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Business English in Saudi Universities: A Study on Linguistic Skills of the College Undergraduates in Line with the Demand of Future Labour Market of NEOM-Vision 2030

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ABSTRACT

The Saudi Vision 2030 incorporated the \$500 billion Project NEOM, that is being built in the Tabuk area. According to estimation 380,000 new employment will likely be created as a result of this initiative. As English language proficiency is considered one of the most crucial abilities needed by this enormous workforce, the researcher undertook this study to investigate the current status of business English (English for Specific Purposes) in the business colleges under Saudi universities and evaluated the curriculum with a view to measure its acceptability according to the demand and need of the job market of NEOM in future. It also investigated whether the undergraduates were equipped with all the four skills of language – reading, writing, listening and speaking. The study employed quantitative methodologies, and a questionnaire was created to gather data from the business students regarding the course goals and content, course materials, teaching strategies, evaluations, etc. Data were collected from 191 business undergraduates of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University and SPSS software was used to analyse the data. The results demonstrated that most of the undergraduates were satisfied with the curriculum of business English (ESP) and they were equipped with the required linguistic skills after completing their graduation.

Keywords: ESP, Business English, NEOM, Saudi Vision 2030, linguistic skills, Saudi students

INTRODUCTION

With a goal of becoming a trailblazing and prosperous global model of excellence on all fronts, the government of KSA unveiled its grandiose project NEOM as part of the ambitious Saudi Vision 2030. This aspirational venture is to be set up in the Tabuk region at a cost of US \$500 billion. Prince Mohammad bin Salman remarked with pride and joy “Our country is rich in its natural resources. We are not dependent solely on oil for our energy needs. Gold, phosphate, uranium, and many other valuable minerals are found beneath our lands. But our real wealth lies in the ambition of our people and the potential of our younger generation” (Abdulaziz, 2019). He firmly believed that the younger generations and fresh university graduates are the project's most promising cornerstones. He also underlined the need to increase and strengthen the nation's capabilities and potential. Therefore, the Kingdom has a vision for creating a renowned education to overcome the challenges in global communications. The individuals need to be skilled in a variety of areas, including communication, which necessitates fluency in a foreign language like English. The proper acquisition of English in Saudi Arabia is crucial since it is connected to elements that have an impact on both the nation and the entire world. Since English has taken over key industries like education, business, and diplomacy around the world, it is imperative that kids learn it well. English is also the official language of information technology, and it is the language in which the majority of the world's knowledge in this important area is documented. Another reason why learning English is necessary in Saudi Arabia is the function that English plays in boosting international investment and the growth of the Saudi economy. Additionally, to compete with the high number of foreign expats currently working in the nation, Saudi students must become fluent in English.

The proficiency of English language is one of the top priority requirements for nearly all the jobs in the global market. The English language provides a person with an opportunity to unlock the doors of various cultures worldwide and widen one's minds so as to help him/her learn fresh and novel things and finds himself or herself suitable for lucrative jobs and also enable to compete on the future global labour market. NEOM offers various job opportunities in a wide career market enabling the diverse workforce to learn and thrive. A career at NEOM is an opportunity to live in the “new future”. English for Specific Purposes or learning business English as a linguistic skill to communicate with the global market has a great importance now-a-days. It becomes more pertinent when the workforce is grooming for an ambitious scheme like NEOM under the Saudi Vision 2030.

The futuristic mega city of NEOM will be a huge technology hub and a thriving global market for all the fields. So, preparing human resources in line with the careers to be created by NEOM demands more focus on providing the English language skills to the university students of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, to meet the demands and needs of the future labour market, the Saudi universities need to produce such graduates who have good linguistic skills. The study investigates whether the linguistic skills of the undergraduates of business colleges under Saudi universities are at par with the demands and needs of the future labour market of NEOM.

Research Question

One of the rapidly expanding subfields of English for Specific Purpose, known as "Business English," is focused mostly on adult learners who are either currently employed or preparing to enter the workforce. Compared to general English, business English has different traits. Its objective, assessment, teaching resources, plan, instructional strategies, etc., are distinct from those of General English. This study investigated the present-day status of business English (English for Specific Purpose) taught in the business colleges under Saudi universities. It also investigated whether the linguistic skills of the college students groom them to meet the demand and need of future labour market to be created at NEOM, a huge scheme emerged from Saudi Vision 2030. The study also looked at potential gaps and difficulties that would prevent the country from achieving its vision, which called for rapid economic expansion, expanded economic diversity, and increased employment. Therefore, the primary goals of the study are to address the following research questions –

- What is the present status of learning business English as ESP in the business colleges under Saudi universities?
- What linguistic skills do the business undergraduates acquire when they study ESP?
- What are the gaps and challenges that hinder the learning of ESP in the Saudi universities in view of the demand and need of future labour market of NEOM?

