Listening to More Voices: Why Being Heard Matters

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Abstract

This article examines various voices in a triangulated needs analysis project aimed at reevaluating the curriculum of a graduate level EAP program. Previous work (Elisha-Primo, et al., 2010) presented students' voices; this article focuses on department chairpersons and graduate advisors, and graduate EFL instructors with respect to the perceived needs of their students. Results show that listening to all stakeholders enabled us to negotiate and implement requisite changes by resolving the discrepancies among their needs. Moreover, findings demonstrated why being heard matters: the dialogue that ensued from the needs analysis process generated a network for communication, enabling stakeholders to become cognizant of and subsequently more involved with the graduate EAP program. This article demonstrates the complexity and significance of including multiple voices in needs analysis as well as the significance of establishing a forum in which stakeholders may have their voices heard. The implications of this process transcend this study and could be germane to other graduate EAP programs.

Introduction

This article is part of a curriculum reevaluation project that uses a triangulated needs analysis, focusing on three populations: students, department chairpersons and graduate advisors, and EFL instructors. The rationale for the project stems from the state of graduate level programs of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in Israel. Most universities in Israel do not have a compulsory graduate level EAP program; Bar-Ilan University was among the first to establish such a program in Israel, enabling students to advance their English

academic proficiency. Since the program has been running for a number of years, a reevaluation of its theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings was initiated by the EFL department. The first stage of the project was to undertake a triangulated needs analysis. In a previous article (Elisha-Primo, 2010), the needs of the student population were analyzed and reported. The purpose of this article is to investigate the remaining two populations.

The current research consists of three studies conducted on these two stakeholders: department chairpersons and graduate advisors, and EFL instructors. Study 1 reports on the views of department chairpersons and graduate advisors with respect to the perceived EAP needs of their students. Study 2 reports on the graduate EFL instructors' perceptions of their students' needs. In both studies, semi-structured interviews were used in order to situate the discussion within the context of Bar-Ilan University's EAP graduate program while encouraging an open exchange of ideas (Johnson, 1994). Study 3 is a follow-up after changes were implemented in the EAP program. In this study, questionnaires were used in order to provide anonymity, to lower possible occurrence of interviewer bias, and to provide additional data (Long, 2005).

The needs analysis process discussed in this article not only allowed us to recognize the stakeholders' needs, but also demonstrated the significance of establishing a forum in which they could be heard. The implications of this process transcend our program and may be integral to other graduate EAP program.

Literature Review

The significance of needs analysis for curriculum development in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs is well established (Belcher, 2006; Hyland, 2006; Long, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). A cornerstone of needs analysis is Long's (2005) method of triangulation. Studies such as Atai and Nazari (2011) and Talillerfer (2007) demonstrated the value of this approach by studying students, EFL instructors and field-specific instructors.

Nonetheless, Belcher (2006) observed that multiple stakeholders both clarify and complicate the picture. Indeed, while research supports the fact that students' voices should be heard (e.g., Bhatia & Candlin, 2001; Braine, 2001; Chan, 2001; Chase, 1993; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Evans & Green, 2007; Fan, 2001; Hyland, 1997; Jackson, 2005; Littlewood & Liu, 1996; Spratt, 1999; Tajino et al., 2005), our findings (Elisha-Primo, 2010) corroborated the research of Long (2005), Liu, Chang, Yang and Sun (2011), Holme and Chalauisaeng (2006) and others, showing that students may not fully recognize their academic needs. We demonstrated that there was a discrepancy between the graduate EAP curriculum and the students' perceived needs. Furthermore, certain results were inexplicable and pointed to the limitations of relying only on students' perceptions. These findings demonstrated that adjusting the program based on the students' voices alone may not necessarily best serve their academic needs.

Listening to the voices of the other stakeholders and implementing their views would seem to be a solution, yet it is no less complex. In a case study of teacher knowledge and voice in curriculum development, Sharkey (2004) reported on the significant contribution instructors offered due to their understanding of the social and institutional contexts in which they taught. Yet, she noted that what is eventually taught in a classroom is affected by a wide range of educational policies and politics that are quite removed from the classroom context. Other contextual factors, such as time and finance, may be the basis for practice

(Kuzborska, 2011). The situation is still further complicated. Eslami (2010) found that instructors do not necessarily judge students' needs and challenges best. There may be differences between what instructors deem necessary and what their students feel is important, and instructors' decisions about course design and materials development are often intuitive. Spratt (1999) found that instructors were not extremely successful at knowing what activities learners found enjoyable or helpful, and therefore, need guidance and support when making decisions about course design and implementation. Indeed, Davies (2006) commented that "resulting divergence of teacher and learner beliefs and expectations can spell trouble for language courses as the teacher-learner gap widens and becomes increasingly difficult to close as the course progresses" (p. 3). Many of these situations were evident in our institution. For example, the graduate EFL program coordinator felt that instructors were out of touch with administrative realities and student expectations.

