

## Sciences Faculty Students' Perceptions of the Role of English Language Course in Meeting Workplace Language Needs

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### ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at investigating the reasons behind faculty of science undergraduates' English language learning along with identifying their most needed language skills. Further, it sought to shed light on undergraduates' evaluation of the course merits for future job together with ascertaining their self confidence in job interviews. In order to achieve its objectives, descriptive research design was used in the present study; questionnaires and interviews which were developed by the researcher and then were checked for reliability and validity measures. The sample of the study consisted of 294 (150 male; 144 female) faculty of science undergraduates who responded to the survey questionnaire. Upon filling in the questionnaire, 30 students were interviewed. The findings of the study indicated undergraduates' keenness to learn English for the reason that it will help them in their future career. The results of the study also showed that listening was the most important language skill for science students as it helps them in their course of study. Furthermore, the study reported that English language course stressed reading and grammar skills rather than communication language skills that are crucial in developing students' self-confidence for workplace.

**Keywords:** English language, faculty of science undergraduates, workplace, Jordan.

### Introduction

Workplace is extensively quoted as a crucial reason to study a foreign language. It is certainly a 21<sup>st</sup> century debate rationale for learning English language in countries where English is not first or second. It has been a recurrent theme of *Modern Language Journal* from its inauguration in 1916. Consistent with the challenges of globalization, undergraduate students who have a good command of the English language skills get hold of jobs that may help them in having a successful life upon graduation. All undergraduates need to be proficient in English so that to make sure that they will be employed. An assessment of their needs, having faculty of science undergraduates as a model, can identify the needed language skills for their employment. In this regard, Stevens (2005) stated that the ability to communicate successfully, orally and in writing, will turn out to be with great value as language proficiency increases the impact of communication in the workplace.

This study has a main purpose to investigate science faculty undergraduates' readiness for workplace with reference to their English language learning at English language departments. Students, usually, have language problems in English language learning in different parts of the world, particularly for the countries that English is a foreign language and not spoken as the mother tongue. English language has always played a crucial role in the development of Jordan; nevertheless the English proficiency level of Jordanian undergraduates is still far from satisfactory. In this regard, Arab EFL learners proficiency was reported (Al-Jarf, 2008; Ibrahim, 1975; Javid & Al-Khairi, 2011; Rababah, 2003; Zughoul, 1986) as unsatisfactory and did not reach its anticipated goals along with considerable weakness in all language skills. The role of English in workplace is well-known. To become proficient graduates, thus, students in Jordan need to learn skills pertaining to job interviews, teleconference communication, presentations.

According to Yarmouk University (2016), the aim of science faculty is as follows: To create first-degree graduates well

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prepared to follow careers in their chosen specialization and more largely, in the public sector (mainly in international institutions) where knowledge of another culture and its language is crucial. Concerning the aim of language programmes, they aim to equip graduates with the ability to establish interpersonal, interpretive and presentational communication skills.

Byram, Talkington, and Lengal (2004) introduced intercultural competence as the ability to interact in multifaceted social settings where mother tongue language skills alone are not enough for accommodating cultural contexts. For that reason, employers value undergraduates' cultural knowledge. Now higher education institutions are responsible for endowing them with all kinds of skills. As early as 1993, Flowerdew referred to an entire range of tasks that assist learners to be professional in workplace, such as interviews, press conferences, letters and reports, presentations. That is, all reading, speaking, listening and writing skills are equally important.

Sarjit (1993) conducted a needs analysis study of 36 consultants, 4 directors and one instructor at University Putra Malaysia. In order to achieve the aim of her study, Sarjit used survey questionnaires, face to face interviews and observation checklist. The study reported that instrumental motivation stand as the reason behind English language learning. What's more, Maes, Weldy and Icenogle (1997) introduced a whole range of tasks that assist learners to be professional in workplace such as following directions, speaking, and offering or getting feedback.

