

As mentioned earlier, data for the current study was collected by means of a self-reported questionnaire as a main tool for data collection, as well as two structured interviews: one with Language instructors and the other with subject area specialists. Documents analysis was also carried out to support the results obtained from the questionnaire and the interview.

As for the questionnaire, it was administered to a sample of four hundred freshman students from different medical departments. However, only two hundred-twenty seven responded and returned their feedback. The questionnaire comprised 45 items, the majority of which were Likert-like items based on a scale from "Strongly Agree" through "Strongly Disagree".

After the questionnaire was developed and designed, it was published online using google Form. The survey link was shared with participants through e-mail and other social media like WhatsApp inviting them to take part in the survey. It is worth mentioning that some hard copy forms were

distributed at the pilot stage of the questionnaire.

In order to design the interview for the current study, an expert in statistics field and two professors from English language department were consulted about the appropriateness of its contents. Prior to the administration of the interviews, three language instructors were invited to answer the interview questions to find out whether the questions were logical and clear. The interview was administered to a sample of fifty language instructors from ELC and ten subject specialists who currently work in different medical departments of Jazan University.

It was very useful for the present study to obtain some of the vital data from the range of documents available as these documents 'may sometimes speak louder than participating in an interview question, or convey a lot about something we were not in a position to observe' (Robson, 1993: 187). Document analysis was employed in the present study as a supplementary data collection method. It included the PYEL course description and curriculum, statements of aims, objectives and syllabus, course textbooks, tests, final grades.

3.4 Analysing the Data

The data gathered by means of the questionnaire were compiled and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences [SPSS] 16.0 software was used to analyse the data. The students' responses in the questionnaire were tested for abnormalities and missing data. Incomplete information from participants was excluded from the analysis. Subsequently, the data were analysed through both descriptive and inferential statistics.

As for the interview analysis, all responses of the interviewees were qualitatively analysed by sorting the points that came out from the statements for each question. Besides, thematic analysis and grouping of the answers from different interviewees to similar questions were employed for the interviews analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

The Questionnaire Results

To start with, the students' questionnaire is divided into five parts:

Part I: Background Characteristics of the Study Participants

The first part of the student's questionnaire provides background characteristics of the study participants. This includes the participants' academic disciplines and gender:

Disciplinary Fields of Participants

The student subjects in the current study came from the university's six major medical disciplines—Medicine, Applied Medical Sciences, Pharmacy, Dentistry, Public Health, and Nursing. However, the majority of the responses came from the college of Dentistry 34.4% (Figure 1). It is also clear that a few students (only 3 students) from college of nursing participated in the study. One possible interpretation is that the student enrolment in this particular discipline was confined to female students only.

Gender

Exactly 227 students responded to the questionnaire, 195 students from male campus representing 85.9 % of the total respondents, and 32 students from female campus representing 14.1% of the total number of the student subjects.

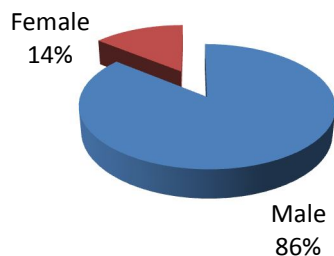


Figure3: Distribution of Participants by Gender

Part II: Students 'Attitude towards Language Learning

Q.3.the students were asked to express whether they were interested in language learning or not, a high proportion of the students 97.2% responded positively and showed interest in language learning. Only a very few students about 2.8% said they were uninterested in learning English language.

Based on this result, it could be observed that the subject students of the present study showed a very positive attitude to learning English and most of them (97.2%) did feel that being good at English is an important element for academic success and in their future careers.

The students were also asked about the reason why they study English to identify their real language needs.

It was imperative to find out how they were aware of the importance of studying English in their life. According to their feedback, 78.1 per cent of the total responses (157 male students 81.8% and 18 female; 56.2 %) reported that they were learning English because it would help them in their career in the medical field, and 68.3 per cent of the respondents needed to study English because it is a degree requirement.