Despite the difficulties involved, research demonstrates the importance of negotiating the different voices. Spratt (1999) noted that there is little doubt that "bridging the gap between teachers' and learners' perceptions plays an important role in enabling students to authenticate and thus maximize their classroom experience" (p. 152). At the same time, it is important for teachers to gain a thorough understanding of the educational context without which even the best ideas cannot be implemented (Li & Baldauf, 2011). Given that institutional needs have traditionally taken priority over students' needs, it may be time to reexamine the traditional power structure, so that students' needs be considered before more pragmatic institutional needs (Benesch, 1993). Deutch (2003) took a practical stance in noting that discrepancies in needs and expectations are a reality that must be negotiated in order to create a realistic and balanced learning environment. Finally, Kumaravadivelu (2001) envisioned a situation in which pedagogy moves beyond a theoretical construct, and suggested that students, instructors and administrators be "co-explorers, [which] could provide the opportunity to negotiate and reconcile any differences between differing beliefs and expectations and build consensus in working towards a shared vision of learning and teaching" (p. 235).

Since little research regarding the graduate level EAP needs of multiple stakeholders has been conducted in Israel, we undertook a triangulated needs analysis in order to listen to all the voices; this article examines department chairpersons and graduate advisors, and EFL instructors.

Study 1: Department chairpersons and graduate advisors

Method

Participants
The population included faculty members from 13 departments at Bar-Ilan University, representing five different faculties: exact sciences (Computers, Mathematics), social sciences (Social Work, Business, Geography), interdisciplinary studies (Gender), humanities (Classics, French, Comparative Literature, Translation, Information Science), and Jewish Studies (Archeology, Jewish Art). Seven interviewees were male and nine were female. Six of the interviewees were native English speakers, eight were native Hebrew speakers, and two were native French speakers. All the interviewees were senior staff at the university.

Materials and Procedure

A letter was sent to department chairpersons of graduate programs in the university introducing the curriculum reevaluation project and requesting an interview with the chairperson and/or faculty graduate advisors regarding the English needs of their graduate students. Letters were not sent to departments that run their own EAP programs. Forty letters were sent, and 13 departments agreed to be interviewed. Prior to the interviews, letters were sent confirming the appointment and outlining various topics that could be used to initiate and situate the discussion (see Appendix A).

Interviews were conducted individually in the interviewees' department offices. Two members of the research team were present at each interview. Permission to tape the interview was requested and granted by each participant. The interviews were semi-structured, that is, topics and general questions were presented with the intention of encouraging elaboration and discussion. For example, the interviewees were asked to rank the relative importance of the language skills; describe the English tasks assigned to students; refer to the pedagogical goals in preparing students for academic and professional purposes (see Appendix A). Each interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes to an hour. Interviews were conducted in either English (n=5) or Hebrew (n=8) depending on the interviewee's preference. The tapes were transcribed by professional transcribers and checked for accuracy by the research team.

After all the interviews were conducted, the research team analyzed the transcripts identifying recurring topics that emerged from the interviews. Two members of the research team analyzed each transcript independently and then compared analyses and findings.

Results

The overwhelming finding from the interviews with department chairpersons/graduate advisors was that reading English at an academic/professional level was perceived as the most important skill for their graduate students (n=11). For example, the Geography chairperson observed that, "there is no question that the first skill they must have is being able to read professional literature in English. And whether people like it or not, most of the scientific literature today is in English." The Translation graduate advisor agreed that reading is important since "the world demands it […]. The most urgent need is critical reading… Anything else is additional" (translated from Hebrew). Along the same lines, the Business School advisor asserted:

> *I can categorically say that there is a very pressing need, very strong need. […] Being able to pick up any journal whether it's an academic or a professional journal […]; to be able to read without any problems […], be completely familiar with both the terminology, the language, […], the culture behind the language. That is something that we're not preparing students for […]. If you cannot read the English, then your MBA's not worth anything.*

The various departments dealt differently with these reading needs. In the Math, Computer Science, and Gender Studies departments, English is as a prerequisite for admission and therefore, advanced level reading competency was assumed. Other departments focused on students' limitations, and expressed a need for the services of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) department. For example, the Comparative Literature chairperson exclaimed, "[…] I can't give them a book, an article that is more than ten pages long, they already choke. It's too difficult. This is the request [to the EFL Department] – to get them to

practice reading critical articles in English, so that they'll be able to read a book without fainting" (translated from Hebrew). More specifically, departments, such as Art, requested a focus on general vocabulary and Information Science requested the instruction of technical terms as well as the skills that would enable students to read more professionally in their field:

> *I will give you an example. When a person reads an article for a test or work, he needs to understand the content of the article. If he doesn't understand a specific word, it's not so bad. When he looks up [a word] in a data base ... but this word has ten synonyms, if he doesn't look up the synonyms, he will not find the material. So there are real skills they need, at least to know how to search for synonyms, at least that [translated from Hebrew].*

Another interesting point raised by the interviewees was that their students simply feared reading in English despite at least eight years of English instruction in primary and high school education. The Geography chairperson admitted that, "[...] certainly I would like to see them more comfortable reading the material in English. And not freaking out every time they get an English article handed to them." The French advisor observed that "[...] If they have to they will try [to read]. But as I said, their immediate reaction is one of fear because they don't have the mechanism." The interviewees were also troubled by the fact that students paid for translations of the course reading material.