Research Objectives

The study has the following objectives

- (i) To diagnose the present curriculum of business English taught in the Saudi universities.
- (ii) To investigate the prevalent teaching strategies and methods which equip the learners with the skills of language and suggest remedial substitutes.
- (iii) To find the gaps between the college undergraduates' linguistic skills and the demand and need of the labour market of NEOM and bridging the gaps by suggesting the required changes in the curriculum, teaching methods, and strategies etc.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The most widely spoken language on earth is English. It is the lingua franca of the globe and hence used as a communicative means of various cultures and languages. Various researches have been undertaken on the significance and relevance of English as ESP or EFL in Saudi context. Al Mukhallafi (2019a) examined the degree of English proficiency among university undergraduates relating to English as a Foreign Language study with the help of smart phones. The findings demonstrated that the pupils were quite optimistic about learning English using smart phones and technology. The students were very enthusiastic in acquiring the skills of English language using smart phones. In another study by the same author, Al Mukhallafi (2019b) studied the extent to which Saudi Vision 2030 is being executed in view of instructing English as EFL in the universities of Saudi Arabia. He found that the performance of university teachers needed to be developed especially when teaching English using the technology. He also suggested to employ the modern teaching methods to impart English skills to the university graduates so as to attract and motivate them to acquire English. Mitchell and Alfuraih (2017) undertook a study that traced the progress of English Language Education in KSA. The report also stressed the importance of investing in higher education and vocational training in addition to secondary school in order to prepare graduates for the job market. The study also emphasized that staking in secondary education is augmented by staking in higher education as well as vocational education to get the graduates ready for the labour market. Al-Hazmi (2017) in his investigation found that there were many paucities in the English of university students, mentioning that a lot of learners were not competent in speaking English and also not able to use English for their academic and real-life affairs after completing their university studies. They also lagged behind the required competencies in writing much-needed documents in a workplace such as applications, reports, memos etc. and could not engage themselves in meaningful communications in English. Additionally, it was observed that all the first year students during their university studies required intensive and remedial English courses before they start their actual courses due to low level of English proficiencies. He also evidenced that a good deal of pre-university EFL teachers had difficulty in using English credibly in the classrooms for activities such as delivering lecture or giving proper instructions. The majority of Saudi Arabia's universities, according to Alshammari (2016), have a monolingual approach as their standard way for teaching English. In a study of developing business writing skills of EFL learners of a business college at Prince Sattam

bin Abdulaziz University, Kaseem (2017) found that enough training must be given to the teachers of English on how to incorporate wikis in business writings.

In his study, Al-Shehri (2020) identified a few obstacles to educational reform that stood in the way of the Vision's objectives for integrating technology into English language instruction.

Among other things, he recommended fostering the development of critical and creative thinking skills as well as individual learning and contextual learning. He also strongly advocated to incorporate technology and social media for learning purposes. He opined that "Technology should be utilized because it is effective, not because it is a requirement or because it is already there" (p. 117). Al-Nasser (2015) in his study focussed on the main obstacles and challenges that the EFL students of KSA faced while acquiring English language. Both the researchers reported that the discordance between the English sounds and Arabic sounds make it complicated for many of the students to differentiate them. The university EFL instructors lacked adequate training in linguistics and using a learning management system (LMS) that is based on technology. He also observed that the instructors did not take notice of improving the four basic skills of a language, rather they stress more on writing and reading abandoning the other two skills – listening and speaking. Qayoom (2017) in her research stressed on teacher training programs and quality textbook for an ESL classroom with a focus on technology based teaching. Alrabai (2018) in her research examined usual demographic, psychological and social attributes that the Saudi EFL learners share and she found that the motivation or demotivation of students to learn English rested with the English language instructors. The study also demonstrated that the majority of secondary level schools lacked the proper technical LMS necessary to improve the practice of teaching English. She also advocated for providing teachers with extensive training on how to use technology to teach English in an innovative way and that "modern technology must become an integral part of the Saudi EFL classroom to enhance the quality and effectiveness of learning". (p. 115)

Despite the fact that the English language has long been seen as a crucial tool for social and economic growth in the Saudi academic system, Alsudais (2017) noted in his study that this is no longer the case. It was obvious that nonetheless of the prodigious accomplishment, the achievement level of the learners inclined to be below the much needed standards, insufficient and unduly low. He suggested to carry out an inclusive examination and to enhance the setting of the school classrooms. He is of the opinion that much attention to be paid on the teaching approaches of the teachers and there must be enough teacher-training programmes. Also, there should be a proper moderation of the English syllabus with a focus to enhance the student's motivation and constructive attitude towards the EFL learning (Alseweed, 2009; Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2016). Alrashidi and Phan (2015) pointed out that the constructive learning of English in KSA was very significant as it was related with the elements that influence both the nation and the world in general. The role of English was also great as it played an important part in enhancing foreign investment and growth of Saudi economy. Also, Saudi nationals must acquire the skills of English language to be qualified to substitute the great number of foreigners in the labour market. In his study, Alamri (2019) argued in favour of including foreign culture in the secondary EFL curriculum. He asserts that a teacher must work to ensure that KSA students learn English in contexts relevant to their daily lives as well as how to use it correctly in a foreign culture. Avsheniuk & Seminikhyna (2020) undertook a research and the results showed the difficulties faced by ESP practitioners, including variations in students' linguistic proficiency, course material choice, a lack of enthusiasm, in-class hours, etc., and suggested strategies for addressing these difficulties. They advised business English experts to develop and improve efficient tools for the certification of outcomes in accordance with the guidelines, as well as to make further improvements to the institution and methods of instruction and learning, the course content, the course structure, and the creation of text books and supplemental educational resources for each specialized area.

