Alumnae and Teachers' Perceptions about English Communication Skills Courses for Engineering Undergraduates

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Abstract

Language is a living phenomenon and its utility is best demonstrated and measured in practical life. This is especially so about language learned and taught for specific purposes. Those in the practical field know the demands and challenges that the graduates face in practical life regarding their English proficiency. This study presents the perceptions of university alumnae and ESP teachers about the usefulness of various ESP courses taught to engineering students at five universities. In the first phase of the study, we collected data from 100 alumnae and 25 teachers from these universities. We selected 20 graduates and 5 teachers from each university. In the second phase, 10 graduates were interviewed. It was found that while the teachers were generally satisfied with the courses taught at the universities, the graduates thought otherwise. The graduates reported that there was no focus on developing oral communication skills and this led to communication apprehension when the students joined practical fields. Moreover, they claimed that the courses emphasized on hackneyed styles of writing reports and letters that were no more in vogue. In the second phase, we conducted focus group interviews with five members of the alumnae to gain an in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon. The alumnae proposed that instead of going for traditional courses, the teachers needed to come up with such contents that help the students develop practical speaking and presentation skills.

Keywords: ESP Courses; University Teaching, Oral Communication, English for Engineering

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1. Introduction

Language is a living phenomenon and its utility is best demonstrated and gauged in the practical life. This is especially so about language for specific purposes. Those in the practical field know the demands and challenges that the graduates face in practical life regarding their English proficiency.

English is the language of knowledge, science and technology and every other nation, especially in the developing world, places due emphasis on its learning in educational institutions. Hence, more than 1.2 billion people speak English today (Ethnologue, 2020). However, since it is an age of specialization, there has been an emphasis on areas of specializations within the English language teaching and learning. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) started in the later part of the 20th century with a focus on catering to the specific needs of the students. It presented English as an international language as far as its scope was concerned while emerging as specific with regard to its purpose (Johns and DUDLEY-EVANS, 1991).

English has been taught in Pakistan even before the country gained independence from the British in 1947. However, ESP is quite a novel phenomenon. Until recently, most of the universities offered academic courses for English and did not feel the need to offer Functional English or ESP courses. However, things have changed over the years, and one sees several universities offering ESP courses now.

2. Literature Review

This section of the paper reviews research into ESP in Pakistan and also outlines different studies carried out on the area of research in different parts of the world.

2.1 Research into ESP in Pakistan:

Several studies have been undertaken about various aspects of ESP in Pakistan over the last two decades. Nawaz (2019) conducted a study on perceptions of university lecturers and former students on Functional English courses offered to Applied Science students at a Pakistani

university. Soliciting former students and teachers' perceptions through interviews, the study found that there was a lack of liaison between academia and industry regarding these courses. The courses did not fully prepare the students to cope up with challenges of using English in practical life. Nawaz recommended developing functional English courses at the university based on students' needs.

YousafZai and Fareed (2019) also conducted a qualitative study, comparing the views of ESP learners and teachers in Management Sciences. They found that the teachers were not trained prior to teaching the learners. In fact, they learnt everything due the course of instruction. The study concludes that the teachers need to have the desired pedagogical skills and linguistic competence in addition to knowledge about students' needs in future professional contexts.

Sultan et al. (2019) carried out need analysis for teaching ESP courses in engineering universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Triangulating questionnaire data with classroom observation, they found that although the students had a positive attitude towards English, they did not develop necessary competence in English even after studying the available courses in engineering universities. The researchers called for training of the English instructors in the use of educational technology for effective teaching.

Kakepoto et. al (2012) used a questionnaire to collect responses from 30 engineers and determined the importance of oral communication for engineers. They found that different types of oral communication skills play a significant role in engineering profession with regard to efficient performance of engineers.

Exploring the effect of teaching mythologies for a business communication course undergraduate level in a Pakistani university, Najeeb-us-Saqlain et. al (2012) conducted an experimental study and concluded that simulation method was found to be better than lecture method in yield effective learning of Business Communication course for business major students at undergraduate level.

