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Identifying the undergraduates' needs and problems of EAP skills at the faculty of education of Tripoli university.

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الملخص:

ملخص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من كيفية إدراك الطلاب الجامعيين لمحتوى مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الأكاديمية (EAP) وما إذا كان ذلك مرتبطًا بتخصصهم الدراسي.

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على احتياجات ومشكلات مهارات اللغة الانجليزية لأغراض اكاديمية لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية في كلية التربية جامعة طرابلس. المشاركون في الدراسة هم طلاب الفصل الدراسي الأخير في برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية الأكاديمي المقدم في كلية التربية. وشمل جمع البيانات استخدام الاستبيان والمقابلة كأدوات رئيسية لجمع البيانات. كشفت نتائج الاستبيان الخاص بالدراسة أن الطلاب شعروا بأن لديهم مشاكل كبيرة في مهاراتهم الإنتاجية في EAP، الكتابة والتحدث بشكل خاص، وتم تصنيفهم على مستوى عالٍ. أشارت النتائج أيضًا إلى أن الطلاب بحاجة إلى تحسين مهاراتهم الاكاديمية في مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية الأربعة في EAP بشكل متساوٍ تقريبًا. أشارت نتائج المقابلة أيضًا إلى أن الطلاب قد واجهوا مشكلات كبيرة في كل مهارة معينة وشعروا أن هناك حاجة إلى تحسين بعض مهارات اللغة الاكاديمية. نأمل أن تساعد نتائج هذه الدراسة مدرسي البرنامج الأكاديمي ومصممي المناهج المهتمين بشدة بتطوير دورات اللغة الانجليزية لأغراض اكاديمية لأن تحليل الاحتياجات هو الخطوة الأولى قبل تصميم دورة لغة الانجليزية لأغراض اكاديمية

Key words: Needs Analysis, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for General Purposes (EGP), English for Specific Purposes(ESP).

Identifying the undergraduates' needs and problems of EAP skills at the faculty of education of Tripoli university

Abstract:

This study aimed to examine how undergraduate students perceived the content of English for academic purposes (EAP) skills and whether it was related to their major of study.

The purpose of the study was to identify the needs and problems of EAP skills among undergraduate students at the faculty of education of Tripoli university. The participants of the study were the final semester students majoring in the English language program offered at the faculty of education. The data collection involved the use of questionnaire and interview as the main instruments. The questionnaire findings of the study revealed that students felt that they had major problems with their EAP productive skills, writing and speaking respectively and were ranked at a high level. The findings also indicated that students needed to improve their EAP skills in the four EAP English skills almost equally. The interview results also indicated that the students had experienced major problems in each particular skill and they felt that certain EAP skills were needed to be improved. The findings of this study will hopefully help EAP instructors and materials designers who are deeply concerned about developing EAP courses because needs analysis is the initial step before designing an EAP language course.

Key words: Needs Analysis, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for General Purposes (EGP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

1. Introduction

English as a lingua franca has a major role in facilitating English learning both as a Second Language (ESL) and as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings across the world. Generally, English language courses at the university level are often offered for two purposes, namely, English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) language courses depends on the purpose of the language course. The ultimate goal of EGP language courses is to develop learners' general language competence in the production and reception of English language with everyday life situations. On the other hand, ESP language course, is an approach to language teaching where all decisions regarding the course content and method are based on the student's reason for learning" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Furthermore, ESP language courses are normally designed to serve one purpose, which is to fulfill the English learners' specific learning goals. However, at the higher university level, ESP language courses such as, English for business communication, or English for academic presentation skills often attempt to equip students with a specific genre to succeed in a specific academic discipline or a particular vocational & technical context.

Therefore, despite the fact that both EGP and ESP language courses are designed to meet students' language learning needs at a higher level of education or training, ESP language courses have often been criticized for not achieving their objectives because some ESP students still feel dissatisfied with their abilities and are unhappy with some aspects of that course (Littlewood & Liu, 1996; Yang, 2006).

Moreover, students at the university level who study the required English courses for academic purposes (EAP), which the most well-known branch of ESP courses, still experience linguistic difficulties due to the inappropriateness

and irrelevance of English-medium content courses. (Evans and Green (2007).

As a consequence Long (2005) suggested that there is an urgent need for language courses of all types to be appropriate and relevant to the specific course takers to serve their purposes. Therefore, this is not only pertaining to EAP or EAP courses to be relevant and content- goal-oriented, they are especially important for EGP courses as without needs analysis, EGP language courses can often be either too detailed or too little than what learners need to learn. (ibid).