Ghani et al. (2021) in their study found that the English learners enrolled in Functional English Courses in Saudi universities lacked pragmatic competence and struggled with expressing selected speech acts. They advised that the teaching strategies and curricula for English courses in universities in Saudi Arabia receive high priority scrutiny. The different studies on how to teach English language proficiency to Saudi EFL learners were thoroughly examined by Alsowat (2017). The results indicated that there were some areas of research that needed to be looked at more thoroughly in the future, including the English language proficiency of EFL students enrolled in lower levels of education in Saudi Arabia. Alshahrani (2016) looked at the historical context of the English language status in Saudi Arabia and found that this language had influenced the nation and this development significantly contributed to the improved position of English and new insights in EFL teaching learning in KSA. However, Al-Abiky (2019) looked into the reasons behind low English proficiency and discovered that there was a significant gap between what students learn in EFL programs and what is required in current teaching. Al-Zahrani & Rajab (2017) investigated the school teachers' capability to teach English in Saudi Govt. schools and found that they have high level of academic awareness in terms of improving English language teaching with a view to achieving the great vision of KSA in 2030.

Research Hypothesis

H₀1: There are no considerable disparities in respondents' satisfaction related to course goals of the business English.

H₀2: There are no considerable disparities in respondents' satisfaction related to course contents of the business English.

H₀3: There are no considerable disparities in respondents' satisfaction related to Materials and teaching methods.

H₀4: There are no considerable disparities in respondents' satisfaction related to Evaluation.

H₀5: There are no considerable disparities in respondents' satisfaction related to Teachers' Performance.

H₀6: There are no considerable disparities in respondents' satisfaction related to Evaluation of the content of business English and the requirement of the job market.

Research Methodology

Population

The population of the research is formed with the undergraduates of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, who are from various level of study, especially from the College of Business Administration.

Sample

The sample of the study is made up of 191 students, who studied Business English as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in their curriculum in College of Business Administration, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The population is composed of 55% male students and 45% female students, mostly Saudi nationals among various age groups. Table 1 displays the distribution of the sample.

Table 1: Demography of the respondents.

Sl. No.	Variable	Values	N = 191	%
1	Gender	Male	105	55%
		Female	86	45%
2	Age	Below 20	130	68.10%
		21-25	59	30.90%
		26-30	1	0.50%
		31 & above	1	0.50%
3	Nationality	Saudi	188	98.40%
		Non-Saudi	3	1.60%
4	Level of Study	Level 2-3	134	70.20%
		Level 4-5	38	19.90%
		Level 6-8	19	9.90%

Research Instrument

A well-structured questionnaire was prepared for this study and it was used as a research tool for gathering data. There were six categories of headings under which a total of 39 items were drawn from the pertinent areas. Five general type of questions formed items under the general category while four items are related to course goals. There were eight items that constituted course content. Six items were there under the heading materials and teaching method while five items were included under the category – evaluation. Seven items were included under teachers' performance and four items were drawn for evaluation of the content of Business English and requirement of the job market. All the items were based on five-point likert scale of "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" except the items under general category. The items under general category were based on various responses like "yes/no" question and some specific information type questions.

Data Collection

Google Forms were used by the researcher as part of this investigation. The researcher shared a link of the questionnaire with the faculties of College of Business Administration under Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University through WhatsApp with a request to share it with their students who are pursuing business studies in various levels. The investigator used the SPSS to analyse the collected data.

Results and Analysis

This segment displays and discusses the outcomes of the responses of the questionnaire. The SPSS was used to analyse the data as exhibited in the tables and figures. Based on the six categories of questions in the questionnaire, six hypotheses were developed for the current investigation. Moreover, there was one general category of questions meant for some specific basic information about the business English as ESP. The current study was analysed according to hypotheses.

Table 2: General questions about business English as ESP.

Sl. No.	Variable	Values	N = 191	%
1	Did you study English courses as compulsory course?	Yes	157	82.20
		No	34	17.80
2	How much time was prescribed for English courses per week?	2 hours	44	23.10
		4 hours	36	18.80
		6 hours	71	37.20
		more than 6 hours	40	20.90
3	How much time was used by you for studying English daily?	1 hour	65	34.10
		2 hours	59	30.90
		3 hours	53	27.70
		more than 3 hours	14	7.30
4	The English language courses included in your curriculum are helpful in your daily life.	Always	112	58.63
		Sometimes	72	37.70
		Not helpful	6	3.14
		Don't know	1	0.53
5	Where did you study the English language most of the time?	Home	137	71.70
		University library	22	11.50
		Others	32	16.80

Table 2 displays that 82% respondents in the study studied business English as compulsory subject. This means that the lion's share of the respondents studied ESP as compulsory subject in their business curriculum. The table also shows that 58% undergraduates believed that they have been allotted six hours and above to study ESP per week while 42% students agreed that ESP was taught four hours and less per week. This means that the time prescribed for English is approximately five hours per week. In respect of hours of study utilised by the students, the table shows that 65% undergraduates study English daily for one hour to two hours while 27.70% students utilise three hours and only 7.30% students use more than three hours to study English daily. A total of 184 out of 191 respondents constituting 96.33% students agreed that the ESP curriculum was helpful in their daily life. A majority of the students (71.70%) asserted that they study English language at their home while only 11.50% students use library to study English language.