2.2 English Communication and Engineering

As in every other discipline, there has been an increasing emphasis on the need for introducing communication skills in engineering programs over the years (Lengsfeld et al., 2004; Lappalainen, 2009; Paretti, 2008). There have been some studies to emphasize on the need to teach English to prospective engineers. For instance, Adnan (2019) calls for integrating Vygotsky's social constructivism theory with ESL training to engineers. However, most of these studies have focused on suggesting syllabus design for these engineering programs through need analysis. Meanwhile, there have a few studies focusing on teaching methodologies and strategies as well. Using a mixed method study to estimate the usefulness of teaching literature circles to promote English speaking skills among the prospective engineers, Kaowiwattanakul (2020) found that the use of literature circles significantly enhanced speaking proficiency of the students under study. Earlier, in a year-long case study on communication aspects in assignments of the engineering students Paretti (2008) focussed on teacher's interaction with the students. It was a qualitative study in which the students were assigned various tasks including oral presentations, design reports, formal reports and poster summarization. The researcher concluded that transferrable communication skills of the students depend to a large degree on their interaction with the instructors.

Nevertheless, need analysis studies have also focused on the perceptions of working engineers. For instance, Nilforoush and Chalak (2019) conducted a study to find out the language skills required by the engineers at workplace. They concluded that, instead of the productive skills, the receptive skills were considered more important for effective job performance.

Meanwhile, in a study to determine the undergraduate engineering students' levels on lecture listening comprehension tasks based on CEFR, Taghizadeh & Namayandeh (2019) recommended that strategy instruction should be offered in listening courses

In addition, there is conceptual literature in which different scholars have come up with different ideas regarding methodologies and syllabi for engineering students. For example, Kotkovets (2016) calls for adopting role play as a strategy for developing English skills among engineers. In fact, role play and dramatics have proved to be quite effective not only in improving oral communication skills but also in composition skills (Hafeez and Asif, 2010) Meanwhile, evaluating the existing ESP textbooks and teaching methodologies adopted for teaching ESP to engineering students in Romania, Drobot (2016) suggested using seminars to help the students in presenting arguments, making decisions, processing information and solving problems. Drobot also recommends using a wide variety of methods to cater to different learning styles of the prospective engineers.

Recently, there have been several studies in Asia and around the world investigating the perceptions of teachers and engineering students, and the comparison of the two, regarding the ESP courses taught to them (Inozemtseva and Troufanova, 2018; Alsamadani, 2017; Muhammad and Abdul Raof, 2020; Nurmasitah et al., 2019; Thepseenu, 2020; Ishak, 2019; Mousavi et al., 2019; Devira, 2017). Meanwhile, there have been studies that have included the viewpoints of the employers (Poedjiastutie and Oliver, 2017). However, very few studies have included the viewpoint of working engineers (Rohmah, 2017).

2.3 Communication Courses for Engineering Programs in Pakistan

Communication Skills courses in engineering programs at Pakistani universities contain different kinds of contents. A synthesis of these contents is produced below.

- Introduction to Report Writing
- Basic Grammar
- Paragraph Writing
- Essay Writing
- Translation Skills (Urdu to English)
- Email Writing
- Letter Writing
- Study Skills
- Technical Communication/Writing

- The Writing Process
- Academic Skills
- Effective Communication
- Overview of Memoranda
- Presentation Skills
- Plagiarism and Referencing
- Resume/CV Writing
- Interview Skills

These contents are commonly used throughout the world. However, there is a need to see how relevant these contents are to the needs of prospective graduates. Moreover, there is also a need to focus on aims and objectives, materials, methodologies and assessment methods to see how far these courses are helpful in yielding the desired results.

2.4 Justification for the Present Study

The review of literature presented above highlights the significance of this area of research. However, it is pertinent to mention here that although there have been several studies (cf. 2.1) in the field of ESP in Pakistan yet, there has been no published work on perception of teachers and alumnae with regard to English communication skills courses for engineering undergraduates in Pakistani universities. The present study strives to fill the same gap.

2.5 Objectives of the Study:

The study was undertaken

1. To find out the perceptions of teachers about English Communication Skills Courses for engineering undergraduates in Pakistani universities.
2. To find out the perceptions of alumnae about English Communication Skills Courses for engineering undergraduates in Pakistani universities.

3. To find out whether or not the about English Communication Skills Courses for engineering undergraduates in Pakistani universities are in line with the needs of the students.

2.6 Research Questions

In line with the objectives of the study, we ventured out to answer the following research questions.

