

Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Needs in University Foundation Program

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Abstract: Carrying out a needs analysis (NA) is paramount for the implementation of any new curriculum where many stakeholders, such as students and teachers are called upon to be involved to probe their perceptions of such an enterprise. This study investigated teachers' perceptions of NA in a Foundation English program in a Saudi context. Data of the study were collected using an online questionnaire administered to 85 teachers in men's and women's campuses. Results of the study indicated that teachers had conflicting views of NA, the curriculum and its implementation. For instance, teachers had different input on the importance of language skills their learners needed, priority of study topics, research and critical thinking skills. Teachers claimed that the course as it currently stood did not prepare their students to face the challenges of future careers, while others held a different opinion. Recommendations were made for teachers, in this very context and other similar-related contexts, to consider the need to design and adopt a new curriculum developed by teachers which should address the students' evolving needs and wants.

Key words: curriculum, language skills, thinking skills, uses and usefulness of English, CNP

1. Theoretical Background

With the widespread interest in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), NA has been ushered as a major instrument to document, analyse and respond to learners' needs through language syllabi, instructions, and teaching methods (Rashidi & Kehtarfard, 2014). In parallel with the ever-growing interest in learners' needs in various learning contexts, NA is not confined to Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) contexts only. Rather, educational programs rest on NA studies as integral resources to design materials that exemplify as well as answer learners' needs and learning goals (Litz, 2001). Accordingly, any teaching materials are adjusted toward accommodating learners' propensities in their disparate learning contexts (Stoller, Horn, Grabe & Robinson, 2006).

Studies focusing on NA have followed various approaches to address stakeholders' needs, notably learners. Instantly, the focal study that could shed light on the incorporation of learners' communicative needs in teaching programs accentuates the skill-based approach in the process of curriculum design (Munby, 1978). Yet, among its limitations are the complexity and impracticality of the approach to be implemented in a learning context, particularly as it transforms learners' needs into sub-skills and sub-functions to be translated in the curriculum (Ha, 2005; Rashidi & Kehtarfard, 2014). Progressively other approaches to NA have been elaborated toward augmenting the practicality and addressing the gaps of the former approach. The systemic approach, the

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learner-centred approach and the task-based approach represent alternative perspectives to NA.

Teachers are supposed to play a key role in carrying out NA to consider the needs of the learners in such a context. And what is more important and challenging for these teachers is the necessity and obligation to be engaged in NA to develop suitable courses (Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1995). Despite this importance, the task may seem challenging for these teachers who most often have different backgrounds and perceptions of language and language learning. Along with materials design, they also have other roles to play, such as research, teaching and test design. For any syllabus specifications, it is important to undergo a NA from a process perspective (Bowers, 1980; Brown, 1995; Coleman, 1980; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Jordan, 1997; Robinson, 1980; Widdowson, 1983). In this regard, Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 53) argue that “any course should be based on an analysis of learner needs.”

There are different approaches to NA the first of which is the target situation analysis (TSA) where it is intended to define the learners' future needs, whether in an ESP or academic context. Munby (1978) considers this approach as the most influential one. The second approach is called “deficiency analysis,” where it concerns about defining the learners' needs about their preferred strategies. For Nunan (1989), this approach holds a “mismatch between teachers' and learners' expectations” (p. 179). The third approach is called “means analysis” where, unlike what Munby called for, it highlights the pedagogical aspects in meeting the needs and in overcoming the learning obstacles and constraints (West, 1994). The fourth approach, language audits, refers to language programs intended for companies (West, 1994).

Figure 1 highlights the basic idea that NA is the business of so many parties, such as policy-makers, teachers and students. For students, needs are basically defined as wants and desires. For teachers, NA entails aims and necessities. Although all approaches highlight the necessity of considering needs from different perspectives, they all try to promote success and motivate students to be involved in the learning process. Munby's model of NA remains the most used model in the literature on NA. It is based on the notion of “communicative needs processor” (CNP) where the learner plays the role of a participant. This model also addresses the learners' needs at the end of each language course. Munby intended to create a model of a learner's profile who needs a specific language course which is processed by the CNP which is in turn transformed into needs of language skills, functions and forms (Munby, 1978).