Pereira, Louis and Lok (2002) examined both undergraduates' perspectives of English Language proficiency. They reported occurrences of problems in undergraduates' oral communications that are related to their self- confidence. This was correlated to their low levels of motivation. Also, the 'speaking' skill was ranked as the most significant skill trailed by the writing skill.

Gallagher-Brett (2005) stated *700 Reasons for studying languages* which were collected from a wide range of source comprising reports, articles, along with interviews etc. The term of 'employability', commonly, is central in evaluating higher education institutions. In this regard, Knight and York (2004, p. 4) explained it as: "*a set of achievements - skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make individuals more likely to gain employment.*" Knight and York, also, introduced the 'USEM Model' of employability constituents where it stands for the skills of: Understanding, skillful tasks, Efficacy beliefs and Metacognition.

In Turkey, the association of attitudes and learning was examined by Karahan (2007). To achieve such aim, a survey questionnaire was distributed to 190 eighth grade private primary school students. The study reported that the participants did not show great level proficiency in English language learning in spite of the fact that they realize its significance. That is, most students cannot achieve the anticipated level of proficiency in English because of their attitudes. Further, Carol, Khaun, and Singh (2011) reported that, by the means of a survey questionnaire, that 80% of corporations recruit graduates who are proficient in English.

Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac and Lawton (2012, p.8) identified the role of higher education in higher education as: "*to enhance the employment potential for the full spectrum of its graduates, while acknowledging that economic forces, of various kinds, will influence the graduates' success*".

Sometimes, the increase in the effectiveness of English language learning has not reached its satisfaction towards fulfilling the demands of societies. In Malaysia, for example, set of factors were articulated by Normazidah, Koo, and Hazita (2012) in addition to Trawiński (2005) as learners perceive it as a difficult subject that lacks support to be used at home or community since they have limited exposure to the language. Muthiah (2003) aimed at examining Malaysian ESP course undergraduates' ability to communicate by asking them to reply to complaints. These written complaints, however, were evaluated by real bank officers. To achieve this aim, the study used verbal protocols along with structured interviews. The study reported a low quality of English in the workplace. Additionally, the study presented workplace (i.e. bank officers) of undergraduates' language errors.

A positive correlation between self-confidence and language proficiency has been articulated by many authors such as: Aryana, 2010; Al-Hattab, 2006; Al-Hebaish, 2012; Lloyd & Sullivan, 2003; Lockett & Harrell; Schmidt & Padilla, 2003. Promoting students' oral communication abilities is central in producing competent speakers of a foreign language.

Language learning is a complex as it entails cognitive and affective factors (Brown, 2000). Dörnyei (1994) stated that the concept of self-confidence is associated with self-esteem since both are concerned with perception of the ability of oneself. In Jordan, the only way to learn English is in classrooms where students have limited opportunities to communicate effectively. Therefore, self-confidence is always associated with successful language learning.

In Jordan, teaching/learning English for Specific Purposes was felt significant by a large number of researchers as English proficiency has become English ability has become fundamental component of globalization (Abu-Zahra & Shayeb, 2011; Al-Khatib, 2005; Kandil, 2009; Freihat and Machzoozi (2012). For example, Al-Khatib (2005) investigated how thirty senior tourism and banking personnel use and attitudes of English language communication at workplace. To collect data, Al-Khatib used a survey questionnaire, interviews, and textbook content analysis. The study reported personnel positive attitudes toward using English in their workplace at it meets their wants. Also the Al-Khatib voiced significance of equipping students at university courses with ESP as it helps them later in their future careers.

Similarly, Freihat and Machzoozi (2012) explored oral communication forms of Jordanian personnel (Business degrees holders at Isra University ) practice in various workplace situations. To collect data, the researchers used a survey questionnaire. Upon analyzing the completed questionnaires (N.24), the study reported the following finding. Graduate employees need to be involved in oral communication during their course of study as graduates who were not involved in oral communication felt disadvantaged in the workplace as a result.