1. What is the teachers' satisfaction level with regard to English Communication Skills Courses for engineering undergraduates in Pakistani universities?
2. What is the alumnae's satisfaction level with regard to English Communication Skills Courses for engineering undergraduates in Pakistani universities?
3. How far are the English Communication Skills Courses for engineering undergraduates in Pakistani universities are in line with the needs of the students?

3. Methodology

The study employed a mixed-method design to collect and analyze data. Pragmatic value of combining the quantitative and qualitative data provided the rationale behind using a mixed-method design. A mixed-method design is always helpful in avoiding issues related to validity of data (Ryu, 2020).

In the first phase of the study, we collected data from 100 graduates and 25 teachers from these universities. We selected 20 graduates and 10 teachers from each university. We chose those graduates who had recently graduated and started their jobs to avoid issue of data validity. All these graduates were working in either Islamabad or Lahore. Convenience sampling method was used to select the sample since it was not practically possible to locate alumnae in different companies established in different cities. Same questionnaire was used to collect data from teachers and alumnae. The questionnaire was divided into five categories, i.e. Introduction to the Course and Aims and Objectives; Course Material, Course Contents, Methodology and Assessment. The questionnaire contained 56 items. Data from the questionnaire was analysed in terms of percentages. In the second phase, 10 graduates were interviewed. A semi-structured interview was

conducted, and it covered the same themes on which the questionnaire was based. Triangulation of data helped in verifying, complementing and interpreting the results acquired through questionnaire data.

As far as the course evaluation is concerned, scholars in different parts of the world have been focusing on different areas within the ESP courses including the course objectives, course outlines, contents of the course, teaching strategies, delivery methods, assessment and evaluation techniques and motivation of the students and teachers. As stated earlier, all these have been based mostly on the perceptions of the teachers and students. Hence the research tools for this study have also been developed on the same lines.

4. Results

Results from the data gathered through the questionnaire are presented in tabular form. This is followed by discussion of categories that emerged out of semi-structured interviews conducted with the alumnae.

4.1. Data Collected Through Questionnaire.

Data collected through questionnaire was presented and discussed under five headings, i.e. the course introduction and objectives, course contents, course materials, teaching methodology and methods of assessment.

4.1.1. The Course Introduction and Objectives:

There is hardly any difference between the responses of the teachers and alumnae regarding the introduction of course introduction and objectives. Teachers' claim that the learners are introduced to the course in the first lecture is generally endorsed by the alumnae, 74% of which either strongly agree or agree with the statement. In the same way, there was an agreement that objectives were clearly defined and outlined. Nevertheless, there is a sharp contrast in the views of the two groups as far as relevance of the course objectives to the practical field is concerned. While majority of the teachers report that these are relevant, a dominant majority of the alumnae, who are now in the practical field, disagree with the teachers. This shows that the teachers are not aware of the demands of practical field as far as

communication skills are concerned. Similarly, as against the teachers who believe that the course objectives are realistic and that these are achieved in the class, the alumnae report that these are neither realistic nor are they achieved during the class. The knowledge of the teachers seems to be limited to the class. They seem to be unaware of the ground realities which the prospective engineers will find themselves in. Hence, there is a sharp contrast between the perceptions of the teachers and the working engineers.

Table 1. Teachers and Alumnae's Responses on Course Introduction and Objectives

S. No.	Statement	Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The learners were/are introduced to the course in the first lecture.	Teachers	0%	6%	16%	78%
		Alumnae	6%	20%	15%	59%
2	At the end of the first lecture, the learners were/are aware of what they were/are going to learn.	Teachers	0%	32%	16%	52%
		Alumnae	16%	20%	52%	12%
3	The course objectives were/are clearly outlined and defined.	Teachers	0%	12%	19%	69%
		Alumnae	6%	18%	70%	6%
4		Teachers	0%	40%	11%	49%

	The course objectives were/are related to the practical field.	Alumnae	24%	38%	26%	12%
5	The course objectives were/are realistic.	Teachers	0%	18%	70%	12%
		Alumnae	26%	46%	24%	4%
6	The course objectives were/are achieved during the class.	Teachers	0%	18%	18%	64%
		Alumnae	22%	38%	26%	14%

It is pertinent to mention here that the alumnae are now independent of the teachers. They express their ideas freely. With their professional background and experience in the practical life, they are more likely to report the needs of the profession than of academics. This explain the contrast between perceptions of the teachers and alumnae. These findings endorse the recommendations by Nawaz (2019) who found that Applied Science alumnae wanted the course objectives to be based on occupational needs of the students.