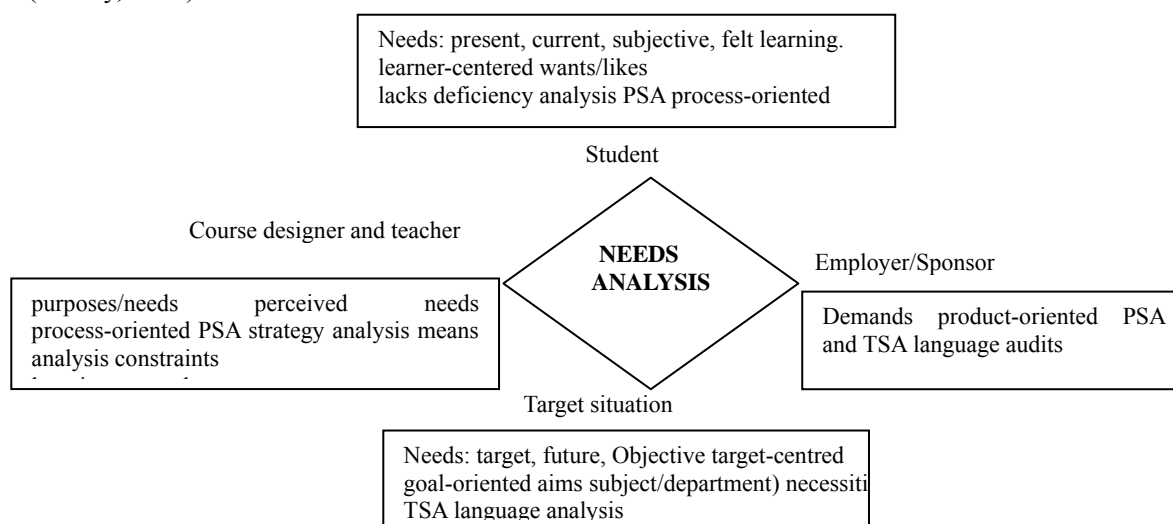


Figure 1 Summary of the Different Approaches to NA (Jordan, 1997, p. 29)

Richterich and Chancerel's model contradicts Munby's model of CNP, since it addresses placing the learners at the center of the analytical process of needs and considers them as simple participants. In this regard, Jordan (1997) claims that "essentially the learner is at the centre of the system, which includes the surrounding society and culture" (p. 24). For Richterich and Chanceler (1977), there should be a Present Situation Analysis (PSA) where the sources of information for the analysis are the students themselves, the teaching establishment and the "user-institution". They combine three different methods of data collection in the investigation of learners' needs: surveys, questionnaires, and directive and non-directive interviews.

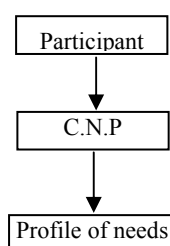


Figure 2 Munby's Communication Needs Processor

The other model, Hutchinson and Waters' model, combines the other two approaches mentioned above. This model highlights the idea that any course should address the analysis of learner's needs. Such needs could be classified into two categories: target needs and learning needs where the former could include necessities, lacks and wants, while the latter might refer to the ability and the knowledge required from the learner "to perform to the required degree of competence in the target situation" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1989, p. 60). In considering NA in general English courses, it is important to highlight the literature on NA in general English. Jordan (1997) contends that NA should be a starting point for any course. Learners are the centre of any NA, since they are the target of any assessment phase. There are different instruments to gather information on the learners' needs: questionnaires, surveys, classroom observation and interviews (Jordan, 1997). For instance, Nunan and Lambert (1996, p. 24) suggest that data about "learners' needs and their preferred learning strategies" could be gathered either at the beginning or during the course.

Notwithstanding the practicality of the systemic approach (Richterich & Chancerel, 1977), it is confined to scrutinizing learners' perceptions of their needs, rather than concretely addressing them. In an attempt to depart from the focus on language needs, the learning-centred approach is based on identifying learners' needs and factors shaping them in their real-world context, with a special attention given to the learning styles (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In the same respect, Brindley (1989) conceptualised learners' needs from different perspectives. In fact, learners' needs can be objectively identified prior to the course, while they can be subjectively addressed throughout the course in a subjective way. These needs can be perceived by and investigated from the viewpoint of professionals as well as learners themselves. Equally, these needs can be detected based on the target situation, i.e., product-oriented interpretation, while the process of interaction with the target situation is the process-orientation analysis of students' needs. Therefore, this model corroborates the sociolinguistic variables of learners' needs. The following approach, however, emphasises the language variables involved in the task. In this regard, the task-based approach rests upon the tasks and the communicative aspects related to it as analysis entities (Long, 2005).

In adopting NA as a major component to curriculum design, various theoretical models accommodate all the variables that can punctuate learners' needs. In a model inspired by that of Brown (1995), Richards (2001)

indicates that NA, situation analysis, goal and learning products specification, syllabus design, lesson plans and teaching methods are all integral to his approach. Corresponding to the fact that needs have to be satisfied, other recent models, critical in their orientation, posit that learners' needs should be approached from socio-cultural and motivation motives prior and during courses (Kaewep, 2008). These aforementioned models revolve around the importance of learners' and teachers' perceptions of learners' needs (Holme & Chalauisaeng, 2006).

Empirically, NA approaches are used as constituents to design language programs and textbooks and are acknowledged as standards against which these textbooks can be evaluated (Brown, 1995; Harmer, 1996). In other words, the setting of curriculum design and curriculum evaluation is defined by the salient learners' needs that have to be met. In the same paradigm, NA could be informative of learners and teachers' backgrounds, language variables as well as the limitations of their contexts (Lambert, 2010). In a more focused perspective on task-based NA, learning is being organised through tasks that are in turn units of analysis of students' needs and an orientation for teaching (Long, 1996). More to the point, tasks are invested as methods to grant students with the possibility to use new language and to adapt their personalities and learning styles to their language setting. Therefore, the focus is purely on communication and learners are perceived as the ultimate goals of these analysis units (White & Robinson, 1995). Task types and teachers' perceptions of learners' needs and methods are thus critical to collecting and analysing needs data (Long, 2005).

