



Saudi EFL In-Service Hospital Employees' Beliefs and Attitudes about an Intermediate Medical English Course: Focusing on Issues, Difficulties and Motivations

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Abstract:

ESP courses serve to equip specific learners with the functional language to help them better communicate in their purposeful field or work domain. Realizing the significance of the subject of this study and the importance of the voices of the participants, this research attempted to describe 18 Saudi male EFL in-service hospital employees' beliefs, attitudes and concerns about an intermediate ESP medical course. The study used qualitative research methods, including interview and observation. The main research question of this study was what beliefs and attitudes the participants had about this ESP course. The findings of this study indicated that the issues brought by the participants were consistent with issues covered in the scholarly literature, although the participants did not have any prior experience in this subject of the research. These issues included, needs analysis, general English versus specific English, textbooks, ESP teachers, and motivation



towards their profession. Finally the study showed that the participants gained some confidence in carrying out communication with physicians and nurses, though they faced some problems. Some recommendations were suggested for further research studies.

Key words: English for Specific Purposes – beliefs – attitudes needs analysis text books– ESP teachers– communication – genera English – motivation

المستخلص:

تتميز دراسة اللغة الانجليزية لأهداف خاصة بأنها تزود المتعلم باللغة الوظيفية في ميدان عمله. وادراكا لأهمية موضوع هذه الدراسة والفائدة المرجوة من سماع آراء الموظفين المشاركين بهذه الدراسة، فقد اهتمت هذه الدراسة بتقديم دراسة وصفية لثمانية عشر موظفا في مستشفى الملك فهد التخصصي بمدينة بريدة حضروا فصلا دراسيا باللغة الانجليزية لأغراض صحية . وركزت الدراسة على سماع آراء الطلاب حول أثر هذا الفصل الدراسي على أداء الموظفين لغويا في ميدان عملهم وماهي المشاكل التي يواجهها الطلاب والتي قد تحد من الاستفادة من هذا الفصل الدراسي. استخدمت هذه الدراسة منهجية البحث الوصفي واشتملت على المقابلات والمشاهدة. وأشارت نتائج الدراسة إلى أن الآراء التي تحدث عنها الطلاب متوافقة مع الدراسات السابقة والعرض الأدبي في هذا المجال رغم أن الطلاب ليس لديهم سابق خبرة في موضوع البحث. وقد تمحورت المواضيع حول تحليل احتياجات الطلاب، اللغة العامة مقابل اللغة الخاصة، المقررات الدراسية والاساتذة وكذلك أثر البرنامج الدراسي على معنويات أدائهم الوظيفي الصحي. واخيرا فقد أوضح البحث أن



الطلاب اكتسبوا مزيدا من الثقة أثناء المحادثة مع الأطباء والممرضين رغم أنهم مازالوا يواجهون بعض المشاكل أثناء المحادثة.

Introduction:

No one can deny the increasing number of people speaking English in the world.

English is considered the first language spoken in the world. Specifically, the number of Saudi Employees working in hospital is growing noticeably. Most of these employees are coming from health institutions, medical colleges, or from colleges related to medical environment such as colleges of nutrition, and health.

English is widely used in Saudi hospitals. The employees need to read documents written in English and communicate in English with physicians and nurses as many physicians and nurses don't speak Arabic and therefore the only medium language is English.

In-service Saudi hospital employees graduating from medical institutions medical colleges, and science colleges face a serious problem when applying for jobs in hospitals. Most employers require at least a minimum level of English language proficiency. With this level of proficiency, employees still encounter some



difficulties in communicating with hospital staff as employees lack vocabulary items, a number of terminologies, and communication skills.

On the level of self-interest, the employees themselves are very much concerned about their profession. As An English supervisor in the deanship of Community Service, I met many people looking to develop their own profession and their English language in the workplace to obtain better position in their job and to develop their English communication with their coworkers. They seek courses related to their job and their main concern is communication and medical reading, such as reports, instructions, and doctors' notes.

The number of people looking for jobs are increasing significantly during the last ten years. However, these jobs require English proficiency. Therefore the need for specific English has become a necessity. People working in hospitals need English to carry out several duties. These duties are summed up as follow:

- Taking serious and urgent phone calls from non-Arabic physicians and nurses.

Thus hospital employees need to know how to effectively deal with such situations starting from greetings to dealing and finishing up the situation.



- Contacting physicians and conveying patients' request, messages, and complaints relating to medical issues.
- Helping patients' companions and visitors with updates about the patients' status according to doctors, notes and reports. Patients' affair office personnel sometimes need to do instant translation.
- Dealing with new devices and technologies that require general and specific English.
- Being able to use the English language in the administration offices and represent hospital administration board in official committees.

Justification for the Study: This study was conducted for the following reasons:

Although English teachers are aware about the significance of ESP and the students' needs for specific language in the field of their study or after graduation, there is not much research carried out in the workplace situations, in general, and in Saudi hospitals, in particular.