An important consideration in the ESP courses is that they should specifically target the language used in the discipline in which the students are graduating. Their aims and objectives should be in line with the demands of profession. If that is not the case, it would naturally appear that there was no need analysis before the introduction of the course. If the course objectives are not relevant to the field, it means that the learning outcomes will not be achieved. This ultimately leads to loss of time and resources.

4.1.2. The Course Contents

Table 2. Teachers and Alumnae's Responses on Course Contents

S. No.	Statement	Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The course contents were/are relevant to the prospective engineers' needs.	Teachers	10%	20%	50%	20%
		Alumnae	28%	42%	28%	2%
2	The course contents contained/contain a variety of topics.	Teachers	0%	15%	75%	10%
		Alumnae	6%	20%	70%	4%
3	The course contents catered/cater to the learners' reading needs.	Teachers	10%	12%	60%	18%
		Alumnae	28%	32%	40%	0%
4	The course contents catered/cater to the learners' writing needs.	Teachers	10%	12%	60%	18%
		Alumnae	28%	32%	40%	0%
5	The course contents catered/cater to the learners' listening needs.	Teachers	20%	42%	20%	8%
		Alumnae	30%	52%	18%	0%
6	The course contents catered/cater to the learners' speaking needs.	Teachers	20%	42%	20%	8%
		Alumnae	30%	52%	18%	0%

7	The course contents developed/develop grammatical competence among learners.	Teachers	10%	12%	60%	18%
		Alumnae	12%	20%	68%	10%
8	The course contents developed/develop discourse competence among learners.	Teachers	10%	12%	60%	18%
		Alumnae	28%	32%	40%	0%
9	The course contents developed/develop sociolinguistic competence among learners.	Teachers	10%	22%	50%	18%
		Alumnae	28%	42%	30%	0%
10	The course contents developed/develop strategic competence among learners.	Teachers	20%	32%	30%	18%
		Alumnae	28%	42%	20%	0%
11	The course contents were/are easily covered during the class.	Teachers	50%	38%	12%	0%
		Alumnae	20%	66%	10%	4%
12	The course contents enabled/enable the learners to work/study in an English-speaking country.	Teachers	20%	25%	50%	5%
		Alumnae	28%	48%	20%	4%

Although the teachers agreed with alumnae on listening and speaking skills, yet they seemed to claim that the contents were suitable for developing requisite reading and writing skills. There was an agreement between teachers and alumnae that the contents focused on developing grammatical competence; however, alumnae's perceptions about other areas of communicative competence were different from that of the teachers who claimed that contents developed discourse competence, strategic competence as well as sociolinguistic competence among the learners. Meanwhile, both teachers and alumnae were on the same page regarding completion of the contents. However, they differed again on whether the course enabled the learners to work/study in an English-speaking country. Teachers were confident that they had selected such course contents that enabled the students to use English in English-speaking world; however, a dominant majority of the alumnae disagreed.

What transpired from the above findings was alumnae's dissatisfaction with the contents of the course. It is evident that course contents did not cater to development of communicative competence. Alumnae's claim that the contents did not cater to any of the language skills. These findings are consistent with those of Low (2018) who concluded that needs analysis was essential for deciding course contents.

4.1.3. The Course Materials

Table 3. Teachers and Alumnae's Responses on Course Materials

S. No.	Statement	Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The course materials were/are taken from the practical field.	Teachers	36%	24%	26%	14%
		Alumnae	32%	42%	24%	2%
2		Teachers	18%	20%	30%	32%

	The course materials were/are continuously updated.	Alumnae	32%	54%	10%	4%
3	The course materials contained/contain notes prepared by the teacher.	Teachers	10%	24%	50%	16%
		Alumnae	28%	54%	10%	8%
4	The course materials contained/contain adequate number of activities for developing different skills.	Teachers	2%	34%	50%	14%
		Alumnae	22%	54%	20%	4%
5	The course materials, including the recommended books, were/are readily made available to the learners.	Teachers	16%	54%	30%	0%
		Alumnae	24%	64%	24%	0%
6	The course materials contained/contain topics from a wide variety of sources.	Teachers	12%	24%	50%	14%
		Alumnae	22%	34%	40%	4%
7	Course materials relied/rely heavily on anonymous internet sources.	Teachers	20	66	14	0%
		Alumnae	2%	12%	70%	16%