H₀₁: There are no considerable disparities in respondents' satisfaction related to course goals of the business English.

Table 3: Course goals

Variables of course goals	S	A	N	D	SD
CG 1: The objectives of the English lessons are made very clear.	40	117	33	1	0
CG 2: The objectives of the courses are achieved.	29	127	31	4	0
CG 3: Quizzes, homework, or assignments assist the actions of educational aims.	30	110	41	8	2
CG 4: The English curriculum has lessons that correspond to career objectives.	34	100	49	7	1
Mean of responses	33.25	113.5	38.5	5	0.75
Percentage of mean of responses	17.41	59.42	20.16	2.62	0.39

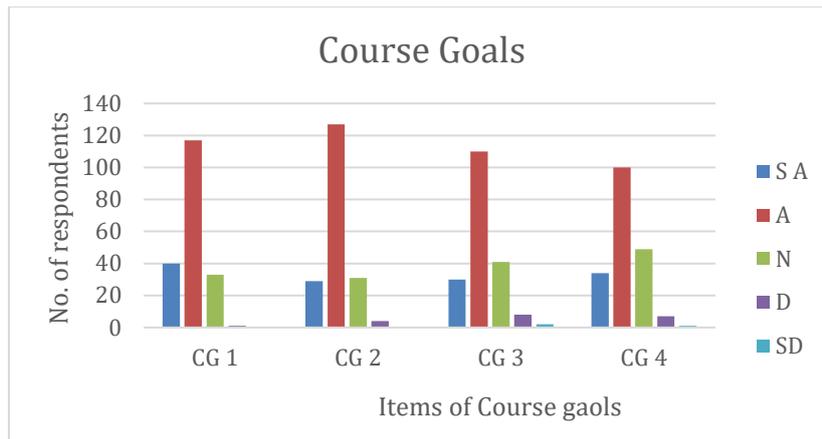


Fig.1: The satisfaction of the respondents related to course goals of the business English.

Table 3 and Figure 1 show that the majority of the participants generally agreed or strongly agreed with the items of course goals. A total of 157 (82%) respondents strongly agree and agree that the objectives of the English lessons are made very clear while 156 (81%) of students concurred that the course's goals had been met. 140 students (73%) agreed that quizzes, homework, or assignments assisted the actions of educational aims. 134 respondents in the sample (70%) agreed or strongly agreed that the English curriculum was tied to career objectives while almost 26% respondents have neutral opinions about it. The average percentage of mean of responses of both strongly agree and agree for all the items constituted 77%, 20% for neutral and only 3 for disagree and strongly disagree. This means that majority of the respondents are satisfied with course goals of English course. Therefore, null hypothesis H_01 is discarded due to significant differences in the items of the course goals.

H_02 : There are no considerable disparities in respondents' satisfaction related to course contents of the business English.

Table 4: Course content

Variables of Course Content	SA	A	N	D	SD
CC 1: The English courses develop the business writing skills with a focus on improving your paragraph writing, essay writing, letter writing, memo writing, etc.	41	106	35	7	2
CC 2: The English courses emphasize on grammatical correctness and analysis of business reports, agreements, and contracts.	32	105	45	8	1
CC 3: The English courses include reading skills in the context of business administration laying emphasis on content, vocabulary, and identifying the main ideas.	42	91	45	12	1
CC 4: The English courses prepare students to become reasonably communicative in all business contexts by means of reading different types of English content.	30	104	43	8	6
CC 5: The English courses illustrate communication techniques to develop interpersonal skills through spoken English.	36	110	35	9	1
CC 6: The English program enhances one's capacity to collaborate across cultural boundaries.	36	100	47	7	1
CC 7: The English course aids in the advancement of professional business skills.	32	104	45	9	1
CC 8: You are encouraged to study English and foreign culture via the English curriculum..	32	102	37	14	6
Mean of responses	35.13	102.8	41.5	9.25	2.37
Percentage of mean of responses	18.39	53.80	21.73	4.84	1.24

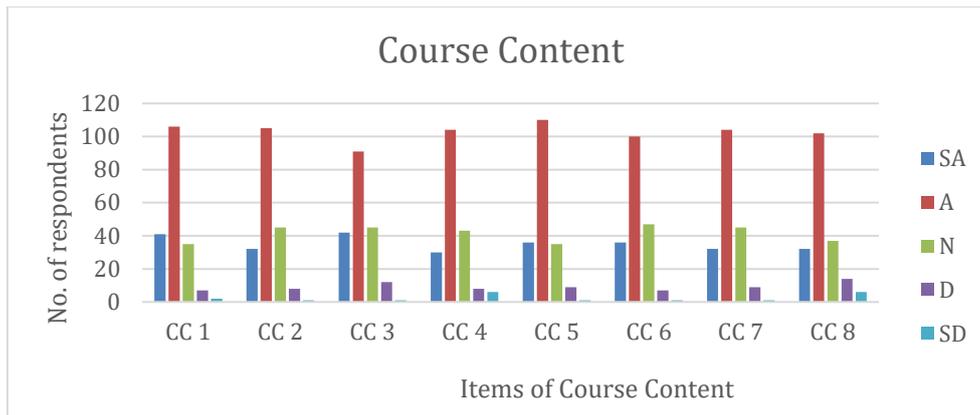


Fig.2: The satisfaction of the respondents related to the course contents of business English.