This research aimed at exploring how effectively hospital employees could apply the course outcomes in their every-day communication with coworkers. Also, this paper attempted to examine the change, if there is, in the hospitals employees'



performance in real and emerging situations. Furthermore, this study tried to explore if the course impacted the participants' confidence at work.

Additionally, the research paper described the obstacles and challenges that students encountered during and after the course. This is very essential to examine course impact on the learners after they finished the course so that obstacles and challenges can be treated to develop future courses.

Definition of English for Specific Purpose (ESP):

Scholars gave many definitions for ESP. Some scholars have tried to define ESP in terms of the absolute and variable characteristics of ESP Dudley–Evans (1998).⁽¹⁾ According to Dudley Evans, the focus is on what is or is not ESP based on these characteristics in which ESP is being differentiated from general English. Dudley aims at clarifying the confusion among ESP practitioner and teachers with regards. Dudley Evans's definition of ESP can be summed up based on the absolute and variable characteristics. These characteristics are stated as follows:

Absolute Characteristics

- ESP provides teaching methodology and includes different activities



- ESP focuses on the content–language appropriate for the specific discipline. This includes topics, vocabulary items, grammatical structures, language skills, and centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, and genre.
- ESP is defined to meet specific language needs for specific learners.

Variable Characteristics

- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines
- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English
- ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level
- ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students.
- Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems, but it can be used with beginners (1998, pp. 4–5). ⁽¹⁾



Types of ESP :David Carter (1983) provided three types of ESP:

Type one: English as a restricted language: In order to identify this language Carter gave an example of this type. The example of restricted language includes language used by air traffic controllers or by waiters. ⁽²⁾

Type two: English for Academic and Occupational Purposes. This type is additionally extended by Robert Jordan (1997). ⁽³⁾ He provided two main branches for ESP: English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Additionally EAP is divided into English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) and English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP). Although these branches belong to one type of ESP, some specialists (Carter, Robinson, Jordan, and Hutchinson & Waters) argue that there are some differences among them. They stated, "people can work and study simultaneously; it is also likely that in many cases the language learnt for immediate use in a study environment will be used later when the student takes up, or returns to a job" (p.16). ⁽³⁾

Type three: English with specific topics. The name of this type identified by Carter (1983) suggests that the shift is on the topic instead of the purpose. This



kind of ESP anticipates the future specific needs of topics for learners such as scientific or postgraduate reading and specific topics at work. ⁽²⁾ It has been proposed that this type should not be considered as a separate type ESP, but it is an additional focus of ESP that is concentrating on situational language for specific learners. This situational language came into existence as a result to the interpretation of results from needs analysis of authentic language used in real working settings.

Problems of ESP:

A brief review of the nature of ESP and its relation with General English helps in understanding the different factors, that if taken into consideration when running an ESP program, we will establish a successful ESP course. Among these factors is learners' needs behind enrolling in ESP courses. Some learners join ESP courses to find a job or to develop their professional skills for better performance in communication, reading academic works or English documents, and writing notes or reports. Another factor relates to the kind of language being taught in ESP courses. The focus is no longer on language features such as grammar or structure. Rather, ESP courses deal with a variety of professional



areas such as business, accounting, medicine, law, and engineering. Several experts in ESP emphasize the differences between ESP fields (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Helsvig, 2012; Prasetyani, 2014).^(4:5:6) They showed that language used varies depending on the contexts where it is used. Therefore, course designers and teachers need to pay attention to this issue when preparing ESP materials.

In general, ESP courses vary in their focus from one skill to another depending on the nature and the aim of the ESP program. A writing skill might be the focus for learners joining a medical course to promote their ability to write medical notes or reports. Another course might be expected to emphasize in reading skill for learners seeking to pursue their academic study. Similarly, the participants' purpose of this research study was to promote their oral communication skills in a health setting, especially in hospitals, where employees constantly need to communicate in English.

Research in ESP shows several problems related to ESP learning and teaching. Researchers believe that General English competency is essential to ESP learners. Glenda Crosling and Ian Ward (2002) conducted a survey in business



oral communication among employees in the workplace. ⁽⁷⁾ The participants of this study graduated from Monash University, Australia. The researchers found out that oral communication and language proficiency are crucially required for successful ESP courses in Australia. Galina Kavaliauskiene's (2003) research on ESP learning at university level in Lithuania shows that learners faced some difficulties in learning ESP due to their low level in general English. ⁽⁸⁾ Yogman and Kaylani (1996) emphasized on this notion. ⁽⁹⁾ They observed a four-week business English course. They concluded that the learners need at least a minimum level English proficiency with courses of content related activities. Kristen Gatehouse (2001) in his work about key issues in English for specific purpose emphasizes the need for general English level when learning ESP. If basic English level is not possessed, ESP learners will be frustrated. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Another problem of ESP relates to teaching and teachers. Researchers show that ESP teachers should have more skills and teaching methods to deal with ESP courses. Jones (1990) claims that teachers are not qualified enough to just teach ESP courses as they do with general English courses. ⁽¹¹⁾ He states "ESP teachers find themselves in a situation where they are expected to produce a



course that exactly matches the needs of a group of learners, but are expected to do so with no, or very limited, preparation time" (p. 91). Swales (1985) claims that the lack of "specialized teacher-training" adds a burden to the success of ESP programs (p.214).⁽¹²⁾