The conventional approaches of teaching are still followed by a large number of English tutors at English language departments in Jordan (Al-Wreikat & Bin Abdullah, 2010). Usually, they are overloaded to finish their syllabuses within sixteen week time along with undergraduates' assessment timetable. Accordingly, an ample improvement in learning language skills needed for being employed is not achieved. The present research, as a result, embarks on such ability to communicate in English language. Is it a challenge for science students in Jordan? As such, the present study explores the appropriateness of the English courses in a way that help them succeed in their job interviews which is part of the placement process in Jordan.

### **Statement of the problem**

The present study addresses a potentially important problem related to the significance of English as the language for business (i.e. lingua franca). This tends to be very demanding and challenging when English is taught as foreign; like the case of Jordan. A lingua franca is defined as a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose language is different. Specifically, at Jordanian universities (e.g. Yarmouk), faculty of science students have only one English language course (namely; Eng.101) which, in turn, is not sufficient for maintaining communication in English. As such, graduates find communication in English as to be challenging at the workplace, where they encounter difficulties with several tasks related to workplace that call for speaking, writing, reading and listening. Getting or maintaining a job is not easy since the English undergraduates acquire at the university does not help them at the workplace (Al-Khatib, 2005; Freihat & Machzoozi, 2012). Examples of such tasks are: interviews, telephone-conferencing, reports, presentations and group discussion. What's more, the researcher as a university tutor herself sensed that most students lack self-confidence to use English. Given a high rate of unemployment among graduates (i.e. 12%), this is certainly a distressing point. The present study, accordingly, focused on undergraduates from the sciences faculty at Yarmouk University with the aim of addressing the next research questions:

1. *What are the reasons behind undergraduates' English language learning?*
2. *What are the perceived language skills needed most for the faculty of science undergraduates?*
3. *How do they evaluate the course merits for future job?*
4. *What are undergraduates' assessed self-confidence and language proficiency levels?*

### **Method**

The present study followed a descriptive survey research design in order to examine undergraduates' readiness for workplace with reference to their English language learning at English language departments. Accordingly, the researcher developed a questionnaire and interviews.

**Setting and participants**

The current study was conducted at Yarmouk University in Irbid, Jordan. The selection of the university was intentional since there is no evidence that all English Departments at all universities in Jordan have similar teaching approaches. Thus, generalizing the findings of the present study is limited to Yarmouk University only; otherwise the external validity of the findings will be affected negatively. More specifically, all the participants came from the faculty of science where a huge number of students have different specializations. The participants of this study were enrolled in four undergraduate sections at the English department in the first semester 2014/2015 and participated willingly in responding to a survey questionnaire. That is, four whole intact classes were considered. The course four sections were taught by four colleagues who collaborated with the researcher and provided her with all needed actions to conduct the present study. The number of participants who returned questionnaires was that of 294 (150 male; 144 female) students who were drawn from three departments: math, chemistry, and physics.

**Table 1: The distribution of students according to specialization and gender**

Specialization	Gender	Number	Total
Math	Female	43	97
	Male	54	
Chemistry	Female	47	99
	Male	52	
Physics	Female	60	98
	Male	38	
<b>Total</b>	Female	150	<b>294</b>
	Male	144	

**Instruments**

In this research, both quantitative (a questionnaire) and qualitative (an interview) data gathering tools have been employed.

Questionnaires: The items of the survey questionnaire were designed to decide to cover three domains covering reasons to learn English, language needs analysis, and an evaluation of the course merits for future job. Each statement corresponded to 5-point Likert scale starting with 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Upon the completion of filling-in the questionnaire, thirty undergraduates were interviewed by the researcher herself with the purpose of finding out more about undergraduates' confidence in facing job interview sessions.

Semi-structured interviews: In the present study, holistic assessment of undergraduates' language proficiency was carried out. In such assessment, the interviewee's linguistic ability was not the sole criteria, but rather the overall performance during the interview. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign languages (hereafter ACTFL see Appendix) rubric were the criteria used for rating where broad descriptors of undergraduates' ability through the interviews. The ratings, also, were criterion referenced as the assessment was compared to set criteria that bears the same rating regardless of linguistic performance variations among candidates.