Writing and speaking were perceived as important needs by most departments (n=10), but were ranked lower than reading, with no clear cut preference between the two skills. Those chairpersons/graduate advisors who ranked writing higher than speaking (i.e., Information Science, Gender Studies, Computers, and Translation) differentiated between thesis and non-thesis track students indicating that only the former had any real need in writing, specifically, publishing articles, writing abstracts for conferences, and communicating with colleagues. The Translation advisor pointed out that "[since] the only common language is English, the need of the academic person is to think, to think scientifically in English, to publish, to communicate [in writing...]"(Translated from Hebrew). The need for writing was further emphasized by thesis advisors who commented "that they end up having to edit the students' papers over and over again until they are happy with something basic" (Computers). In contrast, departments in which most of the academic work in their field was not carried out in English (e.g., French, Archeology, Jewish Art, and the School of Social Work) ranked writing lower. "I wouldn't even expect them to write a single sentence [in English]; I don't think it's that relevant" (Translated from Hebrew; School of Social Work). They added that students faced with the need to write in English would probably turn to external help from colleagues or professional translators and editors.

Within the various departments, the need for speaking was perceived differently depending on the specific needs of the graduate population: an emphasis was put either on the importance of speaking for professional purposes, or on the necessity to speak for academic purposes. For example, the Information Science chairperson raised the need for English speaking as part of students' professional training:

> *[T]he second pedagogical goal is to train them for the work world to work as IT specialists [...] Now, you need to understand that in the information field they also need to negotiate with different companies, purchase data bases; most of the companies are owned by people from abroad. They need speaking, communicating, and we do not put*

an emphasis on it but it would be necessary that they come out of here … [with that skill]" [translated from Hebrew].

Departments such as the School of Social Work, French, Comparative Literature, Computers and Geography, in contrast, explained that speaking was necessary for academic purposes, such as presenting and conversing with colleagues at conferences.

> *[…] the speaking is a much bigger problem because they're not really speaking all the time, right, when you present a paper at the conference maybe for twenty minutes. That's it. So they might prepare as text machines, and they're grateful that nobody asks a question, and a- , so speaking is something which I think is more important than listening [Computers].*

Overall, listening was ranked as the least important skill by most departments. Yet, three departments ranked it higher: Gender Studies ranked listening as the most important skill, and the School of Social Work and Archeology ranked listening as the second most important skill. Gender and Social Work noted the importance of understanding foreign and visiting scholars' lectures where English is the lingua franca. "One needs to train the ear because there are accents and different speeds of speaking, and I think this is something that is very important" (Translated from Hebrew; Gender). She gave the example that they offered a very unique on-line course that was carried out simultaneously in five different countries requiring the students to comprehend the speech of the lecturers and participants in English. The Archeology chairperson did not explain the high ranking of listening skills.

In addition to the ranking of skills, another finding emerged. Ten out of the thirteen departments interviewed raised the need for English for specific purpose (ESP) courses. The Computers advisor emphasized the need for teaching computer science jargon. While discussing critical writing courses, he noted, "No, we don't [have them] and that's unfortunate. I think that it would be very helpful, but it would have to be geared towards a computer science curriculum." Similarly, Information Science expressed the need for ESP courses to focus on specific terminology (e.g., for writing different sections of research papers). The Business School advisor presented his vision of making English the language of instruction, in accordance with other international business schools, and showed an interest in creating a customized English business course referring to both the professional and academic needs of their students.

Finally, the interviews revealed an overwhelming lack of knowledge and understanding of the work of the graduate EAP program. Chairpersons/graduate advisors were not familiar with the graduate placement exam, the course levels, requirements and materials: "No I don't know it at all […] I have never heard of it [the program], how long has it existed?" (Translated from Hebrew; Jewish Art). Even the interviewees who were familiar with the program were not aware of its effects on students. "I have a vague recollection of someone who said that she received help with English writing and that it was good […]" (Translated from Hebrew; Gender). The interview discussions provided a foundation for exchanging information. As a result, the department chairpersons showed an interest in establishing working relations and cooperation with the EFL department. For example, the Information Science advisor suggested incorporating some of their required reading into the EAP curriculum; the School of Social Work discussed the possibility of using the format of the existing placement exam to design a specific exam for their purposes.

Discussion
The two main themes that emerged from the interviews with department chairpersons/graduate advisors demonstrated why listening and providing the opportunity to be heard matter. The first theme related to the language skills that they perceived to be necessary for implementation in the graduate EAP program. The second theme concerned the value of including this population in the needs analysis process.

The main finding from the interviews with the department chairpersons/graduate advisors was that they ranked reading English at an academic and/or professional level as the most important skill needed for their graduate students. We expected the department chairpersons/graduate advisors to agree with the mandate from the University Graduate Standards Committee, which specified that the graduate level should focus on academic writing since the undergraduate program is designed to enhance reading English for academic purposes. Nonetheless, department chairpersons voiced a need based on the reality that their graduate students do not have an adequate reading level. These results corroborate what we have seen in our classrooms and warrant discussion for changes.