Q.4 When the students were asked to express a preference as to the language they want to use in studying their major courses (Question 5), among the total respondents, 68.2 per cent of them preferred to follow their major courses through English and Arabic medium of

Table 1: Students' Perception of the Importance of Language Skills for Academic Purposes

Skills	Very important N%	Important N%	So So N%	Less Important N%	Very important N%
Reading	154 (67.8)	54 (23.8)	12(5.3)	7(3.1)	154 (67.8)
Listening	127 (55.9)	61 (26.9)	25(11.0)	13 (5.7)	127 (55.9)
Writing	137(60.4)	58 (25.6)	23(10.1)	5 (2.2)	137(60.4)
Speaking	171(75.3)	31 (13.7)	12 (5.3)	11 (4.8)	171(75.3)
Vocabulary	136 (59.9)	51 (22.5)	27 (11.9)	7 (3.1)	136 (59.9)
Grammar	118 (52.0)	70 (30.8)	29 (12.8)	8 (3.5)	118 (52.0)
Med. Terminology	146 (64.3)	40 (17.6)	26 (11.5)	10 (4.4)	146 (64.3)

In general, this table (1) shows that the majority of the students in this study believed that all four skills of English and the other language aspects (vocabulary, grammar, and medical terminology) to be 'important' for their academic studies with mode very important or important (P. Value less than 0.05= 0.000) for almost all skills.

This result is in line with Jordan's (1997: 50) who believes that reading academic texts is an essential requirement for students in EFL contexts.

instruction .Only 19.4 per cent wanted to use English as a language of teaching for their academic study, and a small number of students (12.3 %) said they want to study their major courses through Arabic medium. This result infers that although the students were aware of the importance of English language for their academic studies, their native language interference was still affecting their foreign language learning.

Part III: Learners' Language Needs for Academic Studies.

Q.5the aim of this particular question was to explore the extent to which the students realised the importance of the four main English language skills for academic studies.

Flowerdew and Peacock (2001b: 185) confirm that 'reading is probably the skill needed by the greatest number of EAP students throughout the world'. It could be argued that the students might have also felt that being good at reading skills would help them to consult reference books and understand lecturer notes given by their professors.

Q.6 this question was set to understand the students' main reason for learning English language.

Domains	Male		Female		Total	P. Value	
	Yes F %	No F %	Yes F %	No F %		Yes F %	No F %
I need it for degree requirement.	135(69.2)	60(30.8)	22(68.8)	10(31.2)	I need it for degree requirement.	135(69.2)	60(30.8)
I need it for my career in medical field.	157(81.8)	35(18.2)	18(56.2)	14(43.8)	I need it for my career in medical field.	157(81.8)	35(18.2)
It is an international language.	138(72.3)	53(27.7)	17(53.1)	15(46.9)	It is an international language.	138(72.3)	53(27.7)
I need it when I travel abroad.	109(57.1)	82(42.9)	15(48.4)	16(51.6)	I need it when I travel abroad.	109(57.1)	82(42.9)
I need it for everyday communication.	86(44.8)	106(55.2)	12(38.7)	19(61.3)	I need it for everyday communication.	86(44.8)	106(55.2)
It is the language of science technology.	101(52.6)	91(47.4)	9(28.1)	23(71.9)	It is the language of science technology.	101(52.6)	91(47.4)

From the above table (2), it is clear that “studying English for career in medical field” received the highest rating (78.1%), followed by “for degree requirement” (69.2%) with P. value of 0.976 and “because it is an international language” (68.3%) and P. value of 0.030 respectively.

Comparatively speaking, (81.8%) of male students said they need English for future career in medical field, while (56.2%) out of the total female (14.1%) need it for future career. On the other hand, female gave high rating to “degree requirements” more than their male counterparts did.

That means male students considered learning the language for their future career rather than for academic studies, while “study English for degree requirement” is a high priority for female students.

This result suggests that a majority of the students (81.8%) wanted to learn English for academic studies and future profession in the medical field. This result is statistically significant (P. value 0.001). The results also indicate that the students recognised the importance of English to their academic success and for their medical career.

Part IV: Level of Proficiency in English Language

Q.7 the students were asked to rate their proficiency in English before taking the PYEL course. Their ratings were on four scale values: “very good,” “good,” “satisfactory,” and “poor.”