As such, in ACTFL there is no “full” mark or “fail.” Additionally, ACTFL focuses on language functions to perform a mock job interviews like those in job appointment, the researcher noticed what a the interviewee can do in authentic setting. One of the tasks for interviewer/researcher was to sustain active interaction during the interview. The interview did not consist of planned questions but rather of a conversation where topics kept changing in order to get an assessable sample. Thus, the interview was adaptive in the sense that it varied according to the level of interviewee; where the questions were modified accordingly.

The interview proceeded in the following manner so that the interviewee expands on a topic and speaks more by the prompt of “say more” was effective. That is, the researcher used a scaffolding strategy through an interview where assessment of undergraduates' language performance was made. The structure of the interview was clear as the focus of

the interview was on function. And function is related to what undergraduates in focus can do with the language in a certain context (job interview) appropriately together with comprehensibility. In the interview, the typical function of giving information about *job* was demonstrated.

In order to examine face validity of the instruments, a panel of ten educational experts went over the instruments. The team was asked to validate the instruments regarding their appropriateness and suitability to the purposes of the current study. The team's comments and suggestions were studied carefully, and the necessary modifications were made accordingly.

In order to check the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted to evaluate the quality of questions of the questionnaire. The pilot study included fifteen fresh science faculty undergraduates (five students for each specialization understudy) who were excluded from the sample of the study. The 'Cronbach's alpha' was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. The overall internal consistency estimated 0.85 highlighting the instrument to be highly reliable in measuring student's reasons, needs and merits of the English language course in focus.

All the interviews were video-recorded. The researcher herself along with two raters assessed each interview independently, then findings were discussed where corresponding ones remained and controversial ones dropped. That is, the consistency of raters was proven in order to establish reliability.

In order to establish the Inter-rater reliability of the interview, the researcher asked another English language tutor to attend ten interview sessions with her. Initially, she told her about the purpose of the study, and then she trained her how to conduct an interview. Then, the researcher took the interview sheets filled by the second observer and herself and calculated the frequency of agreement and disagreement between them. In this way, the researcher examined the consistency coefficient between the second observer and herself. The researcher used Cronbach's alpha to calculate the reliability coefficient. According to the percentage of Cronbach's alpha between the second observer and the researcher, the agreement coefficient was measured as 83%, which was educationally acceptable. This showed that the research tool used by the researcher was reliable.

For this study, one rater (namely; the researcher) observed all the participants' (Intra-rater reliability) interview session which were video-taped. That is, two weeks later, the videos were transcribed and coded for the language proficiency elements. An average of intra-rater reliability for the two sets of interviews was then performed. Such intra-rater reliability was calculated as 0.88(i.e. Spearman's coefficient correlation).

## Results

### Undergraduates' reasons behind learning English (Question 1)

This section offers findings focused on collecting the participants' reasons behind learning language. Frequencies, mean vales and rank order were drawn in Table 2 as follows.

**Table 2: Reasons behind learning English**

Why do you learn English?	$\sum fx$	$\mu$	Rank
1. Because it is a compulsory university requirement	308	1.04	1
2. Because I like to interact with people	342	1.163	3
3. Because I like to read scientific articles	375	1.275	5
4. Because I like to do assignments related to my study	339	1.103	2
5. Because I like to write reports	358	1.217	4
6. Because I will use it in my future career	477	1.622	6

The Table shows the reasons behind studying English in rank order scale ranging from 1-6; the rank 6 as the highest while 1 stands for the lowest rank. The Table demonstrates undergraduates' language needs in their future career ( $\mu=1.622$ )

as the utmost reason behind learning English where they can read scientific articles ( $\mu=1.275$ ). In contrast, learning English because it is a compulsory university requirement scored the lowest mean as that of 1.04.

**Undergraduates' language needs analysis (Question 2)**

This section offers findings focused on collecting the participants' language needs. Frequencies, mean vales and rank order were drawn in Table 3 as follows.