In fact, in the teaching and learning facets, inclusive of course development, teaching methodologies, materials design, assessment, and evaluation, NA plays a focal role to determine these interrelated aspects (Flowerdew, 2013). How the course is implemented and delivered, how the teacher interacts with and identifies students' needs and backgrounds, and how the evaluation is directed are all continuously shaped by NA (Hyland, 2006). It is worth noting that teachers' intuition about learners' needs is considered as an early informal approach to NA as West (1994) reports. As data from NA is generally related to teaching, the approach of PSA evaluates the level of learners before the course and measures their achievement following the same course by attending to the particular aspects of every teaching situation (Richerich & Chancerel, 1977). In this context, other data pertaining to students' personal information, learning styles and experiences, attitudes and the teaching setting are supplied for further considerations. This analysis should be coupled with Target Situation Analysis (TSA) in order to shape a potentially comprehensive teaching and learning environment (Robinson, 1991). The learner will identify the competencies required in order to effectively operate in the target language situation (Basturkmen, 2013).

To elicit data on learners' needs from various stakeholders' perspectives, a plethora of methods are deployed. They include questionnaires and interviews. Furthermore, toward collecting data on the characteristics of the target situation, tasks are used as units for analysis, notably in the task-based approach to NA (Long, 2005; Thomas, 2009). Other methods are provided at the needs analyst disposition, such as data triangulation. This means that different perceptions of needs are consulted such as course members or the target domain is investigated (Gilabert, 2005). Additionally, needs analysts can conduct an ethnographic research which provides an in-depth analysis of the communication occurring in the target situation (Molle & Prior, 2008). These methods are susceptible to provide a socio-cultural setting to communicative events conducive to figure out the requirements of the target situation.

The data obtained from NA is generally embedded into various theories, namely learning and teaching theories (Bustrukmen, 2013). In fact, NA results are accounted for through content specification of the course, but also through teaching methodologies to be endorsed (Parkinson, Jackson, Kirkwood & Padayachee, 2007). Similarly, these results are analysed in the light of learning theories that are mainly responsive to socio-cultural

variables. Accordingly, teaching and learning of the four skills are adjusted to the societal and cultural setting of learners, particularly as teachers or course designers tend to select appropriate task units, teaching approaches and methods of transmission (Bustrukmen, 2013). All this procedural work is conducted by being derived from the theory and functions of a language that could possibly prevail in a given learning framework (West, 1994).

Although NA studies are very informative to ensure effective learning and teaching, they suffer from some issues of subjectivity and marginalisation that are due to socio-political, educational, and methodological aspects (Bustrukmen, 2013). Some needs analysts tend to observe the institutional needs and frameworks established and occlude the genuine learner needs (Benesch, 1996, 2001). By focusing on the target situation needs, learners' needs could not be satisfied in that the learning needs of students can be disparate from the language requirements of the target situation, which is conducive to triggering misrepresentations between the educational needs and the language needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Regarding the methodological issues, reliability of the sources of information is central to obtain accurate data on learners' needs. For learners may not have ample awareness of their needs, nor are they knowledgeable about the characteristics of their potential jobs. This leads to approaching their needs from the perspectives of other stakeholders to diminish levels of subjectivity and have a comprehensive view of learners' needs (Long, 2005).

2. Rationale

This study aimed to investigate teachers' perceptions of NA among Foundation students of English in a Saudi context. It also addressed the weaknesses, the teaching methodologies, and the syllabus of the current course, and insights into designing a new curriculum. English has been gaining territory in the Saudi context for so many years now and it has been established as the most important language in different disciplines, such as education, business, commerce, law, medicine, science and technology; thus acknowledging the international dimension that English has achieved over the last few decades. In different educational contexts, conducting a NA on students' needs and lacks has not been given its due importance in the Saudi context. Although NA is now identified as an essential task for any EFL, ESL course, no assessment was previously conducted in this institution to find about teachers' perceptions of NA that will serve in establishing a new curriculum.

The Saudi ELT context has been witnessing so many changes over the last few decades. One of these changes has been linked to the position of teaching and learning English at the different educational levels. Unfortunately, this growing importance of the English language in the Kingdom has not be accompanied with the implementation of challenging curricula that would consider the changing needs of the Saudi students to be operational in their field of work or to prepare them for a more challenging study program, such as business, law, medicine, IT and engineering. However, addressing the role of the learner and his needs has not been given its due importance in the Saudi context even though it has room in diagnosing the language learning problems whether be it general or specific English. The culture and tradition of NA is not well established in the Saudi context as most textbooks are suggested by the Ministry of Education.

The study considered these perceptions from the Foundation teachers' perspectives ($n = 85$) in men's and women's campuses. It also compared such perceptions of needs to help suggest a comprehensive approach of the learning situation in this context and specifically learners' needs. This would undoubtedly help develop an appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of the Foundation students. Unlike the ESP situation where there is an abundant volume of studies on defining the needs of ESP teachers, this study endeavored to address the needs of

students in a general EFL context. It follows that this study addressed the following research questions:

- What are the teachers' perceptions of needs analysis?
- What are the students' needs as perceived by teachers?
- Can such perceptions of NA help design a new curriculum for learners of English in a similar context?