Among the problems of ESP that is often cited in ESP contexts is the issue of textbooks. Jones (1990) claims that ESP books don not really meet the learners' needs.⁽¹¹⁾ He states that no one single book may live up to its name.lixin mentions that the reason for this problem of textbook refers to needs analysis. Needs analysis is not carried out before designing courses or textbooks although bookstores are replete with many ESP books. Khaled Jebahi (2009) conducted a study on academic experience of using Science vistas by Dean Curry (1981) as a text book to teach English for Biology students in Tunisia.⁽¹³⁾ The paper focuses on the students' reaction about the textbook. The result of the study showed that students are very dissatisfied with the textbook and its topics, tasks, and language skills. The researcher concluded that needs analysis is needed to modify materials to meet the specific needs of learners. Ana Almagro (2002) believes that although perfect ESP textbook do not exist, an adaptation and



modification may server to carry out more successful ESP courses that meet learners' need ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Research on ESP on needs analysis has been widely conducted on in-service ESP learners in different countries such as in the United States (Zhu & Flaitz, 2005), Malaysia (Kaur, 1993; Lee, 2003; Shuib, 2005; Kaur & Hua, 2006), China (e.g. Xiao, 2006), Hong Kong (Chew, 2005), India (Dayal, 2005; Venkatraman & Prema, 2007), Japan (Cowling, 2007), Pakistan (Khan, 2007), and South Africa (Jackson et al., 2006) ^(15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22).

Atef Al-Tamimi and Munir Shuib (2010) warn that ignoring learners' needs is fatal to ESP programs ⁽²³⁾. They added that learners' needs should never be underestimated. Al-Khatib (2005) conducted a study on thirty Jordanian senior workers' attitudes and perceptions towards their needs for communication in tourism and banking in the workplace ⁽²⁴⁾. Al-Khatib used a questionnaire, interviews and analysis of authentic text from the workplace. The result of the study showed that participants' perceptions, wants, and lacks were greatly affected by their attitudes towards the ESP course and needs to promote their communication.



Al-Fadly (2004) conducted a study to identify language needs of undergraduate medical students at University of Science and Technology (HUST) during the academic year 2006–2007. His study also aimed at proposing some suggestions for the ESP course at the Faculty of Medicine from the participants students teachers. The participants revealed that listening and communication are the most important skills they need for their English medical course. He recommended that ESP course teachers and designers should give special attention to the needs of learners and should also treat ESP courses on the basis of the learner's goals and attitudes ⁽²⁵⁾.

Definitions of Beliefs and Attitudes:

Attitudes and beliefs have long been defined by different researchers and psychologists. Yet, most of these definitions are complementary. Lampert (1984) explored how beliefs shape practice and came up with his definition; ⁽²⁶⁾ he defines beliefs as intuitive knowledge that is subjective and based on personal experiences. Latchanna and Dagnev (2009) believe that attitude serves to understand human behavior toward a subject-matter ⁽²⁷⁾. They add that attitudes present a mental states along with beliefs and feelings. conceptual



understanding behavior. Pajares, (1992) argues that these various definitions resulted from different conceptualizations of beliefs and attitudes by different researchers and educators ⁽²⁸⁾. However, Pajares believes that these conceptualizations are not different but make up a personal belief system. Lewis (1990), however, argue that beliefs and attitudes are equivalent ⁽²⁹⁾.

The focus of this research paper, however, is not to differentiate between these terms of attitudes and beliefs. Other sources can be useful for such an issue (Lewis, 1990 & Nespor, 1987) ^(29; 30). This paper assumes that beliefs and attitudes are subject to change due to exposure to different experiences. Thompson (1992) argues that beliefs and attitudes are not static ⁽³¹⁾. According to Al-Khatib (2005), attitudes are changeable with references to students' perceptions and beliefs ⁽²⁴⁾. Thus, this study focuses on the participants' beliefs and attitudes towards a medical English course before and after the course. It tries to explore what kind of ideas students have about this issue and its effectiveness on their job performance and if these ideas change throughout and after the course. Lennartsson (2008) relates attitudes and beliefs to language learning achievement ⁽³²⁾. He argues that if learners' attitudes and beliefs are



negative, they are expected not to do well. From the previous literature review it shows that most of research studies of ESP focusing on attitudes and beliefs of participants in Saudi Arabia were limited to the needs of medical students or practitioners in their workplace. However, this research is significant because it investigates in-service students' beliefs, attitudes and motivations regarding an ESP intermediate medical course. It explores if they experienced issues that helped or hindered them to benefit from this course.