Table 4 and Figure 2 show a very significant tendency toward strongly agreeing and agreeing with the course content's elements. 147 (77%) respondents strongly agreed and agreed that the English courses develop the business writing skills with a focus on improving the paragraph writing, essay writing, letter writing, memo writing, etc. A total of 137 (72%) students agreed that the English courses emphasize on grammatical correctness and analysis of business reports, agreements, and contracts. While 133 (70%) respondents agreed that the English courses include reading skills in the context of business administration laying emphasis on content, vocabulary, and identifying the main ideas, 45 (24%) respondents were neutral on this item. A total of 146 (76%) undergraduates strongly agreed and agreed that the English courses illustrate communication techniques to develop interpersonal skills through spoken English. 136 (71%) business undergraduates agreed that the English course aids in the advancement of professional business skills while only 5% expressed their disagreement on this. The average percentage of mean of responses of both strongly agree and agree for all the items constituted 72%, for neutral the average is 22% and only 6% average is for disagree and strongly disagree. This shows that the majority of students are happy with the English course's content. Therefore, null hypothesis H₀2 is rejected due to remarkable differences in the items of the course content.

H₀3: There are no considerable disparities in respondents' satisfaction related to Materials and teaching methods.

Table 5: Materials and teaching methods

Variables of materials and teaching method	SA	A	N	D	SD
MTM 1: The books on English courses have sufficiently included materials that are directly or indirectly related to business administration.	31	117	36	3	4
MTM 2: Information technology is used to present high-interest interactive situations based on actual business application.	31	93	51	13	3
MTM 3: The books on English courses contain intensive reading excerpts from authentic texts and expand your vocabulary knowledge in the area of business administration.	28	91	59	10	3
MTM 4: You were better able to understand the course because of the additional readings, worksheets, videos, and slides.	29	85	52	23	2
MTM 5: The English instructors used various teaching methods.	25	106	45	15	0
MTM 6: The teaching methods used by the instructors are updated and modern.	27	104	50	6	4
Mean of responses	28.5	99.3	48.83	11.7	2.67
Percentage of mean of responses	14.92	52.01	25.57	6.11	1.40

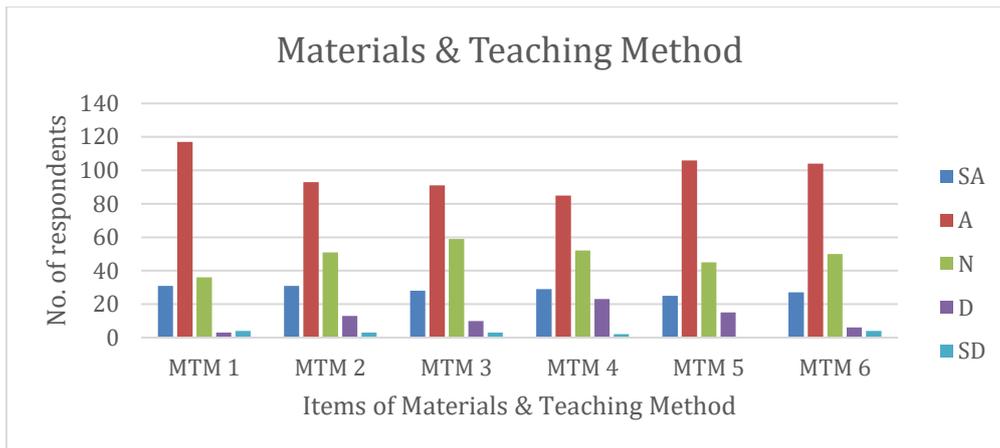


Fig.3: The satisfaction of the respondents related to materials and teaching methods.

Table 5 and Figure 3 display that majority participants had a tendency to agree with the items. A number 148 with 77% respondents agreed that the books on English courses have sufficiently included materials that are directly or indirectly related to business administration while 124 (65%) respondents agreed that information technology is used to present high-interest interactive situations based on actual business application. A total of 59 (30%) respondents had expressed neutral opinions about the books on English courses contain intensive reading excerpts from authentic texts and improve the vocabulary in the area of business administration. 69% respondents agreed that the English instructors used various teaching methods and also the teaching methods used by the instructors are updated and modern. However, 26% respondents were neutral as to whether the teaching methods used by the instructors are updated and modern. The average percentage of mean of responses of both strongly agree and agree for all the items is 67%, for neutral the average is a little higher compared to course content which is 22% and for disagree and strongly disagree the average is 8%. It seems that most students are happy with the materials and teaching method used by the teachers. Hence, null hypothesis H_03 is rejected due to significant disparity in the items of the materials and teaching method.

H_04 : There are no considerable disparities in respondents' satisfaction related to Evaluation.

