Investigating English Language Needs: 
Medical Undergraduates Perspective in a Saudi Context

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Abstract:
ESP learners’ reasons for learning a language are specific that have to be identified through a standard needs analysis (NA) process so that appropriate ESP teaching materials are selected, modified or developed. The present study is an attempt to investigate ESP needs of medical undergraduates studying in the medical colleges of the KSA. A 27-item Likert-scale structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher to identify the participants’ perceived English language proficiency and to record their perceived responses regarding English language skills/tasks which are important to effectively carry out their medical studies because much research has offered valuable insights into the fact that insiders’ feedback is extremely important in a standard NA process. The questionnaires were administered to 506 participants from seven medical colleges of the KSA. The findings of the study have confirmed the previous research that suitable and appropriate in-house teaching materials are inevitable to address ESP learners’ specific academic needs. It is further revealed that speaking and reading skills are the most important for their medical studies. Furthermore, important tasks related to various English language skills have also been identified.

Key Words: Needs Analysis (NA); English for Specific Purposes (ESP); English for Medical Purposes (EMP)

I. Introduction
A systematic and comprehensive needs analysis (NA, henceforward) is inevitable to identify learners’ specific language needs. Research has provided sufficient insights of its crucial role in systematic curriculum development in the realm of ESP/EGP (Seedhouse, 1995; Rokowski, 1996; Masahura, 1998; Benesch, 2000; John & Dudley-Evans, 1991; Lee, 1987). Though understanding learners' needs or expectations is an essential step in the process of curriculum reform, research does not report sufficient studies concerning the identification of medical undergraduates' English for Medical Purposes (EMP, henceforward) needs in the Arab universities in general and Saudi universities in particular. The present study has tried to investigate Saudi medical
undergraduates’ perceived proficiency level in different language skills as well as their perceived linguistic needs to carry out their medical studies effectively and efficiently.

II. Literature Review

NA has been defined as “the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners requires a language and arranging the needs according to priorities” (Richards et al., 1992, pp. 242-243). West (1994) has stated that NA could be defined as an attempt to know “what learners will be required to do with the foreign language in the target situation, and how learners might best master the target language during the period of training” (p.1). Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) declared NA as the process of identifying “what and how” of an English course.

It was during 1970’s when the significance of NA got established in the realm of ESP and it was authenticated by the Counsel of Europe (Richterich, 1980). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) reported that significance of NA was first recognized by ESP practitioners. It was identified that existence of NA was usually underestimated in English for General Purposes (EGP) where the specific needs were difficult to determine (West, 1994; Richterich, 1983). This trend in ELT was described as TENOR - teaching of English for no obvious reason (Abbott, 1981). Talking about the importance of NA, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) declared that all language teaching situations have some sort of identifiable needs and “what distinguishes ESP from General English is not the existence of a need as such but rather an awareness of the need” (p. 53). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) have theorized that “whereas English had previously decided its own destiny; it now became subject to the wishes, needs and demands of people other than language teachers” (p. 7). Effective ESP teaching depends on “S” for “specific” in ESP and the ultimate goal of an ESP course is to address the specific needs of the learners and to prepare them to effectively function in a target situation. ‘Target needs’ have been classified into necessities, lacks and wants. ‘Necessities’ have been defined as what the learners have to know in order to function effectively in “the target situations” (p.12). A scientific analysis of carefully observed target situations is inevitable to gather authentic information regarding “necessities” of ESP learners. The gap between the existing English language proficiency and the target proficiency of learners has been reported as “lacks” while the ESP learners’ perceived needs were identified as “Wants”. Research has provided significant insights into the fact that learners’ perceived wants might be different than the necessities perceived by the sponsors or EAP/ESP teachers. It has been recommended that EAP/ESP course designers or practitioners need to sort out such differences when they develop ESP course contents and select teaching methodology (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Much research has reported that the last two decades of the 20th century witnessed a revolution in the field of NA (Coleman, 1988; Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Lee, 1987; Jasso-Agular, 1999; Richards, 1990; Jordan, 1997; Beatty & Chan, 1984; Burvik, 1989; Leki & Carson, 1994; Teng, 2000; West, 1994; Detaramani & Chan, 1999). The historical work of Munby (1987) initiated a new era of NA in the field of ESP. Braine (2001) reported that before Munby’s model, ESP courses were designed according to “teachers’ intuitions” of students’ academic needs whereas post-Munby ESP literature was full of NA projects that identified learners’ specific needs and these needs provided the foundation for the ESP courses. Research has provided sufficient insights that the role of NA in ELT/ESP has been deep-rooted and
needs no confirmation in modern era (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Brindley, 1989).