Brief Review of ESP in Saudi Contexts:

Research on ESP in Saudi Arabia is very limited at least to the knowledge and experience of the researcher. The concept of ESP to in-service personnel is obviously absent. There are several universities that do not offer ESP programs to their students majoring in, for example, medicine science, business, engineering, and accounting. According to an interview I had with some students in a business college in Saudi Arabia, the students pointed out that they finished their four-year college and never heard of Business English. They stated that all what they studied is General English. Medical students reported the same situation. They mentioned that they studied one preparatory year of English but



never had any medical English. They added that their reading and communication skills are far backward due to the lack of specific language exposure. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) emphasize the need for such specific courses. They state that GE and ESP are relatively similar in term of theory. ⁽⁴⁾ Yet, there they are practically different. ESP differs from ESP in the sense that English used reflects the actual experience that learners encounter in their field of work.

Most studies on ESP in Saudi Arabia are conducted on either academic ESP programs in universities or on needs and attitudes of students currently enrolled in ESP programs (Muhammad, 2017) ⁽³³⁾. Zuhour (2016) investigated teacher's views about the effectiveness of using ESP course in PYP (Preparatory Year Program) at Tabuk University ⁽³⁴⁾. She distributed a 21-item questionnaire to 56 male and female teachers in PYP. The questionnaire questions were mainly about the ESP programs and books. The researcher found that teachers were satisfied with the ESP course syllabus in terms of its level and students' need in the work place. However, she recommended that the ESP program should be redesigned to be consistent with the learners' culture and background. Shuruq (2016) conducted a study to evaluate the need for ESP in Saudi Arabia to meet



the industrial growth ⁽³⁵⁾. He investigated the need for ESP, recommended launching ESP programs, and suggested some solutions for obstacles emerging against ESP programs. ESP learners should transfer their specific language gains to their domains. Al-Humaidi (2005) states that ESP situation in Saudi Arabia is very low where no training is given to in-service teachers who have been required to teach medical English courses and use quite relative skills that are normally existing with trained ESP teachers ⁽³⁶⁾. The current research study is engaged with in-service students who are supposed to relate their course gains to their workplaces. Muhammad, (2017) claims that many research topics on ESP were investigated, such as learners' attitudes, motivations, need analysis, ESP teacher evaluation, but he was unsure if the findings of these studies were utilized in ESP contexts ⁽³³⁾.

Hospital Language:

Most ESP courses are offering speaking and listening, reading, and writing courses because these are the skills that are most often sought in occupation workplace. Hospital language varies from pure medical language to occupational or communication language at work. This paper focuses on the second type



where hospital employees need specific English to be able to communicate with others and to improve their performance whether serving in administrative or medical fields. Yet hospital employees may need to know some Greek and Latin terminologies or idioms that are more commonly used in occupational communications and report writings. However, Arakelian, Bartram, and Magnall (2003) claim that there are many technical words used in hospitals that are related to ever-day language but communication breakdown in hospitals is affecting employees' achievement in using these words in their career with the new meaning. ⁽³⁷⁾ They put it,

There are many words which are used in everyday life, but have a special meaning when they are used in the hospital. It is half-way between general usage and highly technical medical language. It is often the cause of communication breakdown between native and non-native speakers, or between users of American and British English. (p. 55) they cited some examples such as, drip (an intravenous medication), rhythm (heartbeat), gas (a blood test), negative (a good test result), stone (a British unit of weight), and echo (a diagnostic study of the heart).



Successful verbal or written communication in hospital involves knowledge of various kinds of language aspects. Grammar, for example, plays a major role in communication in medical discourse. Marco (2000) emphasize the importance of *nominalizations* and *agentless passives*.⁽³⁸⁾ He examined the two grammatical features in medical discourse of verbal and written communication and noticed that misuse of these grammatical structure hinder communication. Marco states, "the author suggests that "students can improve their ability to understand and write if they are made aware of the function of these frameworks" (p. 75).

The language of communication in hospitals between non-Saudi physicians, nurses, and technicians from one side and the Saudi employees from another side is English. Most physicians and nurses are coming from outside of Saudi Arabia and therefore the only medium of communication is in English. The employees in Saudi hospitals need constantly to communicate in English to carry out their responsibilities.

Research Questions:

This study attempted to answer one main questions and two secondary questions:



Main Question: How are in-service employees' beliefs and attitudes impacted by an intermediate ESP course?

Secondary Questions:

1. What difficulties did practitioner students experience during the course?
2. Did students' communications in English in the work place improve?

Research Methodology:

Data were collected qualitatively by means of interviews and observation. This study seeks to gain in-depth insights about the research questions, which eventually entails that the use of qualitative methods is the best for this study. Interviews and observations are employed in this study because they serve to investigate beliefs, attitudes, and experiences from the standpoint of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).⁽³⁹⁾ Patton (1990)⁽⁴⁰⁾ considers thick description in qualitative research as an advantage because the emphasis is on people, events, and texts in a "natural setting" (Silverman, 1993).⁽⁴¹⁾

The research questions that the study answer relate to the following areas: the participants' beliefs about this ESP course at the beginning and at the end of the course; the difficulties that they might experience during the course; if they have



made any progress in their performance and communication at work; and their opinions regarding whether they will pursue more courses of this type in the future.