Thus, in higher education, English for specific purposes (ESP) such as English for aviation or English for agriculture, (EAP) English for academic purposes have often been the focal point since EAP can apply to all professional fields. In the Libyan higher education context, EAP courses are normally offered to undergraduates, such as those majoring in English, to help the students integrate their English educational skills effectively. Although the EAP skills are offered to university students who have already studied English for over 10 years, their English proficiency still seems low as EFL learners still experience difficulties with most EAP language skills Based on the insightful findings from previous studies on learners' needs and difficulties in language learning, the present study is an effort to identify the problems and needs EFL students have at the university EAP English courses through investigating the EFL students' perceptions. However, the study expands the scope of analysis to examine only the EFL undergraduate students' language needs in ESP/EAP courses without investigating their language needs in EGP for the purpose of the study.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

The faculty of education of Tripoli university offers its undergraduate EFL students an English language program at the English department. To graduate, learners have to pass all course requirements in the curriculum, which are comprised of required courses, elective courses, a small-scale project or an independent study, and a graduate examination. EAP knowledge is mostly offered in the required courses with the aim of helping students to apply all fundamental English skills effectively and allow them to practice all academic English skills. Although the faculty of education tries hard to develop their EAP courses and programs to meet the students' needs, most EFL students who are required to take EAP courses do not feel that these courses meet their needs. As a result, this research study aims to identify the problems and needs of the EFL students regarding all four EAP language skills.

Therefore, this analysis is guided by the following research questions:

1.3 Research Questions

1. What academic English skills are viewed as problems by EFL students?
2. What academic English skills do EFL students need to improve?

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has witnessed a vast growth as a specific discipline in the curriculum of English language teaching. As stated by Thompson & Diani (2015), there has been an increasing demand in the literature of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), especially at the tertiary higher level. Thus, universities offer students the opportunities to study EAP for listening, reading, and writing or communicating with their disciplinary literature, which is published in English (Elsaid Mohammed & Nur, 2018; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

English for specific purposes (ESP) is the teaching and learning of English where the goal of the learner is to use English in a particular discipline or area as stated by Paltridge and Starfield (2013).

The term of English for academic purposes (EAP), which one branch of English for specific purposes (ESP), refers to language research and instruction which focuses on specific needs and practices of particular groups of learners in specific academic contexts as defined by Hyland and Hap-Lyons (2002). The area of EAP knowledge involves reading academic textbooks, writing a composition, giving academic presentations, writing research papers, essays and research articles, etc. (Charles, 2013). The main difference between general English (GE) and academic English (AE) lies in the purposes. In other words, GE does not have specific aims for language learning while AE are for specific domains (Jordan. 1997; Islam, 2011).

2.2 Needs Assessment

Needs assessment is the process of investigating learners' needs that can be used in learning and teaching to develop classroom practices and curricula (Weddel, 1997). Needs analysis, according to Brown (1995), is the systematic collection of information and analysis of all subjective and objective information to determine and design curriculum for particular purposes that meet the language learning needs of students within the context of particular domain or discipline to influence the learning and teaching situations. NA involves different approaches and methods, such as needs analysis, performance analysis, and task analysis (Christensen, 2016) . Needs assessment is the process of selecting needs and identifying problems. It is the process of investigating curriculum planning, diagnosing learners' problems, assessing students' learning, demonstrating accountability, improving practice and safety, or offering individual feedback and educational intervention" (Grant, 2002). Needs analysis according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) are classified as 'lacks', 'wants' and 'necessities', which are used for assessing learners' needs in learning. The term 'necessities' refers to the requirements of the target situation. The term 'wants' refers to what the learners want to know based on their interest, and the term 'lacks' refers to "the problems or difficulties experienced by students". This model suggested by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) can be used to investigate academic English skills for the English language learners in the EFL setting.

Academic English Skills

Over the past few years, education research has given much attention to the importance of EAP to enable EFL students to study content knowledge, gain specific skills, and be aware of certain literacies necessary to succeed in their academic study and professional life.

Academic English (AE) as defined by Cummins (2011) is the kind of English that is needed for reading, writing, speaking and listening in the academic content areas. The mastery of these skills is the key for success for learners to be able to makes use of opportunities in academic setting.

These academic skills go beyond the literacy of technological uses and they focus on the learners' proficiency in critical thinking, problem-solving and communication in order to students succeed in their academic life. Menggo et al. (2019). Therefore, teaching materials should be designed to meet the learners' needs of these skills. However, research on learners' language needs has also indicated that the EAP skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are the key skills needed in EAP curriculum (e.g., (Basturkmen, 2010; Chatsungnoen, 2015; Shing & Sim, 2011; Thompson & Diani, 2015).