Research has emphasized the importance of eliciting information from the learners’ perspective and Widdowson’s (1984) concept of 'subjective needs' is meant to explore what the learners have to do “to actually acquire the language whilst ‘objective needs' reflect what they need to do with language once the learning is complete” (p. 2). Tudor (1996) and West (1994) have stressed the importance of learning comprehensive range of needs and employing scientific analysis to formulate 'strategy analysis' or 'means of travel' of the students to their target destination of target language proficiency. Research has reported that inexperienced and linguistically naive students should not be expected to make correct and authentic decisions regarding their language needs (Drobnic et al., 1978; Long, 2005). Adams-Smith (1989) has agreed to this point of view that the students “at the outset of a course may not yet have reached the stage of maturity where they can appreciate its purpose” (p. 66). The research findings have shown that “the learner input is most valuable in the form of post-course assessment” because at this stage they have “acquired the competence required to understand what is going on” (p. 66).

A lot of NA studies (Rokowski, 1996; Romo, 2006; Hui-Uen et al., 1995; AlHarby, 2005; Kim, 2006; Jasso-Agular, 1999; Richards, 1990; Jordan, 1997; Beatty & Chan, 1984; Burvik, 1989; Leki & Carson, 1994; Teng, 2000; Zaghoul & Hussein, 1985; Ghenghesh, Hamed & Abdelfattah, 2011) have been undertaken all over the world to highlight one obvious fact: NA is must for effective ESP/EAP teaching. There is no denying of the fact that usually a lot of time, financial and administrative resources and professional expertise are required to conduct these projects but professional organizations cannot afford to neglect it.

III. Research Questions
This study investigated the following research questions:

i). What is the perceived proficiency level of the medical undergraduates of College of Medicine and Medical Sciences (CMMS) in language skills?

ii). What is the perceived proficiency level of the medical undergraduates of Other Medical Colleges in the KSA (OMCs) in language skills?

iii). How important are the language skills as perceived by the CMMS medical undergraduates for their medical studies?

iv). How important are the language skills as perceived by the OMCs medical undergraduates for their medical studies?

v). How important are different language tasks as perceived by the CMMS medical undergraduates for their medical studies?

vi). How important are different language tasks as perceived by the OMCs medical undergraduates for their medical studies?

vii). Is there any statistically significant difference in the perceived proficiency level of the CMMS medical undergraduates in language skills with that of the medical undergraduates' of OMCs?

viii). Is there any statistically significant difference in the perceived importance level of the language skills by the CMMS medical undergraduates with that of the medical undergraduates' of OMCs?
Is there any statistically significant difference in the perceived importance level of different language tasks by the CMMS medical undergraduates with that of the medical undergraduates' of OMCs?

IV. Subjects (Population and Sample)

The total population of CMMS (n=250) was selected as the sample for this study whereas seventy-five questionnaires were sent to each of the six medical colleges (n=75x7= 450) situated in the different regions of the KSA.

Instrumentation and the Data Collection

The researcher consulted several NA studies (e.g., Chan, 2001; Jasso-Aguilar, 1999; AlHarby, 2005; Teng, 2000) and a 27-item structured questionnaire was developed mainly based on Basturkmen (1998). The questionnaire was consisted of three parts (See appendix # 1). The first part dealt with the samples' personal information. The second part was consisted of five items of 5-point Likert scale to elicit samples' perceived proficiency level in different language skills.

1. excellent  2. very good  3. good
4. fair  5. poor

The third part had 22 items of 4-point Likert scale. This part was designed to collect data to identify the samples' perceptions regarding the importance of different language skills and different language tasks for their medical studies.