Setting of the Study:

This study was conducted in the Deanship of Community Service at Qassim University located in Buraydah. The Deanship of Community Service offers a number of English courses. The researcher will contact both the dean of the Community Service and the directory of the King Fahad Specialist Hospital to arrange for an ESP course for hospital employees. The course will take place afternoon because hospital employees are engaged in their job in the morning until 2:30 pm.

Course Design:

The class meets four times a week throughout three months. The course is based on the language skills by emphasizing the need of the students develop their communication. In this course, the instructor provides extensive reading passages about hospital and medical issues. He also provides models of



dialogues from the field, and engages students in fixing grammatical structures, analyzing and editing class papers, group discussion and peer review, and writing for specific purpose. The course depends on exposing students to different situations.

The materials of the course include three books: Medical English: Reading and Medical English: Listening, and Medical English Writing. The level of three books is Intermediate. The reading book includes passages about different medical topics with exercises. The listening book includes listening segments and dialogues about different health situations. The writing book teaches how to develop writing paragraphs, essays and reports. All the books present a number of exercises and drills geared to the nature of medical and health practitioners. The course is based on presenting language skills with emphasis on medical issues and communication purposes.

Participants:

150 Saudi male employees from King Fahad Specialist Hospital are randomly contacted and asked if they want to enroll in the course. The employees represented all medicine sections in the hospital so all employees had the chance



of inclusion in the sample regardless of their medical and language backgrounds.

Many employees were interested in the course but the maximum number for the class was 20 students. Therefore, participants were told that priority of registration is given to the first 20 applicants. However, 87 employees applied for the course. All the 87 applicants were stratified based on their medicine sections so participants from different sections had the chance to be enrolled in the course. This technique of stratified sampling served the research methods of the study of gaining a probability sampling (Creswell, 2013).⁽⁴²⁾ Basic demographic information showed the participants did not take any English course whether general or ESP after they started working at the hospital. They graduated from different health colleges and medical institutions. More background information about the participants and their majors is provided from the study site (Appendix C). Two participants withdrew from the course by the end of the fourth week, therefore, they were excluded from the study. During the second week, the students were asked to voluntarily participate in this study, which aims at describing their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences about the ESP course and its effects on their career performance. The real names of the participants have



been kept confidential by the use of pseudonyms. Those who participated signed a consent form accordingly.

Research Methods:

As mentioned earlier, I use qualitative research methods. These methods include interviews, observations, document analysis. Tape recording is used for the interviews and in the classroom. These multiple methods of data collection are interactively used to obtain an optimum amount of information local to the context of the study. This section discusses in details the research methods used in this study.

Interviews:

Interviews are known as reliable sources for gathering data if the task is to collect learners' belief and attitudes (Patton, 1990).⁽⁴⁰⁾ Therefore, this study puts special emphasis on the interviews in order to explore the participants' general experience, feelings, and common concerns regarding the issue at hand. Each participant is interviewed individually at the end of the course. The interviews will be semi-structured interviews. Interview questions are preplanned. However, any



issues emerge from the participants answer will serve for more details. All the interview questions were based on the research questions of this study.

As recommended by Silverman (1993),⁽⁴¹⁾ semi-structured interviews were employed in this study in the form of open-ended questions because, according to Rubin and Rubin (2004), questions can be prepared in advance which allows the researcher to gain data that answer the research questions.⁽⁴³⁾ Semi-structured interviews, as well allow interviewees to express their thoughts and views and feelings freely (Warren & Karner, 2005).⁽⁴⁴⁾ Therefore, the interview is a suitable tool to describe participant's attitudes and beliefs.

Sometimes I asked yes-no questions, as it was unacceptable to assume that the participants had encountered a particular experience. However, whenever I asked a yes-no question, I would seek more information from the participants by asking them to explain or elaborate on their responses. Appendix (A) contains the interview questions of the research.

Observation:

Observation was another source for data collection in this study. Schwandt (1997) defines observation as "directed firsthand eye-witness accounts of



everyday social action” (p. 106).⁽⁴⁵⁾ My role was specified during the observation. I did a nonparticipant role in this study. My purpose was double: (1) collecting specific data, such as participation, attendance, and reaction to the teacher's instruction and (2) triangulating to validate the findings. This observation included 4 lectures and 4 group discussion session. Each observation lasted for 25 minutes. The researcher took notes while observing the lectures.

Data Analysis:

Lincoln and Guba (1985)⁽³⁹⁾ suggested that qualitative data obtained from interviews should be categorized or organized so that data analysis is systemized. Therefore, data obtained from the research methods were organized as follows:

- instant transcribing of data
- coding information
- categorizing information

These techniques are recommended to deal with qualitative data in order to organize and present the findings. Coding of relevant concepts was used to



arrange data into different categories and themes. The themes were either related directly to the research questions or represented important or common issues.