Out of the total respondents, (32.3%) believed that they were good at English

before taking the PYEL course. While (28.6%) said that their level of proficiency was satisfactory, and (27.7%) rated their proficiency level as poor. A small proportion of the respondents (11%) tend to be more confident in their language knowledge, that is, they rated their level of proficiency in English as very good.

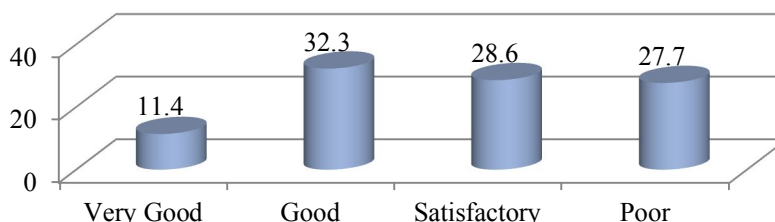


Figure5: Students’ Overall Level of Proficiency in English before taking the PYEL Course. These results revealed a big difference in students’ level of proficiency in English. Such results may pose a challenge to ELC to narrow the gap between these different levels.

Q.8 the students were asked to evaluate their level of proficiency in the main language skills. The responses illustrated in table (2) show considerable differences

in students’ level of proficiency in the four skills of language. It is clear that the highest rating recorded was only (42.7%) which is considered a quite small number. These students considered themselves as “very good” at reading skill and another quite similar number (41.4%) of students rated themselves as “very good” at vocabulary.

Table3: Students Current Level of Proficiency in Main Language Skills

Skills	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Reading	97 (42.7)	72 (31.7)	45 (19.8)	10 (4.4)
Listening	67 (29.5)	80 (35.2)	54 (23.8)	24 (10.6)
Writing	80 (35.2)	70 (30.8)	57 (25.1)	17 (7.5)
Speaking	48 (21.1)	84 (37.0)	64 (28.2)	25 (11.0)
Vocabulary	64 (28.2)	86 (37.9)	58 (25.6)	16 (7.0)
Grammar	94 (41.4)	74 (32.6)	43 (18.9)	12 (5.3)
Medical terminology	37 (16.3)	53 (23.3)	6 (27.3)	67 (29.5)

From this result, it could be said that third and more than a third (37.9% vocabulary, 37% speaking skills, 35.2 listening skills,

32.6% grammar, 31.7% reading, and 30.8 writing) of students tend to be confident “good” in their language skills.

Q.9 the students were asked to appraise their overall level of proficiency in English after they completed the PYEL course. It is worth noting that the rating scales used in this question were similar to the ones applied to

assess their proficiency before taking the course (“very good,” “good”, “satisfactory”, and “poor”). Figure 6 below summarises the students’ responses to this question

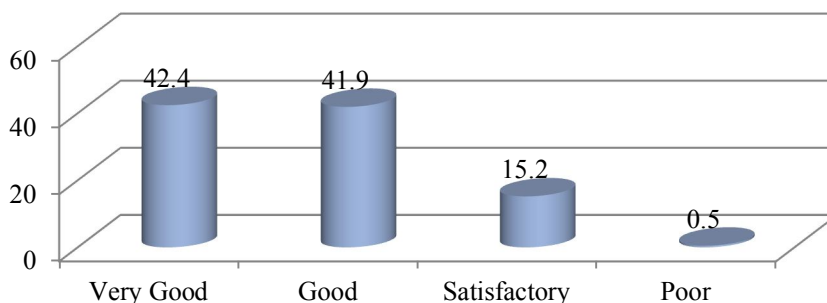


Figure 6: Overall Level of Proficiency in English after taking the PYEL Course

Based on Figure (6), it is clear that more than a quarter of students 89 (42.4%) and (41.9) thought that their level of proficiency in English was very good after finishing the PYEL course. More than a third considered their level after completing the course as “satisfactory,” and only one student (0.5%) said that his level was still “poor.”