8	The course materials helped/help in developing communicative competence among the learners.	Teachers	2%	20%	60%	18%
		Alumnae	12%	74%	10%	4%
9	The course materials were/are consistent with teaching methodology.	Teachers	12%	24%	50%	14%
		Alumnae	12%	24%	50%	14%
10	The course material motivated/motivates the learners to learn communication skills.	Teachers	2%	8%	74%	16%
		Alumnae	22%	54%	24%	2%
11	The course materials contained/contain the vocabulary/jargon needed during professional life.	Teachers	16%	44%	30%	10%
		Alumnae	24%	64%	12%	0%
12	The course materials contained/contain audiovisual material as well.	Teachers	12%	14%	60%	14%
		Alumnae	10%	30%	50%	10%
13	The teacher provided/provides links to online videos to the learners.	Teachers	12%	24%	50%	14%
		Alumnae	2%	20%	60%	18%

Data on perceptions of teachers and alumnae on course materials showed that both the groups agreed that materials were not taken from the practical field. However, as against teachers' insistence that materials were

continuously updated, that the materials contained adequate activities and were derived from multiple sources, the alumnae clearly disagreed. Instead, they reported that materials relied heavily on anonymous internet sources and did not help in developing communicative competence among the learners. However, what they agreed on was that the course material was consistent with teaching methodology. It is interesting to note that alumnae also reported that teachers adopted traditional methods which was teacher-centered (cf. 4.1.4). There was again a disagreement between the two groups on whether the course material motivated the learners to learn communication skills. Nevertheless, they agreed that the course did not contain vocabulary and jargon from professional life; course material contained audiovisual aids, and that the teacher provided links to different videos.

The above findings highlight the lack of ingenuity and originality on the part of teachers. Moreover, it also underlines the need to conduct needs analysis before developing an ESP course.

4.1.4. Teaching Methodology

Table 4. Teachers and Alumnae's Responses on Teaching Methodology

S. No.	Statement	Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The teacher used/uses a variety of methods during the class.	Teachers	10%	22%	48%	10%
		Alumnae	30%	48%	20%	0%
2		Teachers	4%	22%	56%	18%

	The teacher used/uses a variety of instructional tools during the class.	Alumnae	44%	46%	8%	2%
3	The teacher often gave/gives handouts to the learners.	Teachers	2%	8%	86%	4%
		Alumnae	6%	12%	80%	2%
4	The teacher mostly used/uses the whiteboard.	Teachers	40%	38%	22%	0%
		Alumnae	10%	64%	22%	4%
5	The teacher mostly used/uses the traditional methods of teaching.	Teachers	20%	25%	45%	5%
		Alumnae	2%	20%	36%	42%
6	The teacher mostly used/uses Urdu in the class.	Teachers	1%	19%	44%	36%
		Alumnae	2%	20%	50%	28%
7	The teacher mostly used/uses English in the class.	Teachers	1%	19%	44%	36%
		Alumnae	2%	20%	50%	28%
8	The teacher mostly used/uses a mixture of the two languages in the class.	Teachers	10%	22%	50%	18%
		Alumnae	12%	24%	44%	20%
9	The teacher's choice of method relied/relies on the type of learners he got/gets.	Teachers	14%	28%	40%	18%
		Alumnae	26%	46%	22%	6%
10		Teachers	40%	38%	22%	0%

	The teacher gave/gives variety of tasks to the learners.	Alumnae	10%	64%	22%	4%
11	It was/is the teacher who spoke/speaks for most of the time in the class.	Teachers	2%	8%	86%	4%
		Alumnae	0%	12%	72%	16%
12	The teacher made/makes sure that the class is interactive.	Teachers	2%	8%	86%	4%
		Alumnae	16%	52%	30%	2%
13	The teacher asked/asks several questions during the class.	Teachers	2%	8%	86%	4%
		Alumnae	16%	52%	30%	2%
14	The teacher encouraged/encourages the learners to ask questions.	Teachers	0%	12%	80%	8%
		Alumnae	24%	38%	24%	14%
15	Teacher's use of method/s motivated/motivates the learners.	Teachers	8%	22%	58%	12%
		Alumnae	36%	38%	16%	10%