Findings:

Beliefs and Attitudes before and after the course:

This part provides a description of the participants' beliefs and reactions to the ESP course and its effects on their professions. The beliefs and attitudes described in this article are driven from four questions in the interview:

1- Can you describe your feelings about the course?

2- How do you think this course is related to you career?

3- How do you think your communication competence has changed after the course?

16 participants believed that this course was really new to them. They never thought that such a professional course of English exists. Ahmad says that "this course is different from any other English courses. This course uses real topics in my work situations. Yasser confirms, "this course is good for my job because it is about my job." Ahmad's attitudes and feelings at the end of the course have positively overshadowed his attitudes at the beginning of the course. He says," in



the beginning I don't know how the course is but after the end the course is excellent. I use the information in my work with doctors and friends." Khalid's responses are quite similar to Ahmad's. He states that this course of medical English is just what he needs for his profession. In his words, "I always have a problem in my work with my friends but now I can talk with them in English and I can use good medical language." He says that his communication is much better than before the course. His attitudes about the course at the beginning of the course doesn't show any significant indication. He explains, " I thought that this course is like any English course ... but this course is different because I now have confidence. All participants answer "yes" for the question if they would recommend a similar course to their friends at work.

On the other hand some other participants' responses showed opponent beliefs and attitudes. For example, Anmar felt frustrated during the course because, as he puts it, "the subject of the books are very difficult. Naser, confirms Anmar'd attitude as he says, "I cannot understand the words and I don't want to ask every time." Sami reports that this course is not directly related to his profession. He



works in the "patient relationship department." Yet, he believes the course is unique. He puts it, "I think all Saudi friends in the hospital need this course."

ESP Course of medical English versus General English Course:

The participants of the study mentioned that they never tried to perform any kind of reading in their professional field. They also stated that they did not know about an ESP course. Some participants developed themselves only in oral communications at work because English is the means of communication in some specific situations, such as with non-Arab physician or nurses. This communication development varied from one participant to another based on individual differences and English language proficiency. Based on all responses, if they were asked which type of course they would use to improve their English before this course, their answers were to take general English course. None of them experienced such an ESP course before whatsoever. Fahad said, "I was surprised by the course. It is very new to me." Khalid further stated, "I didn't know there is reading and writing and listening subjects about my job." Some participants showed that the language in the course was different from the



language they use in their work place. This is in line with what Kristen (2001) found about the need for general English when learning ESP. ⁽¹⁰⁾

This finding is also in line with the findings of the linguistic study mentioned by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) "English [is] different from Medical English. ⁽⁴⁾

They also state that teaching methodologies and pedagogies of English language are different and has nothing in common with English language teaching for general purposes. In fact, many English teaching methodologies are applicable both in teaching BE and ESP. Thus, BET is still part of TEFL and within the scope of ELT in general.

Need Analysis:

12 participants found the course very difficult. They state that their English never develop at work in the hospital because they are totally engaged with Saudi peers, therefore their chances to use English are minimized although they need to contact English speaking staff. Three participants express their dissatisfaction about the huge individual differences between the students in the class. For example, Thamer, sys, "I feel disappointed when some students ask simple questions and waste time." Two participants, Ibrahim and Salah who work in the



X ray department express their disappointment about the course. They point that the need to know how to read and understand instructional manuals to deal with new devices. Other participants express different views indicating individual and special needs based on their positions but they think the course does not meet their interests.

Textbooks:

The participants were interested in speaking and giving their ideas and beliefs about the textbooks of the course. Obviously, they have negative attitudes about the textbooks. Some participants believe that the textbooks are not familiar and different from normal language textbooks. Anmar, Naser, and Khalid share exactly another point that the textbooks include a variety of issues that do not relate to their profession in the hospital. Whereas Ibrahim is engaged with non-Arabic patients in the hospital, he states that the textbooks don't include issues about patients' affairs. Sami's response about the textbooks of the course addresses the extent of medical course content. The "information in the books [is] very deep, he says. Other participants confirm the same view that the textbooks seem to be designed for medical students. Unlike other participants, Yasser



mentions that the textbooks are produced in the same way general English courses are arranged. He puts it, "the reading book look[s] exactly the same of reading books. We have passages and exercises. Also listening book [has] the same thing".

Course Teachers:

12 participants were dissatisfied with the performance of the course teachers. They express that the teacher are not expert in the field of medical content and the health environment. They are is not well-equipped with the professional medical language. Teachers are common language teachers or subject teacher. One participant says, "Sometimes we tell the teachers some words or terms." Another participant, Saif, comments, "the teacher of writing [does not] write the same way like the doctors in the hospital." The participants list several problems with the teachers, such as pronunciation of some medical terminologies, spelling, lack of health-administrative routine, lack of knowledge of subject-field, and overuse of Arabic during the class.. All in all, if teachers are free from criticism, they do not receive high reputation or appreciation from the participants.