1. very important  2. important
3. less important  4. not important

The questionnaire was translated into Arabic and both versions were sent to four senior professors of linguistics to check its face validity, clarity and translation. Necessary changes suggested by the professors were made before the questionnaire was administered.

The researcher administered the questionnaires at CMMS to the freshmen students during his teaching sessions and some other colleagues were requested to administer the questionnaire to 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students at CMMS during their content subject sessions. 236 questionnaires were collected (94.4 % rate of return). Seventy-five questionnaires were sent to each of the following six colleges, along with a formal request by the Dean CMMS, situated in the different regions of the KSA:

- College of Medicine (King Saud University, Riyadh)
- Faculty of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah)
- College of Medicine (King Faisal University, Dammam)
- College of Medicine (Qasim University, Qasim)
- College of Medicine and Medical Sciences (King Khalid University, Abha)
- College of Medicine (Al-Jouf University, Jouf)

271 questionnaires were received from the above-mentioned six colleges (58% rate of return).
V. Data Analysis

The questionnaire-item responses were manually coded and version 10 of SPSS was used to generate the descriptive statistics namely the means, standard deviations (SD, henceforward) and percentages of the data. Independent-Samples T Test was applied to identify any difference that was calculated at (0.05) level of significance between both populations: CMMS and OMCs.

Results

In this section, the researcher dealt with the analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire.

Questions 1-5 elicited samples’ responses about their perceived level of proficiency in different English language skills. The following table reports English language proficiency of CMMS and OMCs in listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar: 1 stands for excellent and 5 for poor.

Table 1: Samples' perceived proficiency level in the language skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.361</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>2.252</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>-.946</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>.345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>2.317</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.650</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CMMS declared highest proficiency level in reading with the mean value of 2.26 that was followed by writing. Listening was perceived third on this ranking and its mean was calculated as 2.58. Grammar was declared the fourth and speaking the fifth and their respective means were 2.88 and 3.11. The data reports that OMCs were most proficient in writing skills followed by reading (2.31; 2.35). Listening was identified third on the ranking of proficiency and the mean was a little higher than the reading (2.44). Grammar was the second last (2.70) whereas the mean value of 2.89 reports that the samples were least proficient in listening skills. SD was calculated more than one for all five items for both groups that indicate that the samples differed significantly in their responses. The statistics generated through Independent-Samples T Test reported that both groups’ responses carried statistically significant differences (p<0.05) in the second and fourth items.

The following table details the data generated from the questionnaire item 6 to 10 that records samples’ perceptions of the importance of listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar.
Table 2: Samples' perceived importance of language skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.202</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>.840 (insignificant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>-4.891</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>.000 (significant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>-2.975</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>.003 (significant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>-7.533</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>.000 (significant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>-1.879</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>.061 (insignificant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.838</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questionnaire item 6 to 10 investigated samples’ responses regarding the importance of various language skills for their medical studies. CMMS declared speaking as the most important with a high mean value of 1.63 followed by reading: 1.81. Listening was identified third and grammar fourth (1.99 and 2.03 respectively) as far as their importance was concerned for carrying out their medical studies effectively. Writing was perceived as the least important skill (2.17). The data generated through the analysis of the samples’ responses from OMCs documented listening skills as the most important one: 1.97. Speaking was perceived second and reading skills third in this regard with a very narrow margin: 2.01 and 2.03. The samples declared grammar the next one and writing was reported the least important with a low mean value of 2.92. CMMS responses (SD < 1) indicate that they did not differ significantly in all the five items. SD of OMCs reports that they carried major inter-group differences in their perceptions as far as items 6, 7, 9 and 10 were concerned (SD > 1). Independent-Samples T Test results documented significant differences (p<0.05) for both groups’ perceptions in all items except the sixth one.

Mean values, SD and compared means for various listening tasks for CMMS and OMCs are described in table 3.