The skills of writing, speaking, and listening were ranked less important than reading, reflecting specific needs in each field. Furthermore, department chairpersons/graduate advisors requested English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and track specific courses since a "one size fits all" program does not suit the needs of the individual departments. Unfortunately, attempts to accommodate these needs have had little success due to budgetary and administrative constraints (e.g., students' schedules) and will require continued negotiation.

The second theme that emerged from the interviews was that the needs analysis process itself was productive for both the department chairpersons/graduate advisors and the EFL department. The lack of knowledge and understanding of the work of the graduate EAP program, reported in the results, may be due to the frequent rotation of the administrative posts requiring the chairpersons/graduate advisors to become familiar with the workings of their departments within a short time. As a result, the English language requirement may not be seen as a priority. The fact that only 13 out of 40 departments responded to the letters that were sent may attest to this. Their awareness having been raised through the interview process, the department chairpersons/graduate advisors were anxious to learn more about the EFL department services and expressed interest in expanding those services. Moreover, they were also interested in being heard. The interviews provided a venue for communication and exchange of ideas with the research team. These reactions attest to the urgency of communicating with the various departments on a more effective and on-going basis (see General Discussion).

Study 2: Graduate EFL instructors (qualitative study)

Method

Participants
The population included 19 staff members of Bar-Ilan University's EFL department. Sixteen staff members were native English speakers (84%) and three were native Hebrew speakers (16%). All staff members hold graduate degrees. Most staff members have been teaching EAP at "the Authors' institution" for a minimum of ten years. Moreover, 12 staff members have been teaching at the graduate level for at least five years and 7 have been teaching for one year or were preparing to teach a graduate level course for the first time.

Materials and Procedure

A letter was sent to all staff members briefly explaining the project and inviting them to participate in group discussions. All staff members agreed to participate. The staff was divided into five groups according to seniority to encourage discussion and exchange of ideas and to ensure that they would feel comfortable and free to speak their minds. Group 1 consisted of the most senior staff, all of whom had held the post of EFL department chairperson; Groups 2 and 3 were veteran teachers who had taught at the graduate level for a number of years; Groups 4 and 5 were instructors who had little or no experience with the graduate EAP program. The interviews were semi-structured with topics and general questions used to encourage elaboration and discussion (see Appendix B). They were conducted in the EFL department offices with two members of the research team present at each discussion. Permission to tape the discussions was requested and granted. At the beginning of each session, the goal of the project was reviewed and topics for discussion were introduced. Each interview lasted approximately an hour. The tapes were transcribed by professional transcribers and checked for accuracy by the research team.

After all the sessions were conducted, the research team analyzed the transcripts identifying recurring topics that emerged from the discussions. Two members of the research team analyzed each transcript independently and then compared analyses and findings.

Results

Some instructors' comments were common across all groups. All instructors reported a high level of satisfaction in teaching the graduate courses. They found the work to be challenging, enjoyed working with the more mature and motivated graduate students, and were gratified by students' positive feedback. Furthermore, they noted the importance of lowering the students' anxiety about learning English. Moreover, there was consensus that the number of course hours at each level (one to two semesters; 26-104 academic hours) was not enough to accomplish the course goals.

Other comments were group specific. Group 1, the most senior staff, having the broadest perspective, provided insight into the graduate program. They noted that while reading is clearly very important at all the levels, the emphasis on writing was a result of the need to satisfy both university officials, and students. The University Graduate Standards Committee was interested in a writing program that would build on the reading skills developed at the undergraduate level. In addition, students were motivated by the writing element of the course because it brought something new to their English language development. Nevertheless, the reality created a dilemma: Chairpersons of the individual departments called for a focus on reading, and were desperate to have students be able to cope with even the most basic texts, and they minimized the need for writing. The result was creating a program with "something for everyone." Group 1 also commented on the need to make the course as relevant to the graduate students as possible, but recognized the difficulty in doing so due to limitations, such as students' elementary entry level and the assessment tool used for placement. Finally, they reported that the course helped students "[get] over the fear of touching English at all [...] to know that it's hard, but there are tools out there that will help you get through it."

The instructors in Group 2 took a more student-centered approach. These instructors seemed to be most interested in making the course as useful to the students as possible.

They discussed the importance of encouraging students to communicate about their work and studies in English, by focusing on professional language and the skills that would help them perform their academic work. Instructors felt it was important that "[...] the curriculum should include elements of choice and negotiation of individual syllabi" so that the courses could be tailored to individual students. Nonetheless, they acknowledged the difficulty in doing so due to time constraints and large class size.

Another feature of the student-centered approach, which emerged from the discussions, was the issue of student evaluation. Instructors appreciated the fact that grades where determined by assignments only and that there was no final exam at the end of the course. They stressed that this allowed for the flexibility that a more individualized program called for. As one teacher commented, "[...] if there is a need, then we concentrate on that [need] no matter how long it takes even if it takes away from other topics that might seem important to us." At the same time, a need for a set of parameters that would help keep standards across courses was emphasized.