Table 6: Evaluation

Variables of Evaluation	SA	A	N	D	SD
E 1: The English courses have enough assessment tasks such as written tests (final exam, mid exams, quizzes etc.), oral tests (presentation or speech), assignments (assignments, group projects etc.).	37	116	31	6	1
E 2: The evaluation criteria are made explicit at the start of the semester.	30	109	49	1	2
E 3: Your instructors provide feedback on assessments in a timely manner.	30	95	54	9	3
E 4: The instructors give you enough time to submit your assignment.	27	108	46	8	2
E 5: The instructors allow self-evaluation for your assessment tasks.	22	97	53	19	0
Mean of responses	29.2	105	46.6	8.6	1.6
Percentage of mean of responses	15.29	54.97	24.40	4.50	0.84

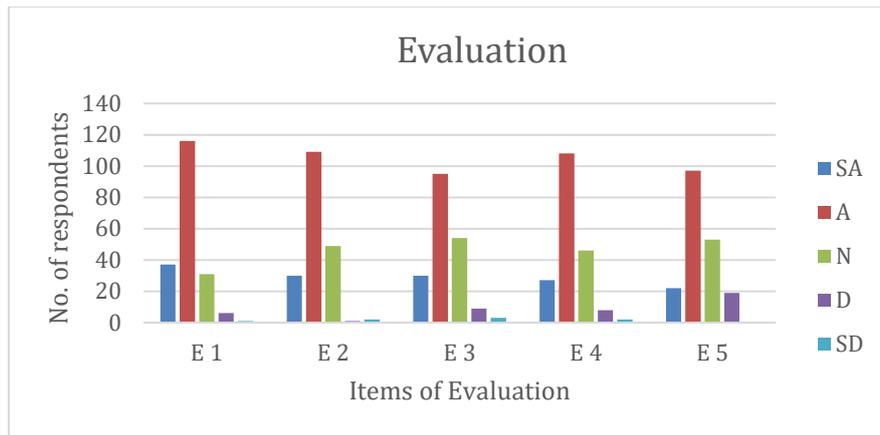


Fig.4: The satisfaction of the respondents related to Evaluation.

Table 6 and Figure 4 show that majority of the respondents were agreed with the items under evaluation. A high number of respondents as many as 153 (80%) agreed that the English courses have enough assessment tasks such as written tests, oral tests and assignments. A total of 139 (73%) respondents agreed that the evaluation criteria are made explicit at the start of the semester. 28% respondents had expressed neutral opinion about the instructors' providing feedback on assessments in a timely manner. In another item also 28% respondents expressed neutrality as to whether the instructors allow self-evaluation for the assessment tasks. The average percentage of mean of responses of both strongly agree and agree for all the items is 70%, for neutral the average is 25% and for disagree and strongly disagree the average is 5%. This indicates that most of the students are satisfied with the evaluation process. Therefore, null hypothesis H₀4 is discarded due to significant differences in the items of the evaluation.

H₀5: There are no considerable disparities in respondents' satisfaction related to Teachers' Performance.

Table 7: Teachers' performance

Variables of Teachers' Performance	SA	A	N	D	SD
TP 1: The teachers are dedicated to the curriculum and the course.	34	114	39	2	2
TP 2: In order to assist you advance your knowledge and skills, the teachers have motivated you to participate in a variety of debates.	25	94	60	10	2
TP 3: The instructors respect your opinion and views.	20	120	42	8	1
TP 4: The instructors follow their work hours properly.	26	116	37	9	3
TP 5: To support the teaching process successfully, the teachers made use of the materials and resources at their disposal.	26	108	49	5	3
TP 6: You had the chance to provide the teachers with feedback regarding the English course, the teaching style, and the performance of the teachers.	26	96	52	14	3
TP 7: The instructors provide you appropriate academic support throughout the course.	23	113	45	9	1
Mean of responses	25.71	108.7	46.29	8.14	2.14
Percentage of mean of responses	13.46	56.92	24.24	4.26	1.12

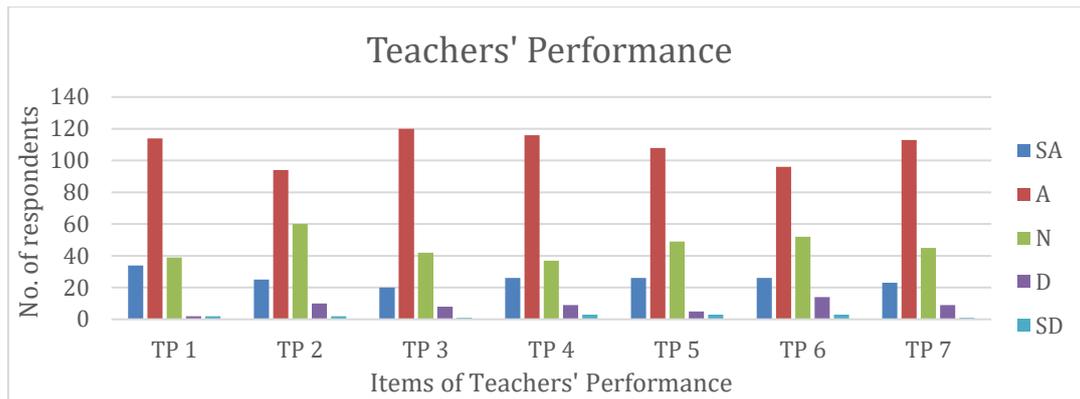


Fig.5: The satisfaction of the respondents related to teachers' performance.