Discussion:

The findings of this study concerning the beliefs and attitudes of the participants toward the usefulness of the course with regards to their professions appear salient although some participants experience some challenges. This is consistent with what other researchers claim about the influence of such courses of subject-field on learners' careers (Jordan, 1997, and Hutchinson & Waters 1987).^(3; 4)

The findings related to the nature of ESP and its status with regard to general English course are in line with former research. This type of ESP course is new and mostly unprecedented to the participants. This was previously confirmed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) who emphasized the need for such specific courses.⁽⁴⁾ Also Al-Humaidi (2005) affirms this concept due to the fact that ESP situation in Saudi Arabia is very low.⁽³⁶⁾ Furthermore, the result is in line with what Gatehouse (2001) stated that ESP earners should be mastering Basic English before taking any ESP course.⁽¹⁰⁾

The findings related to needs analysis and their notes about the course level and whether it matches their level or not is confirmed in ESP literature. It is mostly recommended that course designers and practitioners conduct need analysis to



examine learners' backgrounds and their language proficiency so that the course meets the learners' vocational purposes (MacLean, Betancourt & Hunter, 2000; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Dudley-Evans, 1998; Echevarria & Graves, 2003). (46; 47; 1; 48) Additionally, ESP course designers should specifically bring the attention to the different occupation positions and nature of job descriptions for language learners. For example, some employees are engaged more in medical administrative functions; others are more into medical assistance dealing with medical language in depth. Other employees in hospitals perform paper work such as reading and writing medical reports and therefore, their need to develop ESP of reading and writing seem more demanding for them than speaking and listening. Other groups of employees deal as mediators; they communicate with patients and English-speaking physicians, therefore the employees' needs to for medical ESP sound urgent to be able to convey the message from the patents to the physicians and vice versa. Need analysis helps much in developing and leading a successful medical ESP courses to meet adult professionals whose expectations are expected to be very related to their needs.



Due to health-care language complexity that the participant's experience, Boshier and Smalkowski's (2002) suggest needs analysis should be conducted before running an ESP course for learners with special needs in health care institutions. (49) They recommend approaching the students' needs through questionnaires and interviews. Mostly, they add, students seek to develop communicative skills such as reading and speaking in the work place which they basically believe to obtain from some medical ESP courses. The materials can be geared to fulfill this purpose.

Previous research on ESP textbooks triangulates with findings of this research. The participants have serious concern about this issue. The textbooks of the course do not meet the needs of the learners. Maybe not a single one can live up to its name (Jones,1990). (11) Another problem in ESP textbooks is that the analysis of learners' needs is far from enough, or even no needs analysis is carried out before book compilation.

Based on the findings concerning the course teaches, the participants report that the teachers are not expert in the field of medical content. They are not well-equipped with the health professional and medical language. This note is



confirmed by some researchers (Jones, 1990; Jebahi, 2009; & Ana Almagro, 2002).^(11; 13; 14) "This situation applies even more emphatically in Saudi Arabia where, to this date, very little attention has been given to the training (pre or in-service) needs, Al-Humaidi (2007).⁽³⁶⁾ The participant's thoughts regarding the ESP course teachers under study are in line with Alibakhshi, Ghand and Padiz (2011).⁽⁵⁰⁾ They show that a successful ESP teacher must possess general qualifications of a good teacher. A successful ESP teacher should make an attempt to develop all various components of ESP program, should try hard to get information about the discourse and content of the subject matter which s/he is supposed to teach in order to have meaningful communication.

The findings from observation shows that the majority of the learners' English proficiency level was low. Some learners come late due to their engagement in tier formal job. The issue of punctuality and regularity observed by the researcher is confirmed with interviews. Ten participants share a similar thought. "The course is very useful. But [we] don't think [we] can take another course because the manager [doesn't] allow [us] to be absent from work. Majid says, "but I believe that I should depend on myself to complete the books of this course.



Finally, although the participants are new to ESP and are not aware about the ESP issues and studies discussed in literature, most of the thoughts, beliefs, concerns, and problems they brought are in line with the typical issues previewed in this study. Among these issues and problems emerging from interviews and are inconsistent with previous research are: focus on communication versus teaching grammar, various learners' linguistics interests from the course although belonging to one health institution, skillful ESP teachers, and the need to support such courses by institutional authorities. These findings and issues of ESP courses in general and medical ESP courses in particular should seek academic attention before running the courses. This is reflected typically by El-Bashbishy (1993). He states that learners reading ESP textbooks develop their occupational language. ⁽⁵¹⁾

Conclusion and Limitation of the Study:

Conclusion:

The main findings of this research paper showed that the participants beliefs, attitudes and concerns about their first time to attend a medical ESP course were consistent with the content of ESP literature. The participants expressed their



views about considerable points that, if taken into account for designing, implementing, and teaching medical ESP courses, the outcomes would better serve and help achieve the course objectives. Mostly, all the participants expressed their appreciations toward the type of course and were surprised about its relation to their career, though they experienced some problems. This appreciation calls researchers for evaluation studies to investigate the need of in-service practitioners. Additional studies, based on the findings of this study, can be conducted to find out how ESP medical courses can be launched to meet different language and professional backgrounds as working in one workplace doesn't mean sharing similar needs.