3. Method

3.1 Study Context

This study was carried out at the English Language Institute at the University of Jeddah (ELI-UJ). ELI teachers came from different educational contexts. They held different degrees, such as BA, MA and PhD. For some teachers, they had CELTA and DELTA, as teaching certificates. They taught 18 hours of English. Table 1 reports on the teachers' biographical data, i.e., profile including gender, age, qualifications, teaching experience and course taught. The different levels were labelled as 101, 102, 103 and 104, with 101 including students whose language ability was the lowest. These students studied for two terms in one year after which they joined one the adjacent faculties, such as business, IT, medicine and engineering.

Table 1 Bio Data of the Respondents

	Foundation teachers (n = 85)
Gender	38% Male 47% Female
Age	42.2% (23-29) 15.3 (30-35) 8.2% (36-40) 10.6% (41-45) 20% (46 and above)
Qualifications	43.5 (BA) 47.1 (MA) 5.9 (PhD)
Teaching experience	52.9 (1-5) 14.1% (6-10) 5.9% (11-15) 9.4% (16-20) 15.3 (20 or more)
Skills and sub-skills	Listening, reading, writing, speaking, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and spelling

As a preparation course book, the *Headway* series with its two levels intermediate and upper-intermediate was used in both campuses to teach students. The course was taught as a module system, where students studied for six weeks then sat for their exams.

3.2 Instruments

(1) Teachers' Questionnaire

The researcher opted for the questionnaire mainly for its practicality. The questionnaire combined both closed and open questions. Questionnaire data were analysed using SPSS version 22.0. An online version of the questionnaire was administered to Foundation teachers to probe their perceptions of NA and appropriateness and effectiveness of the current curriculum. The cover page introduced purpose of the questionnaire and the time required to fill out all questions. Basically, the questionnaire was divided into three main sections the first of which sought biographical information about the respondents. It included questions about gender, age, nationality, qualifications, country of qualification, teaching experience, and teaching levels. These variables were estimated

to provide a comprehensive view of the teachers who were involved in the teaching, learning and testing operations. The second part spotlighted questions related to the teachers' perceptions of students' overall ability in English, students' knowledge and use of the language skills and sub-skills, importance of skills and sub-skills to students, the purpose of students' English course, and their frequency of using English in class. The third part of the questionnaire tackled the teachers' attitudes towards students' necessity to use English in their future career, students' frequency of using English, usefulness of specific situation to students to speak English, the types of questions used in class to teach English, curriculum topics, students' competence in the language skills and sub-skills, the kind of English their students needed as well as the skills and sub-skills students needed to improve their language ability in English. In addition, the question also targeted the purpose of learning English, the different skills, strategies and techniques learners required to improve their level in English, the kind of English outside the classroom, the challenging aspect of the current curriculum for the Saudi students, their satisfaction with the current curriculum, the necessity to change this curriculum, usefulness of the courses taught, and the necessity for students to sit for international tests, such as TOEFL and IELTS. The last part of the questionnaire addressed the teachers' perceptions of what students had to do to use English to be operational in their field of work. The question also was concerned with whether the Saudi students were good speakers and users of English, whether the curriculum met the students' needs in English, their satisfaction with teaching, curriculum improvement and evaluation at the Foundation level and the time required for the teaching of English. The questionnaire ended with a suggestion to teachers to add their comments and suggestions regarding the questionnaire. All the collected data were analysed in response to the research questions and were presented in the following section on results.

4. Results

This section reports on the analysis of the contents of the questionnaire as perceived by the Foundation teachers. It basically addressed teachers' perceptions of the time allocated to the teaching of English, perceptions of the language skills, sub-skills, uses of English, topics to study and perceptions of the curriculum. Most teachers claimed that their students' level in English was still poor, which impacted the students' performance in the language skills. Foundation teachers agreed on the necessity for their students to study more English that would meet their hopes and aspirations. Generally, they contended that students' were not proficient in English that the current curriculum was limited, since it did not consider the students' needs.

4.1 Perceptions of Students' Ability

In perceiving students' language ability in the language skills and sub-skills, most teachers identified students' level in teaching as varying between poor and satisfactory in the four skills with 47.1% ($M = 1.65$, $SD = .719$) and 51.8% ($M = 1.56$, $SD = .663$) as having poor levels in writing and spelling respectively. Nearly, 52% ($M = 1.98$, $SD = .744$) claimed that students' level in vocabulary was satisfactory, while 50.6% ($M = 1.82$, $SD = .779$) assured that their level in reading was satisfactory. In testing the language skills, 52.9% ($M = 1.56$, $SD = .665$) of teachers contended that students' language ability in spelling was poor, writing, 51.8 ($M = 1.60$, $SD = .713$), pronunciation, 54.1 poor ($M = 2.01$, $SD = .732$). In addition, 51.8% of teachers claimed that students' language ability in listening was satisfactory. What was remarkable about other replies that in perceiving the students' language ability in all the language skills, the language ability in each skill did not exceed 5% as having an excellent level. Other teachers stressed the fact that teaching listening was not practical on the ground that the

classrooms were not equipped with the appropriate booths to teach listening in class, they maintained that students had a satisfactory level in it with 50% ($M = 2.20$, $SD = .753$).