The literature on EAP skills is abundant. Academic writing is the most important skill in the teaching and learning of EAP skills despite the fact that it is the most challenging skill compared to other EAP skills. As most researchers and language instructors argue that in order to write a paragraph or an essay, language instructors should teach not only the mechanics of writing, but they have to teach grammar and vocabulary, too. As stated by Solikhah (2015), academic students experience difficulty in creativity writing due to their low level in vocabulary and grammar.

As a matter of fact, academic writing is the most important skill for university students in higher education to achieve success in various purposes. For students to reflect their competence in that language, they are required to produce essays, written examinations in order to demonstrate their mastery of the course content.

Therefore, one could argue that to assess learners' academic writing language instructors should pay attention to the content and style of the writing, the text structure, argument construction, grammar, and punctuation.

However, language has been defined as a medium of communication. The teaching of speaking has received significant attention in the context of English as a foreign or second language. The teaching of academic speaking has been the most important skill to

be learnt since many academic students want to be able to communicate effectively. As Eiadeh et al. (2016) pointed out that more emphasis should be given to develop students' academic speaking in order to communicate in English. The speaking skill has been found particularly problematic because it does not only require enough practice opportunities to speak in the language (Sun et al,. 2017; Hakim & Rima, 2022) which a formal classroom cannot provide (Sun et al,. 2017; Levak & Son, 2017), but it should also be integrated to contain its four sub-skills, which are fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.

More importantly, the development of speaking materials should consider the learners' academic needs and therefore should be based on needs analysis. Because of the role of needs analysis to help language instructors and material developers to make the right decisions for the speaking material development. Designing Academic speaking materials should consider students' target and learning needs of speaking skills such as, grammar, pronunciation, discourse and fluency (Menggo & Suastra, 2019).

Moreover, selecting the appropriate speaking materials will help learners to become more fluent and accurate when expressing their views. Despite the major role that needs analysis plays in identifying the learners' academic English speaking skills to succeed in their academic study or job career, the concept has not been fully investigated in the Libyan higher education context Moreover, academic reading has also been regarded as the most important skill for academic students to understand the knowledge of their own discipline area (Wahyono & Puspitasari, 2016). It is important since it helps them access information as references to comprehend their relevant area of study. Therefore, needs analysis should consider the learners' needs towards their requirements of the reading context before start teaching them how to read (Kose et al., 2019).

As long as academic listening is concerned, it is considered important since it is an integral part of the communication process. Listening can positively affect the development of other skills; speaking, reading, and writing skills in learning a language. Listening in EAP has its own characteristic needs in English and demands the utilization of identical sub-skills in line with the purpose for listening context (Goh, 2013). Further to that, designing EAP listening materials entails specific listening skills appropriate and relevant to the needs of learners' academic study (ibid). Academic Listening can be defined as an active process which requires a wide range of sub skills such as distinguishing between sounds,

understanding vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpreting intonation, and decoding information to be interpreted in context later (Astorga, 2011).

Therefore, the EAP instruction at the tertiary level should focus mostly on academic language, which students need to use to for their specific domain. Thus, students enroll in English for Academic Purposes at the faculty of education require EAP language skills to understand academic content and engage in classroom activities and assignments; it is also important for the teachers to employ specific and technical terminologies that will empower students to master EAP skills for their academic studies and professional life.

2.3 Previous Studies

Literature on EAP has shown that much research has been conducted to investigate the EAP problems and needs of university students. For instance, a survey study by Evans and Green (2007) in Hong Kong higher education was conducted to investigate the language problems encountered by Cantonese-speaking students with reference to the four EAP academic English skills – writing, reading, speaking and listening skills. The results of their study revealed that difficult and subject specific vocabulary was the major problem as well as some complex grammatical structures. As for the academic writing skill, vocabulary and grammar aspects were found more difficult than the content or structure of academic written texts. Regarding academic reading, comprehending difficult words and technical vocabulary posed a major problem for learners in academic reading and listening. In terms of speaking, grammatical accuracy was found as the most challenging skill for learners.

Another study by Berman and Cheng (2010) carried out needs analysis to examine students' perceptions towards the EAP use. The findings indicated that students who are native speakers of English experienced some difficulties in the four English skills almost equally and listening skill was found to be the easiest. The findings of their study also found that students who are non-native speakers of English found the four language skills slightly more challenging than students who are native speakers of English. Both kinds of students agreed that academic writing skill was the most difficult compared to other academic language skills.

In the same vein, Noori (2020) conducted a study to analyze the academic writing problems among 121 undergraduate English majors at Kabul University, experiencing difficulties in writing. The findings revealed that students encountered major problems in academic writing with reference to vocabulary and grammar, structure, style and organization, and content genres, conclusions, sources when writing academically.