Comparatively speaking, the students’ responses to this particular question revealed a significant improvement in level of proficiency after taking the PYEL course (Figure 7). For example, the number of students who rated their

proficiency in English as “very good” before taking the course has substantially increased from (11.4%) to (42.4%) after completing the course. As for those who considered their level of proficiency as “satisfactory” before the course (28.6%), this percentage has notably decreased to (15.2%).

The most important observation to be made about these results is that the number of students who felt that they were not proficient (poor) before taking the course has significantly decreased from (27.7%) to only one student (0.5%) after finishing the course.

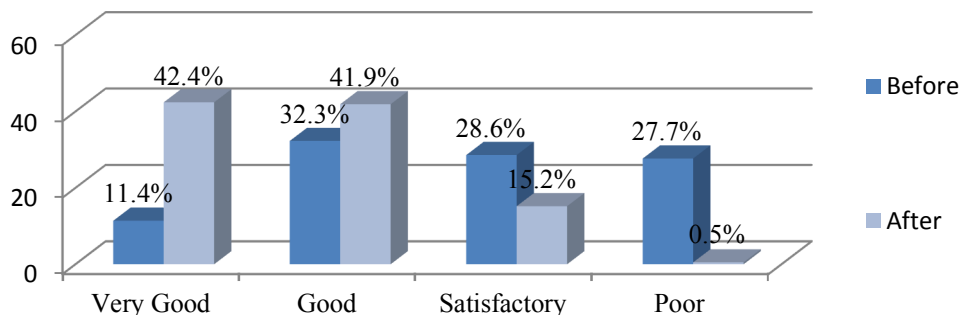


Figure7: Students’ Level of Proficiency before and after taking the PYEL Course

Figure (7) clearly show a considerable improvement in students' level of proficiency after taking the PYEL course. According to these results, the PYEL course is, to some extent, effective and the students are making much progress with their English. Moreover, the results infer that English was not only very important for students' academic success but also indeed indispensable part of it. This finding is consistent with the observation made by Mauranen et al. (2010: 184) that recent studies have shown that English language proficiency plays a major role in academic success.

Part V: The PYEL Course Evaluation

Q.10 The purpose behind this question was to understand the students' perception of the different constituent parts of the

PYEL course. The strategy behind this step is to find deficiencies with the course, if any, and to come up with effective solutions, as well as to highlight its strengths.

To that end, this question is divided into three sub questions each covers a specific area of the course: approach focus, appropriateness, and relevancy, content adequateness, teaching, and learning materials, methodologies, motivation, and assessment procedures.

i. The Course Approach Focus

Responses to this question show that a small number of students 52 (22.9%) strongly believed that General English is required at this level, and 93 (41%) of the students also agreed that it should be GE rather than EMP.

Table 4: PYEL Course Focus

NO	Statements	Strongly disagree F %	Disagree F %	Not decided F %	Agree F %	Strongly Agree F %	Mean & SD	Mode
A	The PYEL course should mainly focus on English for Medical purposes.	18 (7.9)	38 (16.7)	4 (1.8)	74 (32.6)	93 (41)	3.82 1.34	SA
B	The PYEL course should mainly focus on General English.	16 (7)	60 (26.4)	6 (2.6)	93 (41)	52 (22.9)	3.46 1.29	A

The above table (4) suggests that there was still perceived to be many students who needed to improve their GE proficiency, which was thus seen as being too low, although the majority of them preferred to study English for medical

purposes rather than for general purposes (M=3.82, SD=1.34). It was observed that many students failed to construct a correct grammatical sentence when answering the open-ended question in the questionnaire.

i. The Appropriateness of the Course

When the students were asked to express how far the course met their general language needs to function satisfactorily in their academic study, their responses were recorded as follows: more than a quarter of the students 100 (44.1%)

agreed that the course met their language needs to understand their major courses. A small proportion of the students 23 (10.1%) thought that the course was unsuccessful to address their linguistic needs.