Table 2 indicated that teachers ranked speaking (54.1%) as the most needed skill followed by writing (44.7%) then reading (43.5%). Listening was not perceived as important, as the other skills even though it is essential for acquiring and/or learning a second and/or foreign language. As for the sub-skills (grammar, 42.4%, spelling, 36.5%, pronunciation, 36.5%), the Foundation teachers maintained that grammar was very important for learners to learn English appropriately. Teachers, stressed the necessity for learners of English to learn two types of English: general and specific. However, they highlighted the fact that these learners learn English effectively, they should overcome their tremendous difficulties in the productive skills. Perceptions of the thinking skills was viewed as important (41.2%). However, 25.9% maintained that the presentation skills were important and 31.8% admitted that the general research skills were important.

Table 2 Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Language Ability in the Language Skills and Sub-Skills

Skills and sub-skills	Teaching skills and sub-skills						Testing skills and sub-skills					
	P	S	VG	E	M	SD	P	S	VG	E	M	SD
Listening	16.5	50.0	29.4	3.5	2.20	.753	23.5	51.8	22.4	2.4	2.04	.747
Speaking	35.5	47.1	14.1	3.5	1.86	.789	41.2	34.1	22.4	2.4	1.86	.847
Reading	35.3	50.6	8.2	4.7	1.82	.779	36.5	48.2	10.6	3.5	1.81	.768
Writing	47.1	43.5	7.1	2.4	1.65	.719	51.8	36.5	9.4	1.2	1.60	.713
Vocabulary	25.9	51.8	18.8	2.4	1.98	.744	34.1	43.5	20	1.2	1.88	.767
Grammar	31.8	45.9	18.8	2.4	1.92	.779	41.2	43.5	12.9	1.2	1.74	.730
Pronunciation	22.4	52.9	21.2	3.5	2.06	.761	23.5	54.1	20	2.4	2.01	.732
Spelling	51.8	41.2	5.9	1.2	1.56	.663	52.9	36.5	6	3.4	1.56	.665
Thinking skills	32.9	38.8	23.5	4.7	2.00	.873	34.1	41.2	21.2	3.5	1.94	.836
Presentation skills	36.5	45.9	10.6	3.5	1.80	.777	41.2	42.4	10.6	2.4	1.73	.754
General research skills	52.9	30.6	8.2	3.5	1.60	.801	55.3	30.6	8.2	2.4	1.56	.755

Poor (P), Satisfactory (S), Very Good (VD), Excellent (E)

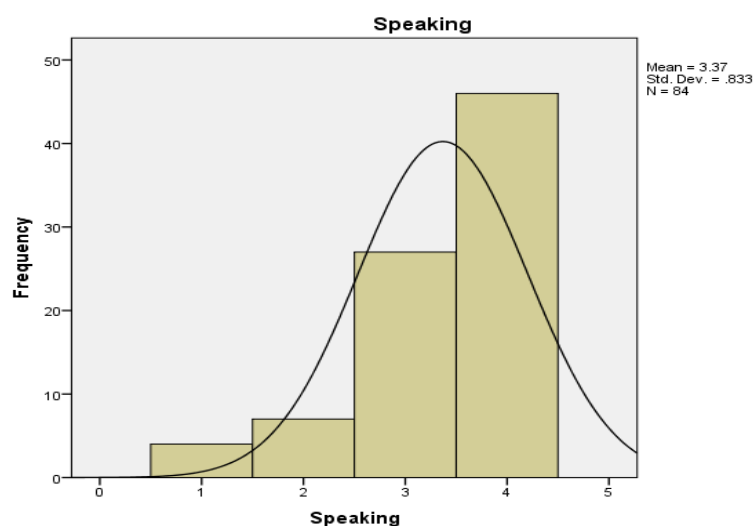


Figure 3 Importance of Speaking for Students, As Perceived by Teachers

A Pearson analysis was carried out to investigate the correlation patterns between the language skills and sub-skills as perceived by teachers. For instance, the correlation between *listening* and *speaking* with coefficients of .669 was significant at $p \leq 0.01$. The correlation between *presentation skills* and *general research skills* with coefficients of .768 was significant at $p \leq 0.01$. The least correlated coefficient, .308, was between *reading* and *pronunciation* was significant at $p \leq 0.01$. There were no instances of negative correlations.

To identify students' future needs, Foundation teachers were asked on their agreement with the usefulness of learning English for students. More than 90% strongly agreed on this usefulness, which reflected an awareness of the importance of English for the Saudi students. Most respondents expressed their interest in learning English, since they felt it had become a requirement in all fields as the first international language.

4.2 Context of Using English among Foundation Students

Table 3 presents the different contexts where Foundation students could use English, demonstrated that their students always used English for study 31.8% ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.063$), examination 44.7% ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.038$). Also, 38.8% ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.053$) of teachers claimed that their students sometimes used English for leisure. In using English for promotion, 25.9% ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 1.146$) of teachers claimed that students used English for promotion. What could be deduced was that teachers highlighted the fact that their students used English in different contexts. In addition, they considered communication with native speakers of English as the most common type of communication in which they were likely to find themselves. Teachers claimed that general English alone could never equip students to face job market requirements. Others added that the *Headway* could never help teachers achieve their objectives; hence a new curriculum based on students' particular needs for future career was highly required.