A similar study by Liu, Chang, Yang and Sun (2011) to investigate the needs of college students in English courses for general and specific/academic purposes showed that the most important skill was speaking and writing equally followed by reading and listening, respectively. The results also found that students needed speaking skill as the most important one, followed by other skills of listening, writing and reading.

Another longitudinal study by Evans and Morrison (2011) to investigate the problems of students in higher education in Hong Kong revealed that first year university students experienced four major problems related to comprehending technical vocabulary, understanding lectures, using an appropriate style and meeting their discipline requirements.

Another study by Terraschke and Wahid (2011) to assess the effect of EAP on the academic experiences with international postgraduate students. The results revealed that the international students encountered major difficulties in the four academic language skills listening, speaking, reading, writing skills. As for academic listening, the students had real problems in understanding the instructors' accents and their speed of speech. Regarding academic speaking skill, students did not feel comfortable speaking in classes and they could not ask questions as they needed confidence in order to communicate. With reference to academic reading, students reported that they experienced difficulties in reading various reading texts and technical vocabulary and unfamiliar terms. The study concluded that academic writing was found as the most difficult skill for them to learn. A more recent study by Gaffas (2019) to examine the undergraduate students' perceptions towards the impact of the general and specific courses they take in English on their academic language proficiency and usage. Surveys, interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data on students' perceptions about what problems they faced considering academic

speaking, writing, reading and listening. The study results found that students' poor vocabulary knowledge was the greatest difficulty in all four skills.

A study by Sukprasert and Sumalee (2016) to examine the most important EAP skills for postgraduates in tertiary education in Bangkok conducting needs analysis employing a questionnaire. The results of their study found that most participants tended to have the most needs and problems in all EAP skills. Due to the fact that this study used only a questionnaire to collect the data, the researcher suggested that interviews should be conducted in further future research in order to identify the learners' needs and problems of EAP skills.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To identify the problems of academic English skills as perceived by EFL students.
2. To identify the academic English skills that EFL students need most to improve.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study was based on descriptive quantitative research, which aimed to identify the problems and needs of EAP skills among B.A students. The adapted questionnaire and interviews were used as the instruments to answer the research questions. Quantitative approaches involve numbers which aim to generalize the results to the existing literature. The data collected were analyzed through statistical analysis. This approach was utilized as it is more objective and less biased.

3.2 Setting of the Study

The context of this study was the English department at the faculty of education of Tripoli university in Libya. This faculty was investigated as it provided English educational programs with English as a medium of instruction. Four EAP required courses, namely, writing, reading, listening and speaking are offered to the B.A students in order to help the students improve their EAP skills. Therefore, for the purpose of the study to identify the

problems and needs of EFL students regarding the educational English language program, only the EAP skills were investigated.

3.3 Sample

The participants of this study were 20 students in their final semester of the B.A English language program at the faculty of education. The students were chosen since they all passed their EAP required courses of the ELT programs and had a high level of proficiency in English.

3.4. Instruments

The instruments employed to collect the data for this study were a questionnaire and interviews. The main data collection tool was a questionnaire with closed-ended questions adapted from Evans and Green's study (2006). Interviews were used to support the findings obtained from the questionnaire and to gain more in-depth data from the participants that might not be included in the questionnaire.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of two sections about the problems and needs of ELT students regarding their EAP Skills. The participants were asked to rate the level of agreement for the problems and needs for each academic English skill with a five-point scale ranging from; 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 =Strongly agree.

To achieve the validity of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was presented in English and piloted to 10 B.A students in the same university course as suggested by Isaac and Michael (1995) that 10 to 30 participants are a sufficient number for piloting any data collection tools and the reliability coefficients for the questionnaire were achieved at 0.80.

3.4.2. Interviews

After completing the questionnaire, the participants were asked to attend individual interview sessions in order to obtain more in-depth data about the problems and needs of EAP academic English skills. As stated by (McLeod, 2014) interviews help a researcher

to obtain information more sufficiently and quickly since the questions are designed and given to participants in the same order. The participants voluntarily took part in interview sessions and were asked the same two questions. The individual interviews were conducted face-to-face with the researcher. The questions employed in this part were:

Q1: What academic English skill is the most problematic and why?

Q2: What academic English skill do you need to improve most and why?

Also, to avoid any misunderstandings in the interpretations and wording of the questions so as to make the interviewees feel more relaxed for the interviews, Arabic language was used.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis

After collecting the data, the responses to the closed-ended items in the questionnaire were analyzed using statistical analysis. As a result, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, including means, standard deviation, levels, ranks, were run to identify EFL learners' problems and needs towards academic English skills in the academic English language program. The interpretation of the five-point scale of the questionnaire was as follow:

Tables (1): shows the weighted averages of means, standard deviations, ranks and levels according to the five-point Likert scale:

Level of agreement	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Points	1	2	3	4	5
Weighted average of the five points Likert scale	1.00 - 1.49	1.50 - 2.49	2.50 - 3.49	3.50 - 4.49	4.50 - 5.00
Level of interpretation	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high

Qualitative Data Analysis

The interview data were used to identify in depth the students' EAP problems and needs in order to support the questionnaire findings. Each audio interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Finally, the participants' quotes were selected and presented for the findings and discussion sections.