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not decided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean & SD	Mode
The content of the course was appropriate to address my academic needs.	29 (12.8)	57 (25.1)	9 (4.0)	98 (43.2)	34 (15)	3.22 1.32	A
The PYEL course has met my academic language needs.	23 (10.1)	47 (20.7)	8 (3.5)	100 (44.1)	49 (21.6)	3.46 1.31	A
The PYEL course was relevant to my field of study.	22 (9.7)	54 (23.8)	7 (3.1)	108(47.6)	36 (15.9)	3.36 1.27	A

Although this result shows a degree of students satisfaction with the textbooks used in the course instruction, a considerable number of students who still believe that these textbooks could not help them to reach the desired level of proficiency. As mentioned earlier in chapter one (introduction) in the current study, these textbooks were not designed or selected based on needs analysis process, and they were commercially available in the market for everyone to use. The result also infers that although the majority of the students tended to have positive attitudes towards the course (M=3.46, SD= 1.31), it appears that still a considerable number of students 47 (20.7%) felt dissatisfied with the course. The finding may suggest some deficiencies in some aspects of the course that need to be addressed and improved.

4.2 The Interviews Results

Interviews were used in the present study as a complementary instrument to examine

some related aspects and topics that could not be explored by means of the questionnaire survey. They were also employed to verify and confirm data collected by other research methods (students' questionnaire and the test).

Responses from the interview revealed that subject area specialists recognised the importance of English language for students' academic studies. They also strongly believed that English plays a major role in the quality of medical education.

Nevertheless, responses revealed that they were unsatisfied with the level of students in English. Moreover, they mentioned that they encountered many problems when teaching the content subjects, for example, they found it very difficult to communicate with students in English. They sometimes had to translate what they say into Arabic to make them understand.

On the other hand, as reported earlier several students complained that the reason why they were unable to develop good comprehension of their English lectures was that most of their professors were not English native speakers and some of them did not speak English well. This point stands as a cautionary reminder to ELC administration that a careful selection of qualified teachers is required. Moreover, the ELC should provide their faculty members with better training and support. Apart from various

teaching strategies, special training programmes in oral English presentation skills should also be offered.

4.3 The Test Result

A paired t-test was run on a sample of 30 students from different medical specialisations enrolled for the intensive English course at the PYD, Jazan University to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the language proficiency before and after taking the course.

Table 6: Pre/ post Test Paired Sample Statistics Box

Test	N	Mean	SD	P. value
pre	30	27.9	7.15	0.001
post	30	36.6	2.15	

Table 6 shows that the students' scores in the test before and after taking the PYEL course. In the first stage, the mean was 27.9 for the sample group of students, for the same group it increased to 36.6 with a percentage increase of 31.2% between the two tests. This increase is statistically significant ($P < 0.001$). This result is consistent with the questionnaire results in which the responses were highly significant as to the level of proficiency in English language after taking the PYEL course.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to understand the students and the teachers' perceptions of the adequacy of the PYEL course for medical specialisations. The overall results of the quantitative and the qualitative survey indicated that the PYEL course was to some extent effective and helpful in improving students' language ability. Moreover, the interview results suggested that the medical students

needed an English language course that could help them to understand specialised courses in their fields of specialisations rather than to develop the basic skills of language. Additionally, the pre/post-test showed a significant change in the level of proficiency in English after taking the PYEL course.

Although the majority of the participants in this study believed that the course adequately prepared the students for academic studies; however, a considerable number of the EFL teachers thought that the course is to some extent inadequate to prepare the students for academic study. In this regard, it could be argued that a foreign language course can hardly be implemented without some deficiencies.

On the other hand, the participants in this study, specifically the student subjects, had positive attitudes toward the existing course, yet there is a need to improve the course in the light of skills competencies needed for medical students.



Accordingly, the ELC administrators should place greater emphasis on defining objectives for the total programme to serve as guidelines for designing the curriculum as well as the skills and knowledge needed for academic studies.

According to the students and the teachers' responses, the course has some limitations, which may prevent it from achieving its goals. These can be summarised in what follows:

1. The PYEL course presents inauthentic language as the texts and other aspects of content are specially written to incorporate teaching points which are often not representative of real language needed by students,
2. The course presents an equal coverage of the four language skills and grammar rules that may not actually be needed for academic studies.
3. The course books used in instruction do not reflect the actual needs of the students as they are commercially published and written for global markets, hence they may require adaptation.

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