Table 3 Frequency Uses of English (Figures)

Statements	N	R	S	O	A	M	SD
Students use English for study.	2.4	9.4	24.7	31.8	31.8	3.81	1.063
Students use English for work.	14.1	31.8	31.8	16.5	2.4	2.60	1.017
Students use English for training.	15.3	34.1	30.6	15.3	2.4	2.54	1.016
Students use English for leisure.	18.8	28.2	38.8	9.4	4.7	2.53	1.053
Students use English for promotion.	25.9	34.1	17.6	15.3	3.5	2.34	1.146
Students use English for examination.	3.5	2.4	21.2	28.2	44.7	4.08	1.038

N = never, R = Rarely, S = sometimes, O = often, A = always

The Pearson correlation between *students use English for study* and *students use English for leisure* with coefficients of .324 was significant at $p \leq 0.01$. The Pearson correlation between *students use English for study* and *students use English for examination* with coefficients of .478 was significant at $p \leq 0.01$. The highest correlation between *students use English for training* and *students use English for work* with coefficients of .657 was significant at $p \leq 0.01$.

However, coefficients that were not significant were between *students use English for study* and *students use English for work* (.070), *students use English for study* and *students use English for training* (.053), *students use English for study* and *students use English for promotion* (.042), *students use English for work* and *students use English for leisure* (.139), *students use English for work* and *students English for examination* (.178), *students use for work* and *students use English confidently* (.148).

Teachers expressed different perceptions of the usefulness of myriads of contexts to use English. In *buying*

things from supermarkets, 38.2% (M = 2.65, SD = 1.092) claimed that this context was very useful for students, while 31% (M = 2.75, SD = 1.085) contended that *getting information to buy items* was useful for their learners. In perceiving *talking to electricians, plumbers, etc.*, 28.2% of teachers admitted that this context was not all useful for their students. However, in *talking to native speakers of English, watching TV or movies*, and *listening to the radio*, 56.5% (M = 3.40, SD = .840), 52.9% (M = 3.37, SD = .818) and 30.6% (M = 2.63, SD = 1.192) assured that such contexts were very useful for their students.

In the same direction, Foundations teachers called for a change to the curriculum so that it would match the students' needs outside the classroom, with most of the teachers who contended that using English outside the classroom should be made very useful to students. They also called for changing the current curriculum with a new one that matches the students' needs and future careers. They also reiterated the relevance of addressing research and thinking skills in the new curriculum, since it has been overlooked in the previous one.

Table 4 Usefulness of Using English

Uses of English	NAAH	RU	U	VU	Mean	SD
Buying things from supermarkets	18.8	24.7	27.1	28.2	2.65	1.092
Getting information to buy items	17.6	20.	31	30	2.75	1.085
Ordering food	10.6	18.8	28.2	40	3.00	1.024
Asking for directions	24.7	31.8	20	22.4	2.40	1.099
Talking to friends	31.8	27.1	28.2	10.6	2.18	1.014
Talking to neighbours	41.2	25.9	21.2	10.6	2.01	1.035
Talking to native-speakers of English	4.7	8.2	28.2	56.5	3.40	.840
Talking to electricians, plumbers, etc.	28.2	28.2	25.9	16.5	2.31	1.064
Making/Receiving telephone calls	23.5	27.1	32.9	15.3	2.40	1.019
Watching TV or movies	4.7	7.1	34.1	52.9	3.37	.818
Listening to the radio	25.9	14.1	25.9	30.6	2.63	1.192
Listening to English music	12.9	9.4	30.6	42.4	3.07	1.046
Students use English confidently.	9.4	34.1	45.9	9.4	2.59	.835
Students generally like studying English.	8.2	16.5	48.2	24.7	2.96	.919
Students write regularly in class.	1.2	22.4	32.4	28.2	3.32	1.020
Students read extensively.	42.4	34.1	18.8	3.5	1.87	.923
Students need speaking more than writing.	3.5	9.4	38.8	29.4	3.47	1.004
Students need writing more than speaking.	5.9	11.8	45.9	24.7	3.25	1.011

Not at all useful, Rather Useful; Useful; Very Useful

4.3 Teaching Approaches

In considering the teaching approaches, 50.6% (M = 4.13, SD = .803) of teachers agreed that they used a learner-centered approach to teach English to their students, while 11.8% were neutral on this. As for the task-based approach, 55.3 (M = 4.04, SD = .756) agreed that they used this approach in class, while 15.3% were neutral on this. As for skill-based approach, 52.9 (M = 3.96, SD = .697) agreed that they used this approach in class, while 21.2 were neutral on this. As for the communicative approach, 52.9% (M = 4.27, SD = .70) claimed that they used this approach in class, while 7.1% (M = 3.82, SD = .857) were neutral. As for the electrical approach, 20% strongly agreed that the use the eclectic approach was practical for their students.