4.RESULTS

This section presents the findings from the data collected from the questionnaires and structured interviews in order to identify the problems and needs of academic English skills based on the undergraduate students' perceptions.

Academic writing skills	Level of agreement							
	Problems				Needs			
	Mean	S. D	Level	Rank	Mean	S. D	Level	Rank
1-How to use appropriate academic style	2.84	1.167	Medium	10	2.750	1.090	Medium	10
2-How to express ideas clearly& logically	3.62	1.227	High	6	3.400	1.241	Medium	5
3-How to write research papers & academic essays	4.20	0.926	high	2	3.750	1.178	High	1
4-How to link sentences smoothly	3.00	1.178	Medium	8	2.900	1.375	Medium	9
5-How to write coherent paragraphs	3.98	0.714	High	4	3.400	1.319	Medium	6
6-How to write academic projects, thesis, reports.	4.22	0.764	high	1	3.600	1.241	High	2

7-How to write summary & conclusion	2.98	1.348	Medium	9	3.000	1.449	Medium	8
8-How to do paraphrasing & proofreading	3.84	1.076	High	5	3.600	1.319	High	3
9-How to write critiques to an article	4.00	1.010	High	3	3.550	1.284	High	4
10-How to write references, bibliography /work-cited	3.48	1.313	medium	7	3.100	1.411	Medium	7
Total	3.61	1.009	High		3.305	1.291	Neutral	-

1. Academic writing skills

The findings on the problems and needs of undergraduate students in academic writing skills were rated by the five-point Likert scale and were analyzed by means and standard deviation (SD) , ranks and levels of effect were obtained to determine the perceptions of the respondents according to each item on the questionnaire. It is, therefore, important to clarify that only the highest average means and standard deviations representing students' responses would be considered to represent the levels of agreement about the problems and needs of undergraduate students in academic writing skills.

Problems of Academic Writing Skills

Table 1 shows the problems of undergraduates students towards academic English writing skills. It is clear from (table 1) that the overall mean of the responses was (M = 3.61, SD = 1.009) which was ranked at the high level of agreement regarding the problems of their academic English writing skills; however, they agreed that "How to write academic projects, thesis, reports." (M = 4.22, SD = 0.764), followed by "How to write research

papers & academic essays " (M = 4.20, SD = 0.926) and "How to write critiques to an article " (M = 4.00, SD = 1.010) were rated as highly problematic.

Needs of Academic Writing Skills

Table 1 shows the needs of undergraduates students to improve academic English writing skills. It is clear from (table 1) that the overall mean of the responses was (M = 3.305, SD = 1.291) which was ranked at the Medium level of agreement regarding their needs to improve academic English writing skills falling within the medium level of effect The findings revealed that the participants needed to improve their academic English writing at a medium level. 'How to write research papers & academic essays was rated the highest (M = 3.750, SD = 1.178) area, followed by "How to write academic projects, thesis, reports". (M = 3.600, SD = 1.241) and "How to do paraphrasing & proofreading" (M = 3.600, SD = 1.319). however, the lowest score of academic writing skills was "How to use appropriate academic style" (M = 2.750, SD = 1.090).

The results, therefore, suggest that the undergraduates need to improve most of the academic English writing skills listed in the questionnaire.

Academic reading skills	**Level of agreement**							
	Problems				**Needs**			
	Mean	S. D	Level	Rank	Mean	S. D	Level	Rank
1-how to understand specialist vocabulary	2.950	1.264	Medium	6	3.000	1.304	Medium	9
2-how to work out the meaning of difficult words	3.21	1.455	Medium	8	3.050	1.322	Medium	8
3- how to identify key ideas	3.42	1.328	Medium	5	3.200	1.364	Medium	5

4- how to read quickly to get overall meaning	2.97	1.122	Medium	10	3.400	1.393	Medium	4
5- how to read carefully to understand a text	3.03	1.197	Medium	9	3.150	1.352	Medium	6
6- how to identify supporting ideas & examples	3.63	1.217	High	3	3.500	1.204	High	2
7- how to understand the organization of a text	3.45	1.350	Medium	4	3.150	1.314	Medium	6
8- how to read quickly to find information	3.37	1.217	Medium	7	2.950	1.244	Medium	10
9- how to interpret graphs, diagrams, tables	4.03	.915	High	1	3.800	1.166	High	1
10- how to read articles in journals & newspaper articles	3.76	1.101	High	2	3.450	1.421	Medium	3
Total	3.43	1.226	Medium	-	3.265	1.308	Medium	-

2 Academic reading Skills

The findings on the problems and needs of undergraduate students in academic reading skills were rated by the five-point Likert scale and were analyzed by means and standard deviation (SD) , ranks and levels of effect were obtained to determine the perceptions of the respondents according to each item on the questionnaire. It is, therefore, important to clarify that only the highest average means and standard deviations representing students' responses would be considered to represent the levels of agreement about the problems and needs of undergraduate students in academic reading skills.