**Table 3: Language needs analysis**

Department	Skills	$\Sigma Fx$	$\mu$	Rank
<b>Math</b>	<b>Listening:</b> understanding lectures, listening to others, and listening to videos related to their career.	225	2.2959	1
	<b>Speaking:</b> job interview, formal presentation, and Communicating orally with others.	125	1.2755	4
	<b>Reading:</b> understanding texts, tables, websites, and charts.	161	1.6428	2
	<b>Writing:</b> writing e-mails, filling in forms, and writing CVs.	24	2.1836	3
<b>Chemistry</b>	<b>Listening:</b> understanding lectures, listening to others, and listening to videos related to their career.	223	2.2755	1
	<b>Speaking:</b> job interview, formal presentation, and Communicating orally with others.	147	1.500	4
	<b>Reading:</b> understanding texts, tables, websites, and charts.	163	1.6632	2
	<b>Writing:</b> writing e-mails, filling in forms, and writing CVs.	212	2.1632	3
<b>Physics</b>	<b>Listening:</b> understanding lectures, listening to others, and listening to videos related to their career.	224	2.2857	1
	<b>Speaking:</b> job interview, formal presentation, and Communicating orally with others.	136	1.3877	4
	<b>Reading:</b> understanding texts, tables, websites, and charts.	160	1.6326	2
	<b>Writing:</b> writing e-mails, filling in forms, and writing CVs.	215	2.1938	3

Table 3 shows that the results were classified into four ranks. The skill of listening came first ( $\mu=2.2959, 2.2755, 2.2857$  respectively) across three departments at the faculty of science (math, chemistry, physics), while the skill of speaking was not felt as needed to be the least needed skill ( $\mu=1.2755, 1.500, 1.3877$  respectively). Apparently, science faculty students participating in the study highlighted the skill of listening as their courses are taught in English. The writing skill was felt needed to a large extent, also, as they take lectures notes in English and undertake exams in English, too. The Table shows that the speaking skill came last as the need to communicate orally in interviews or presentation is not highly appreciated among undergraduates.

**Undergraduates' language perception of course merits for future job (Question 3)**

The following Table displays frequencies, mean scores and rank order of undergraduates' perceptions of the kind of job merits delivered by university English language course.

**Table 4: Students' evaluation of the course merits for future job**

	English language course future job merits	$\Sigma fx$	$\mu$	Rank
1	The instruction in the English courses develops my reading skill in my future job.	908	3.088	1
2	The instruction in the English courses develops my speaking skill in my future job.	411	1.397	7
3	The course helps me I my career.	437	1.486	6
4	The instruction in the English courses develops my writing skill in my future job.	641	2.18	3
5	The course develops my scientific vocabulary items in my future job.	495	1.638	5
6	The course develops my grammatical knowledge in my future job.	797	2.71	2
7	The instruction in the English courses develops my listening skill in my future job.	588	2	4

The Table shows the results were categorized into seven ranks. One utmost merit by the English language course was related to developing the reading skill ( $\mu = 3.088$ ). Another key merit of the language course in focus was relevant to improving grammatical knowledge ( $\mu = 2.71$ ). Developing the speaking skill, which was stated as essential across their needs earlier, is offered by the course ( $\mu = 1.397$ ) marginally. What's more, the course was not seen as one of the merits of helping students in their future careers.

#### **Undergraduates' assessed language self-confidence and proficiency levels (Question 4)**

Regarding the findings obtained by the interview, the present study reported participants' language self-confidence and proficiency on key language skills throughout interviews. Thirty undergraduates were interviewed. Jordanian undergraduates' English skills needed for interviews at a 'mock' job interview were examined. Five students out of thirty undergraduates believed that they seemed competent regarding any job interview; while twenty students said that conducting a job interview in English may make them *nervous* as they think they do not *know what to say* or *how to speak in English*. Conducting a mock job interview that lasted for ten minutes each reported the following:

- Most interviewees (25 undergraduates) were stuttering with a large volume of language errors in verb number (e.g. *everyone know the answer*), tense (*I did not understand the task now*) and word diction (e.g. *this job is economic* to refer income)
- Code switching characterized twenty seven interviews (e.g. *I like to this work لأنه [because] our culture تقويمه مهم [perceive it significant]*).
- Pronunciation problems were evident with twenty undergraduates (e.g. /p/ and /b/ sounds were used alternatively *ben* to refer to *pen*).
- Specifically, the study reported most undergraduates in focus as approaching standards and eventually labeled as 'low' language proficiency students. Table 5 presents the exact percent of students who had 'low' proficiency as follows: 50% of students in phonology, 50% of students in morphology, 53% of students in syntax, 67% of students in semantics, 67% of students in rules for word and sentence formation, 77% of students in discourse, sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge and 84% of students in changing nature of language.

Taking everything into account, twenty-five participants demonstrated language grammar errors i.e. tenses, voice, preposition etc. During the interviews, twenty undergraduates spent more time on producing sentences that have passive voice by hesitating, pausing, stuttering and regression to the start of the sentence. Only 3 undergraduate students were seen good at speaking engaged the mock job interview. In contrast, the majority of the students seemed hesitant and unconfident regarding answering questions at the interview session. Moreover, the majority seemed demotivated as they couldn't demonstrate basic communication skills that enable them to interact with others. Obviously, classroom interaction seemed to be lacking in their lectures.

Correspondingly, the following Table demonstrates participants' English language proficiency levels as being 'low' in terms of frequencies across language elements. The frequencies characterize more than 50 per cent of the participants' in focus as 'approaching standard'; that is, 'low'. These frequencies typically involve most language elements. Particularly,

language elements that are fairly frequent they take the form of phonology, morphology and syntax. There was moderately no evidence of participants who 'exceed the standards', but rather fair moderate numbers of participants who 'meets the standards'.

**Table 5: Indicators of participants' language proficiency**

Element	Approaches Standard (i.e. Low)		Meets Standard (i.e. Intermediate)		Exceeds Standard(i.e. High)		Total	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
Phonology	15	50	6	20	9	30	30	100
Morphology	15	50	5	17	10	33	30	100
Syntax	16	53	8	27	6	20	30	100
Semantics	20	67	8	27	2	6	30	100
Rules for word and sentence formation	20	67	9	30	1	3	30	100
Discourse, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic knowledge	23	77	4	13	3	10	30	100
Changing nature of language	25	84	3	10	2	6	30	100

Only half of 30 interviewed undergraduates demonstrated 'low' phonological and morphological language elements 'right'. Most participants (84% of the undergraduates), additionally, interacted in a way that reflect their 'meeting the standard' knowledge of the changing nature of language; while 77% of the undergraduates in focus demonstrated 'low' discourse and pragmatic knowledge. Only one participant demonstrated 'high' proficiency of rules for word and sentence formation; two participants reflected 'high' knowledge of the changing nature of language. All in all, the interview specified that the participants as having 'low' levels of language proficiency.

**Discussion**

**Perceived reasons behind learning English (question 1)**

Table 2 presented samples of participants' responses regarding their perceived reasons to learn English language. The results show that undergraduates understudy principally had reasons to learn English *because I will use it in my future career* ranking this at their topmost reason ( $\sum fx=477$ ;  $\mu= 1.622$ ). A probable reason for this result might be the point that having a career is emphasized in the Jordanian society as it goes through economic crisis where unemployment rates are at their highest. Whereas the participants declared learning English *because it is a compulsory university requirement* ranked this as their least reason ( $\sum fx= 308$ ;  $\mu=1.04$ ). A probable reason for this finding might be the point that English has not been emphasized more in their syllabus at University; as one course is never enough. Low values for learning English for the reason that it is a university requirement seem to suggest that undergraduates needed more than a typical course; jobs are hard to come by until students are proficient in English.

Research has offered valuable insights into the point that, in Jordan, English is intensely stressed in education as a language that should open the door to the West as it offers Jordanian citizens a bridge to the non-Arabic speaking world

(Cleveland and Bunton, 2013). As early as 1985, Elbiad (as cited in Drbseh's 2013) reported that 72% secondary schools students believe that being proficient in English would help them in obtaining job in future. Recently, Drbseh (2013) reported that 40% of university students believed that English will secure them a better job. The researcher believes that language courses at universities are windows of opportunity for workplace. The implication is that missing the window of opportunity for learning may 'block' career opportunities.