Group 3 focused less on the needs of the students and more on the challenges they faced teaching the course. They felt frustrated by the lack of time available to advance students significantly, as one teacher commented, "The course is too short, too pressured". In addition, they were troubled by the fact that the course lacked a clear structure, and, at the same time, they wanted more flexibility and freedom in creating their own teaching material; they requested "not dictation but direction". Nevertheless, they felt that the relaxed atmosphere was beneficial to students and helped students overcome barriers to learning English.

Group 4 expressed ambivalence toward the program. The instructors who had already taught one course made comments similar to the instructors in the other groups. They noted that they enjoyed working with the highly motivated students and they enjoyed teaching the course because the students were satisfied, "[the students] are so very happy with [the course]; they want to improve their writing [...] Nobody complains about the amount of homework that I give them. They know that they need it." The instructors understood writing to be the main goal of the course: "We have no justification to repeat another reading course [...] they should know how to read, and, therefore, the focus on the M.A. is on the writing." Limitations of the program were also stressed: the preparation was extremely demanding, the limited amount of time to accomplish goals was wearisome, and large class size was trying (20-25 students). The instructors who were preparing to teach graduate courses for the first time voiced a concern that they did not have a clear understanding of the program and needed guidance. As one teacher admitted, "When you say program, I don't know what you exactly mean. Because I understood that I could teach whatever I want, and I saw books and I collected materials. So what is the program?" Finally, instructors expressed the need for more material to be available, but did not want to be required to use any specific material.

Group 5 comprised veteran EFL instructors who were either new to the department or had very limited experience teaching the graduate courses. This group also focused on the need for making the course practical for students by structuring assignments to match students' real world tasks. As one teacher commented, "needs change over time. [There is a] very academic need at the beginning of the program. The end of the program is more business oriented: memos, presentations, real world tasks". Similar to Groups 3 and 4, they enjoyed the flexibility that the course offered; yet that flexibility created a feeling that the program

lacked a specific objective: One teacher observed that the program "is positive as we focus on improvement and is process-oriented; it is negative exactly because there is no objective;" while another reinforced that there is "no common thread in the course material. No common or consistent objective."

Discussion

The comments made by instructors were general in nature, focusing on their feelings about the courses they taught and the program as a whole, and much less on the students' needs. A number of themes recurred within the groups: the student-centered approach, limitations of the program, and teacher satisfaction. Once again, these themes demonstrated why listening and providing the opportunity to be heard matter.

The student-centered approach enables instructors and students to negotiate a syllabus tailored to individual students' needs. Instructors' comments revealed two different points of view. On the one hand, they expressed satisfaction with the approach because students seemed motivated by it. On the other hand, they maintained that negotiating the syllabus was overwhelming and inordinately time consuming, since it required becoming familiar with each student's material in order to develop and respond to the individual tasks. This conflict needed to be addressed.

Limitations of the program were another focus. Instructors felt that the goals of the courses were not clear. This may be the result of a discord between the University Graduate Standards Committee's mandate for writing and the reality in the instructors' classrooms that informed them of the importance of working on reading skills. The resulting dissonance needed to be dealt with. Another limitation focused on course materials. Instructors wanted direction and assistance with the teaching materials, but at the same time, they wanted academic freedom to develop their own.

Limitations also focused on university budgetary constraints. Instructors stressed that at every level one to two semesters (26-104 academic hours) were insufficient to accomplish the course goals. Furthermore, they felt that classes of 20-25 students made it difficult to implement a student-centered approach; smaller classes with 12-15 students were more manageable for instructors.

The instructors' reported feelings of satisfaction, gratification, and enjoyment in teaching the graduate courses took a surprising amount of time relative to the time allotted for the interviews. A possible explanation for the emphasis on the instructors' own feelings may reflect a long awaited opportunity to express these ideas. In retrospect, we recognize that the teaching staff had never been given such a forum prior to these interviews; their voice had never been considered before.

As with the department chairpersons/graduate advisors, the instructors' insights provided valuable information for negotiating changes in the program (see General Discussion).

Study 3: Graduate EFL Instructors (quantitative study)

Two years after Study 2 was completed, a follow-up study using a different tool was conducted. This study was not originally in the research plan but was added since the interviews in Study 2 yielded limited results with regard to students' needs. In addition, in that time period a number of changes were implemented into the program based on results of our previous research (Elisha-Primo, et al., 2010) and partial results of the current

studies (department chairpersons/graduate advisors and graduate EFL instructors; see Discussions above).

Method

Participants

The population included 25 staff members of Bar-Ilan University's EFL department who teach the graduate level courses. Twelve staff members were native English speakers (48%), eleven were native Hebrew speakers (44%), and two were native Russian speakers (8%). All staff members hold graduate degrees. Most staff members have been teaching EFL at Bar-Ilan University for a minimum of ten years with an average of 21.3 (SD = 11.43) ranging from 5 to 43 years of teaching experience. Moreover, most staff members have been teaching at the graduate level for at least 5 years with an average of 6.71 (SD = 4.43), ranging from 2 to 16 years of teaching at the graduate level. Most of the participants in this study were the same participants included in the previous study (Study 2); however, faculty changes have taken place in the time elapsed between the studies.