Problems of Academic Reading Skills

Table 2 shows the problems of undergraduates students towards academic English reading skills. It is clear from (table 2) that the overall mean of the responses was (M = 2.871, SD = 1.362) which was ranked at the neutral level of agreement regarding the problems of their academic English reading skills falling within the medium level of effect ; however, they agreed that "how to interpret graphs, diagrams, tables." (M = 3.350, SD = 1.276), followed by "how to read articles in journals & newspaper articles " (M = 3.150, SD = . 1.424) and "how to identify supporting ideas & examples " (M = 3.055, SD = 1.431) were highly problematic.

Needs of Academic Reading Skills

Table 2 shows the needs of undergraduates students to improve academic English reading skills. It is clear from (table 2) that the overall mean of the responses was (M = 3.265, SD = 1.308) which was ranked at the neutral level of agreement regarding their needs to improve academic English reading skills . The findings revealed that the participants needed to improve their academic English reading at a medium level. The findings showed that 'how to interpret graphs, diagrams, tables was rated the highest (M = 3.800, SD = 1.166), followed by "how to identify supporting ideas & examples". (M = 3.500, SD = 1.204) and "how to read articles in journals & newspaper articles" (M = 3.450, SD = 1.421). however, the lowest score of academic reading skills was "how to read quickly to find information" (M = 2.950, SD = 1.244).

Academic speaking skills	**Level of agreement**							
	Problems				**Needs**			
	Mean	S. D	level	S. D	Mean	S. D	level	S. D
1- how to speak with clear pronunciation	2.86	1.178	Medium	9	3.500	1.323	High	7

2- how to speak with accurate grammar	3.50	0.974	High	7	3.300	1.345	Medium	8
3- how to communicate ideas fluently & confidently	3.66	0.745	High	5	3.545	1.465	High	6
4- how to participate actively in discussions	3.66	0.982	High	6	3.200	1.364	Medium	9
5- how to ask and answer questions	2.80	1.107	Medium	10	3.000	1.304	Medium	10
6- how to present oral reports & give oral instructions	3.98	0.654	High	3	3.600	1.319	High	3
7- how to make presentations	4.10	0.931	High	1	3.700	1.269	High	1
8- how to use visual aids	3.08	1.275	Medium	8	3.565	1.284	High	4
9- how to give short speech	3.98	0.654	High	4	3.650	1.276	High	2
10- how to describe situations & abstract concepts orally.	4.04	0.781	High	2	3.550	1.465	High	5
Total	3.56	0.867	High		3.461	1.341	Medium	

3.Academic Speaking Skills

The findings on the problems and needs of undergraduate students in academic speaking skills were rated by the five-point Likert scale and were analyzed by means and standard deviation (SD) , ranks and levels of effect were obtained to determine the perceptions of the respondents according to each item on the questionnaire. It is, therefore, important to clarify that only the highest average means and standard deviations representing students' responses would be considered to represent the levels of agreement about the problems and needs of undergraduate students in academic speaking skills.

Problems of Academic Speaking Skills

Table 3 shows the problems of undergraduates students towards academic English reading skills. It is clear from (table 3) that the overall mean of the responses was (M = 3.56, SD = 0.867) which was ranked at the high level of agreement regarding the problems of their academic English speaking skills; however, they agreed that "how to make presentations." (M = 4.10, SD = 0.931), followed by "how to describe situations & abstract concepts orally. " (M = 4.04, SD = . 0.781) and "how to present oral reports & give oral instructions " (M = 3.98, SD = 0.654) were rated as high problems at a high level.

Needs of Academic Speaking Skills

Table 3 shows the needs of undergraduates students to improve academic English speaking skills. It is clear from (table 3) that the overall mean of the responses was (M = 3.461, SD = 1.341) which was ranked at the neutral level of agreement regarding their needs to improve academic English speaking skills. The findings revealed that the participants needed to improve their academic English speaking at a medium level. The findings showed that “how to make presentations" was rated the highest (M = 3.700, SD = 1.269), followed by "how to give short speech". (M = 3.650, SD = 1.276) and “how to present oral reports & give oral instructions "(M = 3.600, SD = 1.319). However, the lowest score of academic speaking skill was "how to ask and answer questions" (M = 3.000, SD = 1.304).