Regarding variety in the use of methods and instructional tools, teachers claimed using different types of methods and instructional tools while alumnae reported that their teachers did not do so. There was an agreement between teachers and alumnae that teachers usually switched between English and Urdu during their lectures. There was also an agreement that teachers mostly used traditional methods of teaching and whiteboards in

class. However, teachers reported that their choice of method depended on the types of students they were getting. The alumnae, on the other hand, reported that the teachers remained consistent with the choice of methods no matter what type of students they got. The teachers claimed that they asked several questions during the class while the alumnae reported otherwise. However, both alumnae and teachers reported that teacher spoke for most of the time in the class.

4.1.5. Assessment Techniques

Table 5. Teachers and Alumnae's Responses on Assessment Techniques

S. No.	Statement	Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The teacher adopted/adopts a variety of assessment techniques.	Teachers	4%	6%	84%	6%
		Alumnae	2%	20%	76%	2%
2	Testing was/is content based.	Teachers	0%	22%	63	15
		Alumnae	0%	6%	68	26%
3	Testing was/is based on course objectives.	Teachers	15%	65%	18%	2%
		Alumnae	22%	60%	14%	4%
4	Assessment rubric was/is provided to the learners.	Teachers	40%	38%	22%	0%
		Alumnae	10%	64%	22%	4%
5		Teachers	0%	6%	84%	10%

	The teacher assessed/assesses learner's grammatical competence.	Alumnae	0%	2%	84%	14%
6	The teacher assessed/assesses learner's discourse competence.	Teachers	8%	12%	48%	32%
		Alumnae	4%	14%	60%	22%
7	The teacher assessed/assesses learner's strategic competence	Teachers	22%	48%	26%	4%
		Alumnae	16%	52%	30%	2%
8	The teacher assessed/assesses learner's sociolinguistic competence.	Teachers	2%	80%	16%	2%
		Alumnae	16%	72%	10%	0%
9	The learners were/are assessed for class participation.	Teachers	0%	22%	63	15
		Alumnae	0%	6%	68	26%
10	The learners were/are always provided with	Teachers	0%	8%	62%	30%
		Alumnae	10%	64%	22%	4%

	feedback on every assessment.					

The above table reveals that teachers do use a variety of assessment methods in the class, and testing is content based. However, assessment rubrics were not provided to the students. Hence, they were unaware of how they were being rated. Teachers did assess grammatical competence as well as discourse competence of the learners while strategic competence and sociolinguistic competence were not tested. Moreover, students were assessed for class participation. Teachers reported that learners were always provided with feedback on every form of assessment while the alumnae did not agree to it.

Testing the learners based on contents makes the scope of assessment limited since it does not tell us whether the aims and objectives of the courses have been realized. Moreover, the data also tells us that teachers pay a lot of emphasis on grammatical competence and discourse competence while neglecting strategic competence and sociolinguistic competence, which are significant indicators of whether a student can communicate effectively. "Developing communicative competence has become one of the main goals of foreign language instruction in the case of tertiary vocational learners" (Schormová, 2017, p. 35). However, it merits attention that alumnae also reported that course contents did not help in developing communicative competence (cf. 4.1.2). Since the assessment was based on contents, it was but natural for teachers to neglect communicative competence in assessment as well.

4.2. Interviews with Alumnae
The following categories emerged during analysis of alumnae's interviews.

4.2.1 Course Contents
The same course contents and materials have been used every semester. Course contents should be selected from a variety of sources. Teachers seems to stick to books that were published a couple of decades ago. Instead of doing that, they should focus more on the most current material and content. Even the books are not easily available. The learners should not be expected to spend huge amounts of money on purchasing books. Instead, the teachers

should provide such activities and handouts that are based on practical aspects of the course. Such contents should be selected for the courses that help develop the desired competence to communicate. Since the contents are not such that provide the learners with enough practice in writing and speaking, they are unable to write summaries and reports, or present their ideas in a logical and argumentative manner. One of the alumnae reported that he "was afraid of speaking English because I have [sic] no practice in class."