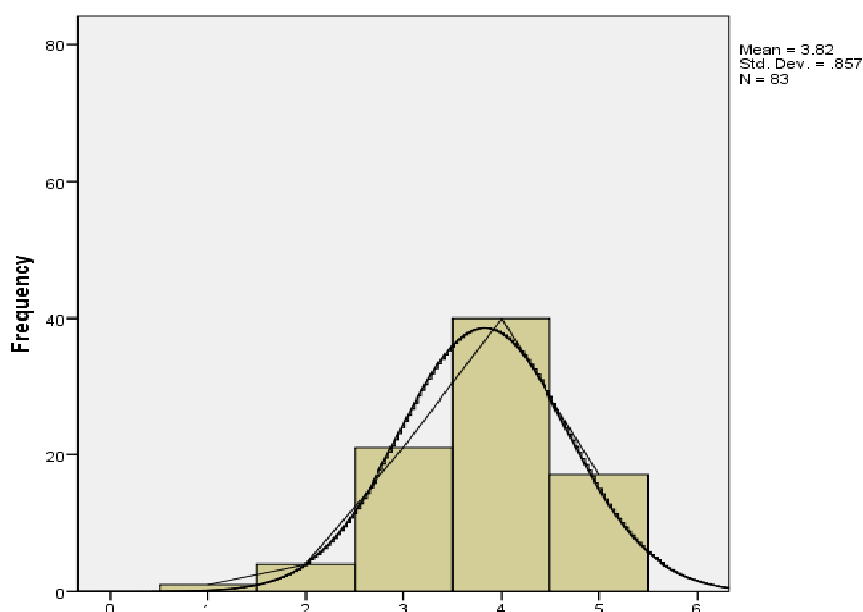


Figure 4 Using the Eclectic Approach to Teach English

In addressing the necessity of using international tests, such as IELTS and TOEFL, 54.1% were for the use of international tests. This is important, since preparing students for such tests would align the curriculum with international benchmarks and standards, such as CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) and the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLBs). Teachers were asked on the time allocated for the course, 20% said that the time devoted to the teaching of English was not enough for students to learn English.

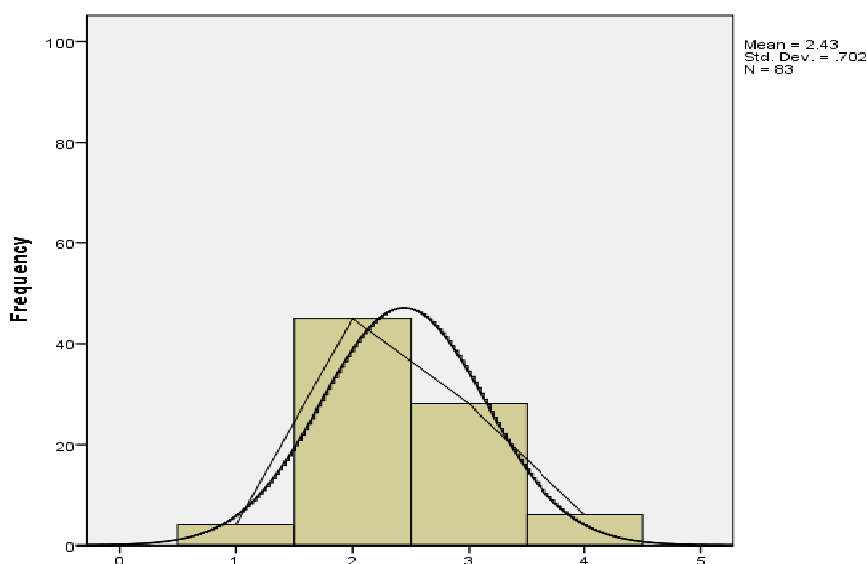


Figure 5 Usefulness of the Course to the Foundation Students

In perceiving the contents of the course, 52.9% of teachers maintained that the *Headway* course was rather useful for their students.

Data analyses of the different ideas pertained to the research questions resulted in the following summary points:

- Reading was the skill with which students had the least difficulty.
- Writing was perceived as the most difficult skill
- Speaking was perceived as the most needed skill
- There was a need to adopt a new curriculum developed by teachers which should respond to students' evolving needs and match their level.
- Teachers assumed new roles in order to help learners better and take advantage of the course.
- The course as it currently stood was not appropriate for the Foundation students.
- There were conflicting views on NA and the curriculum
- There was lack of awareness of the discrepancy between the curriculum goals and what students really needed.
- There was an agreement between teachers concerning the skill with which students had the most difficulty.
- The findings also indicated that the present course needed some improvements at the levels of methodology, materials and approaches, and that clear objectives and goals had to be considered.

To conclude, it was hoped that the new curriculum would help the Saudi learners to improve their language ability in all the skills, sub-skills, and academic, research and thinking skills.

5. Discussion

This study investigated Foundation teachers' perceptions of students' NA in a Saudi context. Results indicated that generally teachers had conflicting views about these needs. To comment, to use Abbott's (1978) terms, some teachers thought that they were facing a TENOR situation, "English is taught for no obvious reason", which might not be the view of the policy makers. In the ELI-UJ, all teachers contended that no NA was carried out before or during the course and, therefore, all respondents assumed that there was a need for English after graduation for a) general purposes, b) academic purposes, c) professional purposes and d) personal purposes. This idea has been highlighted by proponents of NA so that the kind of English presented to participants would match their needs, hopes and future career. This study put stress on the informative nature of NA, as this idea has been accentuated in research (e.g., Flowerdew, 2013; Lambert, 2010).