Academic listening skills	Level of agreement							
	Problems				Needs			
	Mean	S. D	Level	Rank	Mean	S. D	Level	Rank
1-how to listen and understand key vocabulary	2.84	1.093	Medium	10	3.150	1.424	Medium	7
2- how to listen and recognize supporting ideas & examples	3.42	.967	Medium	5	3.200	1.400	Medium	6
3- how to listen and follow a discussion and understand key points	3.24	.796	Medium	6	3.000	1.449	Medium	8
4- how to listen and understand the main ideas of lectures	3.24	1.116	Medium	7	3.000	1.449	Medium	9
5- how to listen and understand the organization of lectures	3.17	1.342	Medium	8	3.350	1.424	Medium	5
6- how to listen and identify different views & ideas	3.62	.953	high	1	3.600	1.281	High	2
7-how to listen to lectures for general understanding to obtain gist.	3.03	.986	Medium	9	3.000	1.449	Medium	10

8- how to listen for specific points to remember to obtain specific information.	3.42	.841	Medium	4	3.400	1.393	Medium	4
9- how to listen and take brief, clear notes	3.54	1.070	high	3	3.400	1.281	Medium	3
10- how to listen and understand discussions, seminars & presentations .	3.55	.921	high	2	3.650	1.314	High	1
Total	3.31	1.01	Medium	-	3.275	1.386	Medium	-

4.Academic Listening Skills

The findings on the problems and needs of undergraduate students in academic listening skills were rated by the five-point Likert scale and were analyzed by means and standard deviation (SD), ranks and levels of effect were obtained to determine the perceptions of the respondents according to each item on the questionnaire. It is, therefore, important to clarify that only the highest average means and standard deviations representing students' responses would be considered to represent the levels of agreement about the problems and needs of undergraduate students in academic listening skills.

Problems of Academic Listening Skills

Table 4 shows the problems of undergraduates students towards academic English listening skills. It is clear from (table 4) that the overall mean of the responses was (M = 3.31, SD = 1.01) which was ranked at the neutral level of agreement regarding the problems of their academic English listening skills; however, they agreed that "‘ how to listen and identify different views & ideas. " (M = 3.62 , SD = .953), followed by "how to listen and understand discussions, seminars & presentations ." (M = 3.55 , SD = .921),

and "how to listen and take brief, clear notes " (M = 3.54 , SD = 1.070) were rated as problems at a high level.

Needs of Academic Listening Skills

Table 4 shows the needs of undergraduates students to improve academic English speaking skills. It is clear from (table 4) that the overall mean of the responses was (M = 3.275, SD = 1.386) which was ranked at the neutral level of agreement regarding their needs to improve academic English listening skills. The findings revealed that the participants needed to improve their academic English listening at a medium level. The findings showed that “how to listen and understand discussions, seminars & presentations" was rated the highest (M = 3.650, SD = 1.314), followed by ‘–"how to listen and identify different views & ideas." (M = 3.600, SD = 1.281) and “how to listen and take brief, clear notes "(M = 3.400, SD = 1.281). However, the lowest scores of academic listening skill were items (3, 4 & 7) in the questionnaire with (M = 3.000, SD = 1.449).

Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with five students at the end of the course which were essential to obtain more insights about their perceptions towards the EAP English skills. The participants were selected voluntarily for the interviews and the interviews sessions were conducted in an informal atmosphere. As it is important to describe the purpose of the study for the interviews as suggested by (Alsaawi, 2014), participants were given some information before conducting the interview. At the end of the sessions, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Below is the information obtained on each participant who was interviewed about the problems and needs of the EAP English Skills.

Q1: What academic English skill is the most problematic and why?

Q2: What academic English skill do you need to improve the most and why?

–Participant 1: I find writing skill as the most problematic skill because of the difficulty with the formality style and its academic vocabulary.

I think need to improve writing skills because I want to write it with the correct grammar.

-Participant 2: My biggest problem is with the writing skill. I find it difficult to organize the ideas in logical ways.

I need to improve my writing skill by exposing to more academic writing samples.

-Participant 3: I have a difficulty with reading because I find it hard to understand academic articles and papers due to the specialist vocabulary. I need more strategies on how to skim and scan. Also, I can't understand main idea of a text.

I would like to improve my listening skill because I cannot understand people when they speak fast and with the different accent.

-Participant 4: I think speaking skill is the most difficult for me due to the lack of practice to speak. I can't speak English fluently and confidently.

Speaking is the skill that i need to improve most to because it is a medium of communication.