Materials

Anonymous questionnaires were distributed to the participants. The questionnaire consisted of two main sections: *background information*, and *skills and language needs* (see Appendix C). The *background information* section consisted of four items: native language, number of years teaching in Bar-Ilan University's EFL department, number of years teaching graduate courses in the department, and the course level taught.

The *skills and language needs* section reported on the degree to which the teacher thought students need particular skills for performing academic and/or professional tasks in English. It was divided into three parts: Part I consisted of 18 items on a 6-point Likert scale (from 1 'least needed' to 6 'most needed'), focusing on the following language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking for academic and professional purposes, more basic skills, such as vocabulary and grammar, and critical reading/writing skills, such as "summarizing for integrating information into writing". Part II included three more items asking the instructors to mark which of the 18 skill items they perceived as most important to the course level they taught, second most important and least important. Finally, an additional question was added to assess the instructors' level of satisfaction with the graduate program, using the same 6-point Likert scale (see Appendix C).

Procedure

The participants were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire that addressed instructors' perceptions of students' language needs at the course level they taught. The questionnaires were placed in the instructors' mailboxes in the EFL department, with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the questionnaire. Instructors returned the questionnaires to one member of the research team's mailbox. Eight staff members (32%) responded for the elementary level courses; nine (36%) for the intermediate level courses, and eight (32%) for the advanced level courses.

Results

The validity of the questionnaire was tested using a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which was conducted on the 18 items of Part I. This analysis yielded 6 factors that explain 87.74% of the variance. The factors that emerged grouped the skills as follows: reading (items 1-2; α = 0.67), writing (items 3-4; α = 0.89), listening (items 5-6; α = 0.87), general

speaking (items 8-9; α = 0.63), vocabulary (items 10-11; α = 0.62), and critical writing/reading (items 13-18; α = 0.83). Two items, "speaking for academic purposes (item 7) and "grammar and sentence structure instruction" (item 12), were not grouped into the factors and, therefore, were treated independently. For each factor, the mean response was calculated for each participant.

In order to examine the assumption that at different levels instructors would perceive different needs for the various skills, a Multiple Analysis of Variance with Covariates (MANCOVA) was conducted. Since there were differences in seniority among instructors with regard to number of years teaching in the department and years teaching the graduate courses, these variables entered the analysis as covariates. In Table 1, the results of the analysis are presented according to skills by course levels.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of language skills by course levels

Skills	Elementary		Intermediate		Advanced		$F(2,18)$
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	
Reading	5.06	0.68	5.12	0.64	4.57	1.01	0.86 NS
Writing	2.94	1.18	4.75	0.89	4.71	0.86	6.95 $p<0.01$
Listening	4.31	1.85	4.75	1.03	3.21	1.47	1.73 NS
Speaking for Academic Purposes	4.50	1.77	5.13	1.12	4.14	1.46	0.94 NS
Speaking for General Purposes	4.75	1.25	4.81	0.88	4.57	1.09	0.08 NS
Vocabulary	5.50	0.46	5.19	0.65	4.36	1.02	6.63 $p<0.01$
Grammar	4.75	1.38	4.25	1.03	3.14	1.34	2.01 NS
Critical Reading/Writing	3.31	0.98	4.67	0.69	4.26	0.73	6.45$p<0.01$

As Table 1 shows, significant differences were found among the three levels in the following language skills: writing, vocabulary, and critical reading/writing. The results showed that in writing as well as in critical reading/writing, the instructors of the elementary level perceived these needs as less important for the students compared to the instructors of the intermediate and advanced levels. In contrast, instructors of the advanced level perceived that knowledge of vocabulary was a less important need for the students compared to the instructors of the elementary level, while the instructors of the intermediate level did not differ significantly from either. In all other language skills, there were no significant differences among the three groups of instructors. Reading skills, oral skills, and grammar were perceived as important needs across levels. The covariate variables were not significant in the analysis (For seniority in EAP courses $F(8,11)=2.16$, $p>0.05$; For seniority in teaching graduate EAP courses $F(8,11)=0.51$, $p>0.05$).

In Part II of the questionnaire, instructors were asked to choose the items they perceived to be most important, second most important and least important from the 18 skill items. Most