Table 7 and Figure 5 display that most of the respondents were agreed with the items under teachers' performance. A good number of respondents as many as 148 (77%) were agreed that the teachers are dedicated to the curriculum and the course. However, many students (31%) expressed neutrality as to whether the teachers have motivated you to participate in a variety of debates in order to assist you advance your knowledge and skills. A total of 142 (74%) agreed that the teachers followed their work hours properly and 134 (70%) participants expressed agreement and confirmed that the teachers made use of the materials and resources at their disposal to support the teaching process successfully. It is, however, revealed that 27% respondents were neutral in their opinion about having the chance to provide the teachers with feedback regarding the English course, the teaching style, and the performance of the teachers. The average percentage of mean of responses of both strongly agree and agree for all the items constituted 70%, 24% for neutral and only 5 for disagree and strongly disagree. This indicates that the majority of those surveyed were pleased with the performance of the instructors. Therefore, null hypothesis H_{05} is rejected since there is significant differences in the items of the teachers' performance.

H_{06} : There are no considerable disparities in respondents' satisfaction related to Evaluation of the content of business English and the requirement of the job market.

Table 8: Evaluation of the content of business English and the requirement of the job market.

Variables of Evaluation of the Content of Business English	SA	A	N	D	SD
ECBE 1: Throughout the studies, you had practical training.	22	102	37	26	4
ECBE 2: The activities and guidance are sufficient for the professional development upon completion.	34	93	50	11	3
ECBE 3: You can assess the material of English language, its appropriateness for you, and its relevance to the demands of the labor market once you graduate.	25	108	50	4	4
ECBE 4: The English language resources equip you with the fundamental abilities needed for the job market following graduation.	31	111	40	8	1
Mean of responses	28	103.5	44.25	12.25	3
Percentage of mean of responses	14.66	54.19	23.17	6.41	1.57

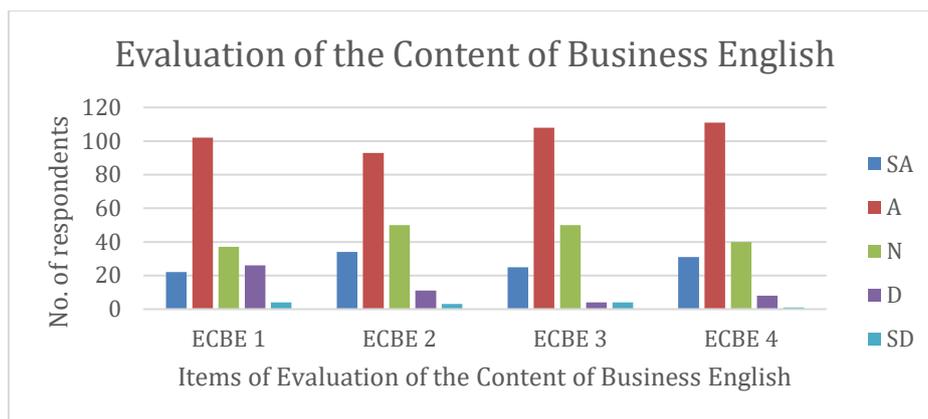


Fig.6: The satisfaction of the respondents related to Evaluation of the content of business English and the requirement of the job market.

Table 8 and Figure 6 reveal that majority participants had a tendency to agree and strongly agree with the items. Though 124 (65%) respondents agreed that throughout the studies, they had practical training, but at the same time 19% respondents showed neutrality in their opinion and as many as 16% students showed their disagreement. 127 (66%) respondents agreed that the activities and guidance are sufficient for the professional development upon completion while 26% respondents showed their neutrality. A total of 133 (70%) respondents agreed to the item ‘You can assess the material of English language, its appropriateness for you, and its relevance to the demands of the labor market once you graduate’. A good number of respondents as many as 142 (74%) agreed that the English language resources equip them with the fundamental abilities needed for the job market following graduation. The average percentage of mean of responses of both strongly agree and agree for all the items is 69%, for neutral the average is 23% and for disagree and strongly disagree the average is 8%. This shows that majority of respondents can evaluate the content of business English and they think that it fulfils the requirement of the job market. Therefore, null hypothesis H_06 is discarded due to significant differences in the items of evaluation of the content of business English and the requirement of the job market.

DISCUSSION

The information presented above was obtained from 191 undergraduate students from Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, who responded to a series of questionnaires. The three research questions of this study are enumerated and discussed one by one.

The majority of the study's participants have studied business English as part of required and mandatory courses, which answers the first research question, "What is the present status of learning business English as ESP in the business colleges under Saudi universities?" The weekly allotment for English is normally five hours. In terms of the amount of study hours spent by the students, the results showed that the majority of undergraduates studied English for one to two hours each day, while one-third of the undergraduates used three plus hours for studying ESP. This finding is in line with Al Mukhallafi (2019b). However, with regard to course goals, the findings of this study are not similar. Unlike Al Mukhallafi (2019b), majority of students agreed that the objectives of the English lessons are made very clear and objectives of the course were achieved. Most of the respondents also agreed that the English curriculum were related to professional goals.