### **Perceived needs analysis(question 2)**

Divergent views were reported concerning listening, speaking and reading skills; nevertheless most undergraduates consistently affirmed that listening is the most important skill ( $\sum Fx= 225$ ;  $\mu=2.2959$ ) for their study. This finding is consistent with all of Baker's (1971), Boyle's (1987), Herrelland Jordan's (2007) and Omaggio's (1986) findings. All emphasize that listening is very important for students as they can recall words better than if they learn them as single items along with getting a clearer picture of the meanings. Also, listening helps students understand what their tutors have said, that is, students achieve thorough comprehension. Undergraduate students understudy declared that speaking skills as the least important for their studies followed by reading skills with mean values of 1.6326. They identified writing as the second important ( $\mu =2.1938$ ).

The results for the participants were consistent with the findings of Brown and Yule's (1983) and Nunan's (1999). The researcher believes that speaking is frequently seen as one of the most difficult skills of language learning; not all FL learners can communicate successfully and correctly as they lack linguistic and communicative knowledge. Thus, linguistic competence includes vocabulary and syntax; yet it is, not sufficient to communicate competently in another language.

Having writing as a second position by the participant undergraduates in focus may be associated with its emphasis on their syllabus. Writing is not only is a vital academic skill, but it is also a vital skill that renders any job. Almost all jobs require some form of writing on the workplace. The results to some extent confirm Baer, Cook, and Baldi (2006) who surveyed graduates' literacy skills. They reported that over half of the students felt responsible for improving their writing skills. It's worth pointing out that undergraduates seem to feel the significance of specialized instruction in the writing skill as it is absent from their syllabus. The researcher believes that prioritizing grammar instruction does not develop students' writing.

### **Perceived course merits for future jobs (question 3)**

Table 4 shows how undergraduate students understudy declared *the instruction in the English courses develops [my reading skill in [my] future job* as the most important instructed skill followed by *the course develops [my] grammatical knowledge in [my] future job* with mean values of 3.088 and 2.71 respectively. In contrast, the responses of the participants in focus indicated that *the instruction in the English courses develops [my] speaking skill in [my] future job* with a lowest mean value calculated as 1.397. The results were consistent with the findings of Scarcella and Oxford (1994) who argued that, on the whole, most teaching courses focuses only on skills of reading and grammar while neglecting the speaking skill.

The results partially contradicted Nunan's (1999) who stated that language learning is achieved when learners can carry out an exchange in the (foreign/second) language. Additionally, the findings are consistent with Llorca and Huguet's (2003 as cited in Benke & Medgyes, 2005) where 101 nonnative English speaking EFL teachers were surveyed for their views on their language skills along with pedagogical skills. Similar to the findings obtained by the current study, the participants believed that they are proficient in reading and grammar, but not in speaking.

The findings revealed that the English course implemented for science faculty needed to be transformed as teaching methodologies are steered towards reading comprehension and grammar. Agreeing with Pekoz (2008), grammar teaching should be presented in a communicative manner that inspires learners to interact in the topic which is crucial in raising students' self-esteem. Additionally, the interviews reported that classes were run as teacher-oriented with a lack of involvement by students along with the statement that no interviewee pointed to course efforts in job placement. This, in turn, makes students as more unresponsive to any task other than writing answers in their workbooks. Drawing on the results obtained by the questionnaire, the researcher believes that all language skills are important. Thus specialized instruction with minimal class attendants should be maintained.