The current study helped to refine Foundation teachers' perceptions of and attitudes towards NA in general and the needs of their students in an EFL context in particular. It also tackled the relevance of syllabi and teaching methods. This idea has been investigated in research by Rashidi and Kehtarafard (2014), when they allocated NE a great and relevant importance in signposting the learners' needs in any language program. This is also echoed in Litz' study (2001). Adhering to the ideas of proponents of NA, such as Munby (1978), this study reflected the idea highlighted by Munby in employing a skill-based approach to carry out a NA. In the same vein, the participants of this study did also refer to the relevance of other approaches, such task-based and communicative language teaching. This idea is supported by, for instance, Ha (2005).

This study opted for selecting teachers as the main source of data collection given the eventuality that teachers play different roles in the ELT field, such as teaching, research, test design and other administrative roles. This idea is also accentuated in research by John and Dudley-Evans (1995) and Widdowson (1983). Carrying out a NA by teachers on their learners has been allocated its due importance in research, where learners play a prominent role (Munby, 1978, 1991; Richterich & Chancellor, 1977).

This study echoed other studies, such as Brown (1995) and Hammer (1996), in putting stress on the relevance and necessity of employing NA to evaluate current textbooks in meeting the learners' needs, knowing about the different types of interactions between teachers and students and in delineating how evaluation is carried out (Hyland, 2006). That is, this study was launched in alignment with other studies in stressing the embedded nature of information and data collection obtained from participants of the study (e.g., Bustrukmen, 2015).

It was obvious that lack of experience had a significant impact on the quality of teaching among Foundation teachers, which in turn affected the ways teachers approached the curriculum as well as needs. Hence, the relevance of training teachers to be able to perceive and meet students' needs appropriately. This study meets with Brown's work (1995) who acknowledged the relevance and importance of teacher training to be able to maintain international teaching standards.

Teachers were said to hold a classical view of language learning, since they perceived learning English as a matter of knowing about and using grammar appropriately. Hence, grammar mistakes should not be allowed. This idea stood in sharp contrast with proponents of the communicative approach, such as Canale and Swain (1980). In the same vein, teachers were asked about the most useful type of English for their students and they contended that both a combination of general and specific English would be a very relevant and appropriate idea for these learners. This is not supported in the literature, since for most needs analysts for learners with a similar profile, it is safer to expose learners to general English. At another level, the study meets with other studies (Hutchinson & Waters, 1993) when it stressed the idea that learners faced tremendous problems in the productive that the receptive skills.

6. Implications, Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study had immediate methodological and pedagogical implications. Using questionnaires to probe teachers' perceptions of NA was helpful in collecting data about the main participants of the study. Perhaps the inclusion of other research methods would be more relevant. As for the pedagogical implications, this study initiated reconsidering the teaching and testing techniques that were engulfed in the teachers' perceptions of teaching and assessment. That is, such perceptions feed directly into evaluating the teaching methods of these teachers. Hence, the necessity to plan professional development sessions accordingly.

In any EFL context, the target of the course is not always clear "as a result no attempt is usually made to discover learners' needs" (Seedhouse, 1995, p. 59). In general, the practice of NA in most EFL contexts remains difficult, but not impossible, because learners are unaware of their needs and unable to diagnose their weaknesses. It is important to note that any assessment of learners' needs does not operate in a vacuum, since "most needs analysis choices will be determined by time, money, and resources" (Jordan, 1997, p. 38), and in most cases by political decisions. So, if the resources are limited the scope of the study is likely to be so. Richterich (1983) explains that a specification of some needs does not necessarily mean that these needs are going to be taken into consideration or that they will contribute to any change. Sometimes some political decisions or language plans may be more influential in determining needs than any other procedure. This study was limited in establishing a direct relation between needs and the actual teaching, especially in a learner-centred approach. It has been argued that although NA has a crucial role in any language course, it should not be overweighed, since it can kill imagination and creativity in teachers and even in students. So, in order to maximize the benefits gained from NA, the procedure should be combined with other conditions so that they could lead to some changes in the

learning/teaching process. For instance, all “the partners engaged in the teaching-learning process: learners, teachers and institutions should be given the means to understand the part they are playing” (Richterich, 1983, p. 5). Unlike what research on NA highlights in using different research instruments, such as interviews, questionnaires, classroom observation and surveys (Jordan, 1997), this study opted for the use of questionnaires only. Others research instruments could have enlightened the researcher to probe other findings that would be very relevant to the Saudi context.

Given the wide array of limitations of this study, it was crucial to highlight some recommendation tips that could be used as future research projects. For instance, the study concluded with the necessity of launching a practical curriculum that would match the needs and wants of Foundation students. Investigating the new curriculum would be a good research idea for the MA and PhD students in Saudi Arabia. In addition, targeting a more challenging teacher profile along with teacher training and professional development that could cope with the new curriculum would be a challenging research topic. Further, aligning the new curriculum with international standards and norms, such as CEFR or CLBs is another research opportunity worth being investigated.

There should be an investigation into the actual reasons behind students' lack of motivation. In addition, teachers should use a variety of teaching objectives and methods. A further investigation is needed to launch a new curriculum. The course should be based on the testing of students' needs and clear objectives and it should adhere to a textbook developed by Foundation teachers. In general, clear goals and objectives for the course should be stated and new teaching techniques and approaches should be adopted.

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