As far as course content is concerned, the courses developed the business writing skills with a focus on improving the paragraph writing, essay writing, letter writing, memo writing, etc. The business English courses also emphasized on grammatical correctness and analysis of business reports, agreements, and contracts. The courses focused on vocabulary, content, and identifying the major concepts while teaching reading skills in the context of business administration. Additionally, the courses enabled students to study a variety of English-language content in order to become reasonably communicative in all business environments. Furthermore, it posted evidence of English communication methods for the growth of interpersonal skills aimed at enhancing the capacity to collaborate across cultural boundaries. Overall, students' motivation to study English was sparked by the course material and other cultures while assisting in the development of professional business competencies. The aforementioned results contrast with those of Al-Hazmi (2017), who discovered that university students' English had many flaws and that many of them lacked linguistic proficiency and also unable to use it for their academic and everyday affairs after graduating from university. They also lacked the skills necessary to write important documents for the workplace, such as applications, reports, memoranda, etc., and they were unable to have meaningful conversations in English.

In terms of business English course materials, the findings show that books on English courses have adequately contained materials that are either directly or indirectly connected to business administration. Unlike Al-Nasser

(2015) and Al-Shehri (2020), it is found that information technology was employed to present highly engaging interactive situations based on actual business application. Furthermore, the books for English classes improved students' vocabulary understanding in the area of business administration by including extensive reading passages from authentic texts. The supplemental readings, practice exercises, videos, and slides aided the learners comprehend the course material. The findings that the English instructors used various teaching methods and these methods are updated and modern are unlike the findings in Alsudais (2017) and Alshammari (2016) who was in the opinion that much attention to be paid on the teaching approaches of the teachers and there must be enough teacher-training programmes.

As far as second research question "What linguistic skills do the business undergraduates acquire when they study ESP?" is concerned, it is observed from the results that the business undergraduates acquired all the four skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking. The findings made it clear that the majority of respondents thought they could write paragraphs, essays, letters, memos, etc. in addition to reading all business contexts. Through spoken English, they improved their speaking and listening abilities. These findings were in contrast to those of Al-Nasser (2015), who discovered that the students of Saudi universities lacked listening and speaking skills as the teachers frequently neglected speaking and listening in favour of reading and writing, disregarding the other two essential language skills.

Regarding the third research query "What are the gaps and challenges that hinder the learning of ESP in the Saudi universities in view of the demand and need of future labour market of NEOM?", it can be stated that except a few, there were no gaps and challenges as such. The following few gaps and challenges were observed

- i) The instructors do not encourage their students to take part in various discussion to help them improve their knowledge and skills.
- ii) The activities and training conducted during imparting business English are not adequate for their professional practice after graduation.
- iii) The undergraduates do not receive any practical training during their study of business English.

However, majority of the students agreed that they could assess the material of English language, its appropriateness for them, and its relevance to the demands of the job market once they graduate. And, overall a good number of students agreed that the English language resources equipped them with the fundamental skills needed for the employment market following graduation. The above findings are in line with Al Mukhallafi (2019b) who also observed that the students could assess the English language's content and applicability for them as well as the demands of the employment market upon completion. The researcher also observed that the respondents said that their studies in English gave them the basic skills they would need on the job market once they graduated.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study has some restrictions, much like other studies do. Firstly, rather than including a good number of sample from many Saudi universities, the study has included only 191 sample from one university. Secondly, it was limited to students only. It could have included the teachers' preparedness and readiness which is much required in the present scenario as they can transform their current teaching practices into creative ones that can consolidate the national educational goals of Vision 2030. It is important to pay more attention to how both instructors and learners use technology in the classroom and outside of it, as well as how effective it is at advancing learning. Future studies must find ways to foster collaboration between teachers and students and to enhance teacher-student communication. We also need to understand how to use students' technological proficiency and literacy for educational goals. We are still trying to figure out how to reduce the computer literacy imbalance between educators and students. Future findings of the research will be used to influence English language training in Saudi Arabia and provide meaningful feedback on the status of each of Vision 2030's educational objectives.

CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to find out if college students' language abilities prepare them for the demands and needs of the future labour market that would be developed at NEOM, a massive project that came out of Saudi Vision 2030. It was specifically designed to examine the level of business English (ESP) proficiency among the undergraduates in business colleges affiliated with Saudi universities. The findings revealed that majority of the business undergraduates are equipped with all the four skills of language – reading, writing, listening and speaking. The undergraduates could assess the course's content and how well it fits their needs and those of the employment market once they complete graduation. The resources in English equipped pupils with the fundamental abilities needed for the job market immediately after graduating. The findings of this study demonstrated a certain degree of variance with the previous studies. However, there are some areas where the authorities of the higher education must focus and take some steps to attain the maximum level of target. The areas are – the instructors are not encouraging their students, inadequate activities and training to develop their professional practice and the undergraduates having not received any practical training during their study of

business English. The findings of the study add to the body of current literature and support the idea that business college freshmen are equipped with the linguistic skills needed to meet the demands and requirements of the NEOM's future labour market.

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