Such findings have emerged in several studies conducted in Pakistan as well as other Asian countries. For instance, Nawaz (2019) claimed that since there was a lack of liaison between academia and industry, the ESP course contents were found deficient. Similarly, Sultan et al. (2019) also found that learners did not develop necessary competence in English even after studying the available courses in engineering universities.

4.2.2 Course Materials

The students get notes from their seniors and can easily get through the case without learning anything new. There is a need to update the course materials in accordance with the needs and demands of industry. One of the alumnae reported, "Even the memos that were practiced during our course were different from those we have got here… Their language is different… it is like a conversation."

Channa et al. also recommend that the teacher should select material from different fields of science and technology in their ESP courses for engineering students in Pakistan. Moreover, (Sofa and Dewi, 2020) remark that effective course materials help the learners in building up their confidence as well as skills.

4.2.3 Assessment Methods

Alumnae expressed deep dissatisfaction with the assessment methods. The assessment methods are based on the previous century ideas of English that was taught to everyone at school. I mean it is mostly based on paper-and-

pen questions that test the students' ability to cram things. There is "a need to change that approach", said one of the interviewees. There were calls for focusing more on testing of oral communication skills so that "the students practice speaking in the class and with their friends."

An ESP teacher can Choose his/her testing and evaluation methods easily if there has been need assessment prior to introduction of the course (Sofa and Dewi, 2020).

4.2.4 Teaching Methods and Need for Teachers' Training

Teachers stick to the traditional methods. "Very often, they will deliver lecturers, which are boring", said one of the respondents during interviews. Teachers should be imparted training in ESP as well. They should be sent to the industry to observe and study language used in offices and other places of work. Only then will they understand the students' needs. Data from the questionnaire also shows that teachers do not use a variety of methods (cf. 4.1.4) or assessment techniques (cf. 4.1.5)

These findings confirm those by YousafZai and Fareed (2019) and Sultan et al (2019) who found that teachers were not trained prior to teaching the learners. Pham and Ta (2016) regret the fact that ESP teachers' training has been a neglected issue. Lu and Garner (2017) also concur that despite great for pre-service ESP teachers' training in China, it is not yet part of the system. Since there are no ESP teachers training programs, teachers do not get any orientation about these courses and are thus unaware of how these courses are different from the general English courses. Based on their findings about language pedagogical styles in technical-vocational education, Carmen-Pamittan and Malenab-Temporal (2018, p. 62) recommend, "Teachers should adopt a teaching style that would match students' learning styles in order to enhance the latter's learning". Since that is not happening, Alfehaid & Alkhatib (2020) note that it is becoming increasing clear that teachers all over Asia are not adjusting their methods to suit the needs of the ESP learners, and that is why there is hardly an organization that feels contented with the language proficiency of the graduates it gets.

5. Conclusion

The importance of English in science and technology is quite well established in present times. No professional can survive in international

arena without requisite competence in English. Competence in English does not merely mean the fundamental literacy skills; equally important in the world of today are listening and speaking skills without which a professional would not be able to communicate globally. However, it was found in this study that the Communication Skills courses in engineering universities of Pakistan were not paying adequate attention to development of listening and speaking skills.

An interesting thing about this study was the sharp contrast in views of teachers and alumnae. This is explained by the fact that the teachers' perception of ESP courses is strikingly dissimilar to that of the alumnae. Alumnae are now part of the industry. Although they have worked in industry for not more than a year, yet they have understood the needs of the prospective engineers as far as Communication Skills course is concerned.

We conclude from the above that there was a discrepancy between the courses taught and the students' needs. There is a need to conduct needs analysis before offering and designing the course. Moreover, no English course, be it general or specific, is useful unless it develops communicative competence among the learners. However, these courses did not develop communicative competence, which should be an essential focus of Communication Skills course for engineering universities in Pakistan. We can define communicative competence in ESP context as the ability to communicate specific ideas in front of a specific audience, with a specific purpose and at a specific time. Communication skills course falls short of achieving its purpose if it does not develop different forms of communicative competence among learners. Hence, there is a need for teachers to devise such methodology, course contents and course materials that develop communicative competence among future engineers.

Moreover, assessment procedures also need to be revamped because they always have a washback effect. It has been found that if the students cram for tests, their language motivation is negatively affected while positive

washback always results in increased levels of motivation (Ahmed and Rao, 2012).

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