instructors across levels perceived reading as the most important skill (See Figure 1): 62.5% for the elementary level, 77.8% for the intermediate, and 50% for the Advanced level. For the second most important skill, 25% of the instructors of the elementary level indicated reading; 33.3% of the instructors of the intermediate level marked *writing for academic purposes* (item 3), and 33.3% marked *speaking for academic purposes* (item 7); 25% of the instructors of the advanced level marked the item *writing for professional purposes* (item 4) and 25% marked *speaking for academic purposes* (item 7) as the second most important skill. For the remaining instructors, there was no one particular skill chosen across levels. Similarly, for the least important item, instructors' answers were distributed among all language skills and no one particular skill was chosen.
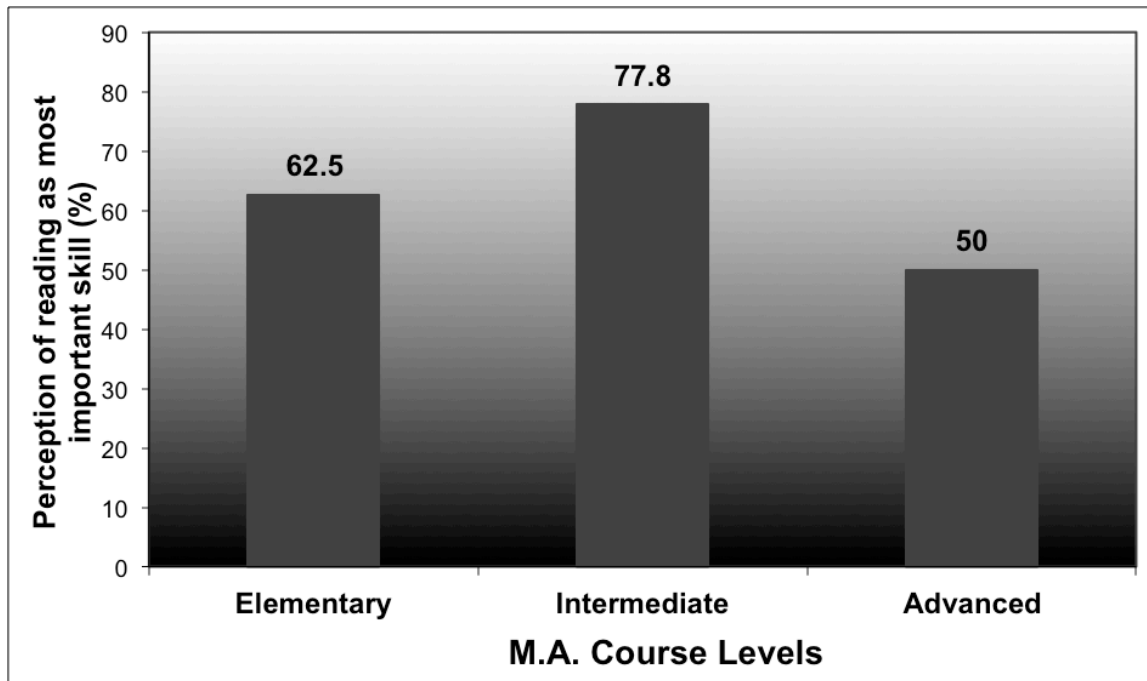

Figure 1. Percentages of instructors' perception of reading as most important skill across levels

Finally, in order to determine whether there were differences among instructors with respect to their level of satisfaction with the program, a chi-square ($\chi2$) test was conducted. No significant differences ($\chi2 = 4.23$, df = 4, $p>0.05$) were found among instructors across levels. It is important to note that across all teaching levels, none of the instructors marked low satisfaction (1, 2) or the highest level of satisfaction (6). The answers were distributed on a scale from 3-5, which indicate medium to high satisfaction across levels.

Discussion

The results from this study corroborate the findings from our previous studies. Reading was perceived as an important academic skill for all levels (Part I of the questionnaire). Similar results were obtained from Part II of the questionnaire: even at the advanced level, where students exhibit excellent academic reading competency, fifty percent of the instructors perceived academic reading as the most important skill. In seeming contrast, at the elementary level, instructors chose reading as the most important skill to a lesser degree than the intermediate level instructors. Their choice of vocabulary and grammar as the most

important skills, however, may reflect their assumption that these skills are requisite for more complex reading.

The results show that for some skills instructors perceived different needs for the three course levels. One possible explanation is that at the advanced and intermediate levels, students have enough proficiency to allow instructors to focus on higher order skills. In elementary level courses, students need first to acquire the basic vocabulary that will allow them to cope with the reading materials in their field before advancing to more critical abilities.

This study was conducted after reading became the focus for the elementary and intermediate level courses. The results suggest that the graduate EFL instructors were in accord with the modifications in the program (see General Discussion).

General discussion and conclusions

Our research builds on the ideas of Benesch (1993), Deutch (2003), Hyland (2006), Kumaravadivelu (2001), Li and Baldauf (2011), and Spratt (1999) demonstrating the complexity of needs analysis and the importance of listening to all the voices in the educational context. We found that beyond listening, the dialogue with the stakeholders that ensued from the needs analysis process created an atmosphere of active cooperation: Listening to all the stakeholders enabled us to recognize the limitations of the graduate EAP program that stemmed from a mismatch among the stakeholders' needs. As a result, we gained the insight necessary to negotiate and implement requisite changes. At the same time, giving the stakeholders the opportunity to be heard initiated conversations that enabled them to become active participants – they were no longer stakeholders in name, rather had a true stake in the process. While satisfying all the stakeholders completely may not be realistic, we understood that their views could not be divorced from one another and must be interrelated for the system to work as a whole.