#### **Assessed self-confidence and language proficiency (question 4)**

Research pointed out that student's learning rises when learners' self-confidence runs high (e.g. Gardner, 1985). As such, Jordan's real demand is increasing the sum of financial funding limits its supply. Thus, the need to learn English includes obtaining a job after graduation. Let's say the reading skill as reported by Bani-Abdelrahman (2010) when self-assessed clearly, it affects students' performance positively and confidently. Yet if Jordanian did not try to see the challenges of the world and they do not change themselves within, they will not improve their proficiency in English. For example, Abu-Melhim's (2009) account of 45 Jordanian college students' negative attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language were perceived as correlated with their low achievement.

Motivation is highly significant in language learning. McDonough (1983, p.142) described it as "the most important factors influencing their success or failure in learning the language". Motivation was further stated by Dornyei (1994:273) as "one of the main determinant of second/ foreign language achievement". To Dornyei, motivation has components relevant to the levels of: language, learner, and learning situation. All in all, an understanding of students' motivation may assist ESL/EFL curriculum designers to develop language teaching courses that may, in turn, results in more successful learners who have great self-confidence.

#### **Conclusions**

This study explored the English language skills required by the science faculty undergraduates in Jordan. A gap between the undergraduates' language ability and employability students pinpointed. The present study reported that science faculty undergraduates seemed to have challenging employability issues regarding their communication skills in English language at their future career. This study showed that there have been huge gaps in undergraduates' English language knowledge for employability. They looked untrained to encounter the work interviews; thus having problems in language skills. As a result, most undergraduates in the current study feel less confident about their language skills.

The 294 undergraduates participating in the present study were asked in a questionnaires to give their views on their prospective language needs as most for their future career. According them, they find it hard to pursue lectures in English. Throughout lectures, they need to take notes and some of them struggle in expressing their thoughts in both ways writing and speaking in English. Thus, the skill of listening was marked as the most needed skill. A 30 undergraduates were had a mock job interview. These interviews indicated problems in their self-confidence regarding their language proficiency levels which was measured by the ACTFL rubric as being 'low'.

The answers to the questions of the study indicated that the participants wanted to learn the English language as a tool help them in their courses as well as for their future prospectus. This study is just indicative to the demands made by the undergraduates regarding the English language component. The interviews with the subject undergraduates were also very much useful as they also feel that their linguistic abilities should be sharpened in order to meet challenges of the workplace. Accordingly, there is a frantic need for universities, including Yarmouk, to re-consider their English language program at times to make certain that appropriate language skills are incorporated. The findings of the study indicated that workplace needs of science faculty undergraduates should be re-evaluated.

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## تصورات طلبة كلية العلوم لدور مساق اللغة الإنجليزية في تحقيق حاجات سوق العمل اللغوية

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### ملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي الأسباب التي تدفع طلبة كلية العلوم لدراسة اللغة الإنجليزية، وإلى تحديد المهارات اللغوية الأكثر احتياجاً، والكشف أيضاً عن تقييمهم لفائدة مساق اللغة الإنجليزية في عملهم المستقبلي وفي ثقافتهم بأنفسهم في مقابلات العمل التي تكون اللغة فيها هي الإنجليزية. ولأجل تحقيق هذه الأهداف، نهجت هذه الدراسة الأسلوب الوصفي المسحي من خلال استخدام الاستبانات والمقابلات، وذلك بعدما التأكد من صدقها وثباتها. وتكونت عينة الدراسة من 294 من طلبة البكالوريوس (150 ذكورا و 144 إناثا) استجابوا للاستبانات، حيث وافق 30 منهم فقط على المشاركة بالمقابلات. وأسفرت نتائج الدراسة أن مساعدة الطلبة في الحصول على مهنة مستقبلية كان هو السبب في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، وأن الاستماع هو المهارة الأكثر احتياجاً لتعلمها كونها متطلب لفهم محاضراتهم. وخلصت الدراسة أيضاً إلى أن مساق اللغة الإنجليزية يركز على مهارتي القراءة والنحو فقط بدلا من التركيز أيضا على مهارات الاتصال التي تعدّ متطلباً أساساً للقبول في سوق العمل وفي غرس الثقة بالنفس.

**الكلمات الدالة:** اللغة الإنجليزية، طلبة كلية العلوم، سوق العمل، الأردن.

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