As seen from the findings of this study that participants encountered several issues although they were engaged in health professions during course. But they still had major issues and concerns. Although the result of this study is consistent with related literature in terms of students' needs, ESP teachers, textbooks, and language proficiency, the findings of this study are significant because data emerged from participants who are already engaged in their professions but their problems are similar to other participants in the previous studies that were



previously mentioned in the literature review. Unlike a study by Zuhoor (2016) that was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of an ESP course in PYP in Tabuk University. ⁽³⁴⁾ She found that the program was successful for the students and concluded that teachers strongly suggested the program continue. The present study is about participants who were currently working in the hospital during the course and who were experts in their professional field.

Limitation:

The research result is limited to the sample of the study. Therefore, some limitations must be carefully considered before drawing conclusion. The findings and discussion are restricted to the research question under investigation and participants. This research employed a qualitative approach utilizing interviews and observation tools. Other studies might employ other qualitative tools or use a quantitative approach. Additional or variant data might be obtained by using different research methodologies. Since, this study examined employees' attitudes and beliefs about an intermediate ESP course, another study examining English speaker physicians' views about Saudi employees' communication performance would add qualitative data to the existing literature.



This current study focused on the learners' voices about the course. Further research is needed to investigate other issues and the functional need for English at work. Health administrations and other governmental and non-governmental circulations are called to support these ESP courses and allow their staff members to attend them.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

- 1- Can you describe your feelings about the course?
- 2- How do you think this course is related to you career?
- 3- How do you think your communication competence has changed after the course?
- 4- Did you face any problems with the course materials? If yes please explain your answer in details?
- 5- Have you taken any English course before?
- 6- Do you know this kind of the course? Ever heard or read about medical or health ESP course?
- 7- Do you think that the goals of the course are clear to you?
- 8- Do you understand what the teachers has explained about
- 9- Can you compare your achievement about the course between now and the first days of the course?
- 10- Do you think the subjects of the books of the course are useful to your profession? If so, how do you think they help you?
- 11- How do you think your professional performance is changing?
- 12- What are you trying to do differently when you communicate in English at work?



- 13- Do you refer back to the text books and your notes when experience situations at work? Explain your answer.
- 14- Do you think the teachers are qualified enough? Explain please?
- 15- Does the course subjects related to your profession? Explain please?
- 16- Would you like to take a similar course?
- 17- Would you recommend the course to your friends?
- 18- Closing- Do you have any other thoughts or concern about the course?

Appendix B

CLASS OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

CRITERIA	YES	NO
1. Is the lesson aim clearly stated at the beginning of class?		
2. Does the instructor encourage the learners to recall what they have learnt in previous lessons?		
3. Does the instructor lead the learners into the topic of the lesson by a clear introduction?		
4. Does the instructor check learners' comprehension of the new topic of the lesson?		
5. Does the instructor model the task/activities that		



learners will do during the practice stage?		
6. Does the instructor give clear instructions for tasks/activities to the students?		
7. Does the instructor provide opportunities to learners to check the tasks/activities and give them feedback?		
8. Are the teaching resources helpful and well prepared?		
9. Does the student-teacher finish his lesson with a useful activity according to the aim of the lesson?		
10. Does the student-teacher checks what learners have learnt?		
11. Is the instructor a good communicator?		
12. Do the students participate with the teacher?		



Appendix C

Background Information

participants	Age	Undergraduate Major	Language Background	Professional Department
Thamer	27	College of Health	general English in School	Nursery Department
Sami	28	College of Science	general English in school	Patient Relationship Department
Ahmad	28	2-year health diploma	general English in school	X-Ray Department
Yasser	30	2-year health diploma	general English in School	Report Department
Khalid	29	2-year health diploma	general English in School	X-Ray Department
Anmar	31	2-year health diploma	general English in School	Social Service Department
Ibrahim	29	2-year health diploma	general English in School	Patient Relationship Department



Salah	31	2-year health diploma	general English in School	X-Ray Department
Naser	27	College of Science	general English in School	Nutrition Department
Mazen	27	College of Pharmacy		Pharmacy Department
Saif	28	2-year diploma: medical files	General English in school	Report Department
Malik	27	College of Applied Science	General English in school & Intensive English in PYP	Medical Committee: administration
Abdullah	37	Health Institution	General English in school	Pharmacy Department
Omar	41	College of Health Administration	General English in school & 2 language courses	Manager Office
Fahad	31	2-year health diploma	General English in school	Emergency Unit
Yousf	33	2-year health	General English in	Anesthetic



		diploma	school	Department
Samer	34	2-year health diploma	General English in school	Medical Technician
Abdulkre m	32	2-year health diploma	General English in school	Surgical Technician