Table 3: Samples' perceived importance of various listening tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>-2.227</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>.030 (significant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>-.534</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>.593 (insignificant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.644</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>.520 (insignificant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>-1.277</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>.202 (insignificant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Listening to lectures" was perceived the most important by CMMS: 1.22. Mean values of 1.46 and 1.49 were calculated for "understanding power point presentations"
and "understanding instructions". "Following question/answer sessions" were identified by CMMS as the least important listening task: 1.74. OMCs also declared "listening to lectures" as the most important one whereas "understanding power point presentations" was the second in the ranking: 1.34 and 1.54 respectively. "Understanding instructions" was perceived third with a slight margin (1.52) and "following question/answer sessions" remained fourth (1.70). Both sample groups did not show any major inter-group differences in their preferences for listening tasks (SD<1). Item 11 and 14 demonstrated significant difference as reported by Independent-Samples T Test results.

The next table describes both sample groups' responses towards various speaking tasks that are sought in the questionnaire items 15-19.

### Table 4: Samples' perceived importance of speaking tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>-.914</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>.361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>-1.347</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.855</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>.393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>1.242</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>.269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>OMCs</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>1.106</td>
<td></td>
<td>.266</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questionnaire items 15, 16 and 19 (asking questions; participating in discussions; interacting with doctors in field) were perceived by CMMS as the most important with marginal differences in the mean values: 1.37, 1.39 and 1.40 respectively. "Answering the questions" was ranked the fourth most important (1.50) whereas "giving oral presentations" remained the last in the ranking (1.83). OMCs also declared the questionnaire item 15 as the most important speaking task followed by item 17 and the mean values were 1.42 and 1.45 respectively. The two items, 19 and 16, that were perceived third and fourth by OMCs also had very close margin with a difference of only 0.01. The least important item remained 18 with the mean of 1.74. SD<1 for all the items reported no major inter-group differences for both groups. Independent-Samples T Test results demonstrated insignificant differences for all items (p>0.05).

Table 5 documents samples' responses regarding their perceived level of importance for different reading tasks.

### Table 5: Samples' perceived importance of reading tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>-1.629</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>5.745</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
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<td>.91</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
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<td>CMMS</td>
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<td>1.60</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>2.072</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>.042</td>
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<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
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<td>1.95</td>
<td>.91</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
"Reading textbooks" was reported the most important reading task by both sample groups (CMMS, 1.25; OMCs, 1.32). "Reading handouts" and "reading instructions for assignments" were identified as second and third in the ranking by both groups with minor differences in mean values (CMMS, 1.60 for both; OMCs, 1.45 and 1.59). "Reading articles in journals" was kept fourth with low values of 2.38 and 1.95 by both the groups respectively. Low value (SD<1) demonstrated moderate inter-group differences. The items 21 & 22 carried significant differences as determined by Independent-Samples T Test.

The following table details the data generated by the items 24 – 27 that elicited samples' perceived responses towards various writing tasks.

**Table 6:** Samples' perceived importance of writing tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>-2.450</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.05 (significant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>-5.559</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.05 (significant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>-0.735</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>p &gt; 0.05 (insignificant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>CMMS</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>1.517</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>p &gt; 0.05 (insignificant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OMCs</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Taking notes during classes" was perceived as the most important writing task by both groups (CMMS, 1.26; OMCs, 1.41). CMMS declared "writing assignment" as the second and "writing class quizzes and exams" as the third most important writing task. Their means were calculated as 1.66 and 1.81 respectively. "Writing certain reports" was given the last position with a reading of 1.91. OMCs identified "writing assignment" and "writing certain reports" as the second and third, 1.71 and 1.80, in the ranking of importance. "Writing for class quizzes and exams" was declared the least important task in this regard with a low value of 2.32, SD for CMMS responses for items 24-27 remained less than one that indicated low within the group differences whereas SD reading for all the items except 25 for OMCs was also calculated less than one. Independent-Samples T Test reported statistically significant difference for two (24 & 25) items of table 6.

**VI. Discussion**

**Perceived Proficiency in English Language Skills**

The first five items on the questionnaire sought samples' responses regarding their perceived proficiency level in English language skills. The results indicate that both groups had high proficiency in reading and writing but in reverse order: CMMS rated reading first (reading, 2.26; writing, 2.54) whereas OMCs declared writing at the top
Choudhary Zahid Javid, Muhammad Umer

A probable reason for this finding might be the fact that reading has been emphasized more in their EMP syllabus at CMMS. Both groups reported that their proficiency in listening skills was third on this ranking (CMMS, 2.58; OMCs, 2.44) and they had least proficiency in speaking (CMMS, 3.11; OMCs, 2.89). Low values for grammar proficiency seem to suggest that samples perceived it a difficult area. Research has offered valuable insights into the fact that Saudi students' reported proficiency in different language skills is exaggerated and higher as compared to their actual proficiency (AlHarbi, 2005; Al-Gorashi, 1988; Al-mulhim, 2001; Basturkmen, 1998; Ghenghesh, Hamed and Abdelfattah, 2011).