Today, in the renewed curriculum, reading has become more central in the elementary and intermediate levels since both the department chairpersons/graduate advisors and the graduate instructors understood that these students were falling short in reading. In line with the University Graduate Standards Committee interests, writing is still the focus of the program at the advanced level, and at the elementary and intermediate levels writing is used to reinforce reading. Furthermore, since the students voiced a need for speaking (Elisha-Primo, et al., 2010), a solution was negotiated here as well. Oral presentation is a part of the program at every level and is based on the students' reading and writing assignments.

Furthermore, new materials have been developed to suit specific needs at each level. At the higher levels, a materials bank with guidelines and teaching suggestions has been developed focusing on higher order reading and writing skills as was deemed necessary by instructors and department chairpersons/graduate advisors. Within this framework, instructors are free to choose materials and implement them using the pedagogical methods they prefer for their students' individual needs. At the elementary level, the level coordinator together with the teaching staff chose text-books that address the vocabulary and grammar skills that both students and instructors felt were necessary. At all levels, instructors are encouraged to supplement materials as they deem appropriate, and many instructors collaborate to do so and share their ideas with colleagues. In addition, training workshops have been conducted

to guide and assist instructors. Thus, they received the direction they called for without feeling dictated to.

Finally, intra-departmental relationships have been strengthened. The EFL department communicates with each graduate program at the university through on-going correspondence and regular meetings. This communication maintains awareness and knowledge of the graduate EAP program and an open forum for continual cooperation.

In the time that has elapsed since the initial study (Elisha-Primo, et al., 2010), overall satisfaction with the program has been voiced: at intra-university committee meetings, the EFL department has been commended for carrying out the needs analysis project, student feedback is extremely positive and instructors report more satisfaction with the graduate level courses. While finances currently limit some of the possibilities, such as a need for ESP courses and more hours dedicated to language learning at the graduate level, a dialogue has begun with an understanding that this process of communication must be nurtured and maintained.

This article demonstrates the complexity and significance of including multiple voices in needs analysis as well as maintaining an on-going process of communication: The process of listening and establishing a forum in which stakeholders may have their voices heard allows for a more fertile and sound basis for development.

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Appendix A. Questions for semi-structured interviews with chairpersons/graduate advisors (translated from Hebrew)

- Which English skills do the students in your department require?

Rank them by level of importance: Reading   Writing   Listening   Speaking

- Can you describe the type of tasks your students are required to perform in English?
- What are the pedagogical goals of the department in preparing the students academically and professionally?
- Is there a gap between the requirements in your courses in terms of English knowledge and the students' abilities to fulfill those requirements?
- How important is knowledge of English in your field for promotion?
- What are the requirements in English for academics in your field as opposed to students?

Appendix B. Questions for EFL graduate instructors

- What do you think is the goal of the M.A. program?
- What does a typical lesson look like?
- What are the positive aspects of the program?
- What worked for you in the course you taught?
- What are the limitations of the program?
- What elements of the course did you feel were less successful for you?
- What do you perceive to be the students' greatest needs?
- Do you feel that the course answered these needs?
- Do you think the students came to the course with these same perceived needs?
- What do you think was the student's attitude toward the course?
- If you could create a "dream course"/utopia what would it look like?
- Do you enjoy teaching the M.A. courses?

Appendix C. Graduate EFL instructors' questionnaire

<u>Background Information</u>
Mother tongue: __ English __ Hebrew __ Russian __ Other __
Number of years teaching in the BIU EFL department ____
Number of years teaching M.A. courses in the BIU EFL department ____

Part I. Skills and Language Needs
To what degree do you think students **need** the following? (For the purpose of these questions, "professional" refers to non-academic purposes such as making a presentation for customers overseas, etc.) (Circle the most appropriate answer: 1 = least needed; 6= most needed)

	least needed			most needed		
• reading for academic purposes	1	2	3	4	5	6
• reading for professional purposes	1	2	3	4	5	6
• writing for academic purposes	1	2	3	4	5	6
• writing for professional purposes	1	2	3	4	5	6
• listening for academic purposes	1	2	3	4	5	6
• listening for professional purposes	1	2	3	4	5	6
• speaking for academic purposes	1	2	3	4	5	6
• speaking for professional purposes	1	2	3	4	5	6
• speaking for social purposes	1	2	3	4	5	6
• vocabulary development (general)	1	2	3	4	5	6
• vocabulary development (field specific)	1	2	3	4	5	6
• grammar and sentence structure instruction	1	2	3	4	5	6
• summarizing for comprehension	1	2	3	4	5	6
• summarizing for integrating information into writing	1	2	3	4	5	6
• paraphrasing for integrating information into writing	1	2	3	4	5	6
• documenting sources professionally	1	2	3	4	5	6
• synthesizing / integrating resources	1	2	3	4	5	6
• awareness and use of supplementary material (dictionary/ thesaurus / writing guides)	1	2	3	4	5	6

Part II. From the items listed above,

1.   Which do you perceive to be the most important? _____

2.   Which do you perceive to be the second most important? _____

3.   Which do you perceive to be the least important? _____

Level of Satisfaction

Do you think the course answers these needs?	1	2	3	4	5	6

Thank you for your cooperation!