-Participant 5: I find speaking and writing the most difficult and problematic skills. Because I do not have a wide range of vocabulary and a good command of grammar.

I need to improve my speaking and writing skills. I need to give presentations in English, also I want to write like formal emails and letters.

5. Discussion

This section presents the interpretation of the findings of the study. The first research question dealt with the problems of EAP English skills as perceived by the participants and reflected in the findings of the study was:

1. What academic English skills are viewed as problems by EFL students?

This research question aimed to identify the problems of academic English skills that B.A undergraduate students feel they have experienced. The participants felt that some of the EAP skills were highly problematic for them. However, by looking deeper at of the

findings on academic writing skills, there were some other EAP skills that were perceived as lacks such **as "How to write coherent paragraphs", "How to do paraphrasing & proofreading" and "How to express ideas clearly& logically",** which were rated as the most problematic areas at a high level. One participant stated in regard to academic writing skills that "My biggest problem is with the writing skill. I find it difficult to organize the ideas in logical ways".

Moreover, vocabulary and formality in academic writing were perceived as problems from the interviews. As one participant stated that "I find writing skill as the most problematic skill because of the difficulty with the formality style and its academic vocabulary". he also adds. "I think need to improve writing skills because I want to write it with the correct grammar."

In addition, grammar was perceived as a problem, they felt that they were not able to perform their academic writing effectively due to a lack of grammar and vocabulary. As one participants said "I find speaking and writing the most difficult and problematic skills". "Because I do not have a wide range of vocabulary and a good command of grammar.".

As for the problems of the EAP speaking skills, there were other major problems that were perceived as lacks by students, such as, "**how to give short speech**", "**how to communicate ideas fluently & confidently**", "**how to participate actively in discussions**" **and** "**how to speak with accurate grammar**". **Based on the interview finding, one participant said:** "I think speaking skill is the most difficult for me due to the lack of practice to speak". "I can't speak English fluently and confidently". "Speaking is the skill that i need to improve most to because it is a medium of communication."

On the whole, it can be concluded that most problems of the EAP English skills as perceived by students were found in their productive skills, writing and speaking respectively, which were found at a high level of agreement compared to other academic EAP problems found in their receptive skills, listening and reading skills, which were found at a medium level of agreement.

Therefore, the findings of this study are similar to the findings of Liu, Chang, Yang and Sun (2011) and are also similar to Terraschke and Wahid (2011).

2. What academic English skills do EFL students need to improve?

The purpose of this research question was to identify the academic English skills that B.A undergraduate students needed to improve. The findings indicated that B.A undergraduate students needed to improve their academic EAP English skills. Academic English writing and speaking were most stressed in the interviews; as one participant said that: "I need to improve my speaking and writing skills. I need to give presentations in English, also I want to write like formal emails and letters."

As long as writing and speaking are concerned, the results from the interview also indicated that students needed to improve their productive skills. As one students said "I need to improve my speaking and writing skills". "I need to give presentations in English, also I want to write like formal emails and letters.". Another participant said "I need to improve my writing skill by exposing to more academic writing samples". One more participant said: "I think need to improve writing skills because I want to write it with the correct grammar". This finding is similar to the study of Berman and Cheng in 2010, which revealed that writing skill was the most needed skill to improve.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate the main challenges in EAP skills faced by students majoring in English at the faculty of education of Tripoli University.
More specifically, the present study aimed to examine how undergraduate students perceived the content of English for academic purposes (EAP) skills and whether it was related to their major of study.

The main goal of the study was to identify the needs and problems of EAP skills based on the students' perceptions. The participants of the study were the 20 students majoring in the English language program offered at the faculty of education. The data collection involved the use of questionnaire and interview as the main data collection instruments. The questionnaire findings of the study revealed that students felt that they had major problems with EAP skills in their productive skills, writing and speaking respectively and were at a high level. The findings also indicated that students needed to improve their EAP skills in the four EAP English skills almost equally. The interview results also indicated that students had experienced major problems in each particular skill and they felt that certain EAP skills were needed to be improved. The findings of this study will

hopefully help EAP instructors and materials designers who are deeply concerned about developing EAP courses because needs analysis is the initial step before designing an EAP language course as well as producing teaching materials and developing language assessment methods.

The study suggested to design a program or course for EFL students in EAP contexts, needs analysis should be conducted as the findings of this study indicated a discrepancy between problems and needs regarding each particular academic skill.

Limitations of the Study

Owing to the limitation of budget and time, only one faculty of education of Tripoli university in Libya was under investigation. Another limitation of this study is that it is a small scale research. Second, although, the findings of this study provided some valuable information about the problems and needs of EAP skills to the current literature and were consistent with other previous studies, they might not be generalizable to all undergraduate students in Libya.

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