VII. Perceived importance of English language skills

Differing perceptions were identified by both groups in listening, speaking and reading skills but both groups unanimously declared writing as the least important skill (CMMS, 2.17; OMCs, 2.92) for their medical study confirming Basturkmen's (1998) findings that writing was not very important for freshmen students of Kuwait University. CMMS declared speaking skills as the most important for their studies followed by reading skills with mean values of 1.63 and 1.81 respectively. OMCs identified listening as the most important and speaking was declared second in this regard (1.97; 2.01). The results for OMCs were consistent with the findings of Yang (1985) and Guo (1989) but contradicted the finding of Rettanapinyowing et al. (1988) who reported reading as the most important language skill followed by writing. CMMS seem persistent in their perception of the importance of reading as they have ranked their reading proficiency higher than OMCs because of its emphasis in CMMS syllabus. The third most important skill was perceived listening by CMMS (1.99) and reading by OMCs (2.03). The results partially confirm Guo's (1987) findings who identified reading as the most important skill followed by listening, writing and reading respectively for medical studies. Responding to the item eliciting their responses regarding grammar, CMMS perceived it more important than OMCs (2.03 and 2.19 respectively).

VIII. Perceived importance of listening tasks

Both groups were consistent in their perceptions of all listening tasks mentioned in the questionnaire. "listening to lectures" was identified as the most important task (CMMS, 1.22; OMCs, 1.34) that confirms the finding of Basturkmen (1998) and Kim (2006). The second and third most important tasks were "understanding power point presentations" (CMMS, 1.46; OMCs, 1.54) and "understanding instruction" (CMMS, 1.49; OMCs, 1.52) that also support Basturkmen's (1998) findings who ranked them eighth and fifth in her ten most important tasks for freshmen students at Kuwait University. "following question/answer sessions" was the least important task as perceived by both groups (CMMS, 1.74; OMCs, 1.70).

IX. Perceived importance of speaking tasks

The results reveal unanimity in the perception of both groups in all except the items 16 and 17. "asking questions" was declared the most important task by both groups (CMMS, 1.37; OMCs, 1.42) whereas "interacting with doctors" was reported third (CMMS, 1.40; OMCs, 1.46) in this ranking. The least important speaking task "giving oral presentations" contradicts the findings of other studies (Kim, 2006; Morita, 2000) that reported this task as very important. CMMS ranked "participating in discussion" second (1.39) and "answering the questions" fourth (1.5). OMCs ranked the same two
items in reverse order with mean values of 1.47 and 1.45 respectively. The results offer deep insights that CMMS perceived all these tasks comparatively more important as compared to OMCs as revealed by higher mean values.

X. Perceived importance of reading tasks

The results indicate that both groups bore similarities in their perceptions of the importance of various reading tasks. The first most important task was "reading textbooks" (CMMS, 1.25; OMCs, 1.32) that confirms the findings of Basturkmen (1998) who identified it the first in her list of the ten most important language tasks. This seems to suggest that Arab students have strong inclination towards following formal textbooks. "reading handouts" and "reading instructions" were assigned the same mean value by CMMS (1.6) as compared to 1.45 and 1.59 respectively by OMCs. The least important reading task was "reading articles in journals" (CMMS, 2.38; OMCs, 1.95). This finding confirms the impression that Saudi students of medicine seem to depend mainly on their textbooks and other reference materials such as articles are not considered important for their studies and examinations.

XI. Perceived importance of writing tasks

The last four items generated data regarding the samples' perceptions of important writing tasks. Both groups partially differed in their responses towards various writing tasks. "taking notes during lectures" was unanimously singled out as the most important (CMMS, 1.26; OMCs, 1.41). The results support Ferris' (1998) finding who declared it very important and partially confirms Basturkmen (1998) who identified this writing task as ninth in her ranking of the ten important language tasks. "writing assignments and homework" was the second in this regard (CMMS, 1.66; OMCs, 1.71). The third most important writing task was "writing class quizzes and exams" (CMMS, 1.81) whereas "writing certain reports" (CMMS, 1.91) was ranked the least important. This finding contradicts Basturkmen's (1998) who identified "writing reports" as the second most important task. OMCs reported these two tasks in reverse order: "writing reports", 1.80 and "writing class quizzes and exams", 2.32.

XII. Findings and recommendations

The data generated from the questionnaire were scientifically analyzed and the following findings and suggestions are forwarded.

EMP students and their academic needs are specific and ready-made teaching materials cannot fulfill them. It is strongly recommended that all the institutions and especially English Language Centers (ELCs) that require addressing specific needs of ESP learners should develop in-house teaching materials based on a comprehensive and standard NA.

The data reveal that students perceived their proficiency level in different language skills as very good but much research (AlHarbi, 2005; Al-Gorashi, 1988; Al-mulhim, 2001; Zaghoul & Hussein, 1985; Ghenghesh, Hamed & Abdelfattah, 2011) and researcher's personal interaction with the CMMS samples as an English teacher seem to suggest that Arab students usually report exaggerated and higher proficiency in this regard. It is suggested that the ELCs and English departments need to
assess learners’ proficiency in different language skills using some standard English language proficiency tests before finalizing EMP syllabus.

The results offer valuable insights that speaking and reading are the most important language skills for the medical undergraduates in the KSA to carry out their studies effectively. It is suggested that speaking and reading should be emphasized more in the EMP teaching materials developed for the medical colleges in the KSA.

The following tasks have been identified important for their studies: listening (listening to lectures and understanding power point presentations); speaking (asking questions, interacting with doctors in the field, participating in discussions and answering the questions); reading (reading textbooks) and writing (taking notes during lectures). It is strongly recommended that the above-mentioned language tasks should be given priority in the EMP curriculum.

Limitation of the study
Although this study tried to involve samples from the medical colleges situated in the different regions of the KSA, yet comparatively a small number of samples from OMCs took part in it. Furthermore this study is limited to the male subjects from Saudi medical colleges.

References:


Choudhary Zahid Javid, Muhammad Umer


Teng, H. (2000). *Analysis of EFL listening needs by Taiwanese college students*. 
Paper presented at the 9th annual international symposium on English Teaching held at Taipei, Taiwan from November 10-12. ED 462862


Appendix # 1
Student Questionnaire (English)

I- PERSONAL
Name: [ ]
Mobile: [ ]
Date: [ ]
Email: [ ]

II- BACKGROUND
* What level of proficiency do you think you have in the following language skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>very good</th>
<th>good</th>
<th>fair</th>
<th>poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Listening</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Speaking</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reading</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Writing</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Grammar</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III- LANGUAGE NEEDS AT CMMS
1. Very important
2. important
3. Less important
4. Not applicable

6. How important is listening skill? 1 2 3 4
7. How important is speaking skill? 1 2 3 4
8. How important is reading skill? 1 2 3 4
9. How important is writing skill? 1 2 3 4
10. How important is grammar? 1 2 3 4

Listening
11. Listening to lectures 1 2 3 4
12. Understanding instructions 1 2 3 4
13. Following question/answer sessions 1 2 3 4
14. Understanding power point presentations 1 2 3 4

Speaking
15. Asking questions 1 2 3 4
16. Participating in discussions 1 2 3 4
17. Answering the questions 1 2 3 4
18. Giving oral presentations 1 2 3 4
19. Interacting with doctors in field 1 2 3 4

Reading
20. Textbooks 1 2 3 4
21. Articles in journals 1 2 3 4
22. Handouts given by teachers 1 2 3 4
23. Instructions for assignments 1 2 3 4

Writing
24. Taking notes in lectures 1 2 3 4
25. Class quizzes and exams 1 2 3 4
26. Assignments 1 2 3 4
27. Certain reports 1 2 3 4