

**ANALYSING LANGUAGE NEEDS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO  
BUSINESS ENGLISH STUDENTS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

by

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## DECLARATION

I declare that the research report hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo for the Master's degree in English Studies has not previously been submitted by anyone for a degree at this or any other university, that this is my own work in design and execution, and that all materials contained in have been properly acknowledged.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents; my brothers and my mother beloved (late); Mrs F.M Meso for support and encouragement. Above all I thank my supervisor Dr L J Ngoepe and my academic mentor Dr R.V. McCabe for being supportive throughout my studies.

## **ABSTRACT**

Although the University of Limpopo (UL) students have been taught Business English (BE) for a number of years, their needs were never formally analysed. Hence, an exploratory research design was used to explore the needs of UL BE students, and a qualitative approached was followed. Thus, students and lecturers in Accounting and Financial Management were requested to fill in a questionnaire and to respond to interview questions, respectively, to identify students' needs which were later analysed. However, Needs Analysis (NA) ought to be at the core of discipline-specific teaching and learning because it is learner-centred. This essential NA exercise is at the core of courses such as the UL BE one. Findings of this study indicate that students' as well as content lecturers' input is authentic and remain invaluable to BE courses as some of these mechanisms are vital for assisting lecturers fulfil students' needs.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFM	-	Accounting and Financial Management
BAcc	-	Bachelor of Accounting
BAccSc	-	Bachelor of Accounting Science
BE	-	Business English
CLNAP	-	Communication Language Needs Analysis Process
CLNP	-	Communication Language Needs Process
CNPM	-	Communication Needs Process Model
CV	-	Curriculum Vitae
DA	-	Deficiency Analysis/ Discourse Analysis
EAP	-	English for Academic Purpose
EFAL	-	English as a First Additional Language
EGP	-	English for General Purpose
EL	-	English for Law
ELSC	-	English Language Support Course
ELT	-	English Language Teaching
ESAP	-	English for Specific Academic purposes
ESL	-	English Second Language
ESP	-	English for Specific Purpose
FML	-	Faculty of Management and Law
GA	-	Genre Analysis
GE	-	General English
HL	-	Home Language
HSRC	-	Human Science Research Council

L1	-	First Language
L2	-	Second Language
LA	-	Linguistic Analysis
LCA	-	Learning-Centred Approach
LoLT	-	Language of Learning and Teaching
LSA	-	Leaning Situation Analysis
MAA	-	Means Analysis Approach
MA	-	Means Analysis
NA	-	Needs Analysis
NE	-	Needs Evaluation
ONA	-	Objective Needs Analysis PSA
	-	Present Situation Analysis SA
	-	Situation Analysis
SAA	-	Strategy Analysis Approach
SA	-	South Africa
SNA	-	Subject Needs Analysis
TL	-	Target Language
TREC	-	Turfloop Research Ethics Committee
TSA	-	Target Situation Analysis
TSN	-	Target Situation Needs
UL	-	University of Limpopo

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 THE PROBLEM DEFINED

Given a chance, content and language lecturers in Accounting and Financial Management (AFM) would advocate for a Business English (BE) support course for students in the Faculty of Management and Law (FML) at the University of Limpopo (UL). This, therefore, places a premium on the significance of support courses such as BE.

Institutes and universities of higher learning in South Africa (SA) are aware of the crucial role of courses such as BE in cultivating students' English ability to speak and write in their discipline and field of work. Many students across various disciplines are eager to study field-specific English in order to increase their English competency when pursuing dream careers. Thus, ESP language teaching should be tailored to the specific learning and language needs of students in a specific vocation (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998: 124).

Since communication skills are assessed through oral presentations in all courses in UL School of Accountancy, the emphasis on language skills in BE is valid, and can be justified by the fact that an accountant should be able to articulate a point of view clearly, coherently and persuasively in negotiations and discussions as well as in writing (School of Accountancy Calendar, 2016: 38).

Furthermore, no one skill should be considered more important than the other when teaching skills to students; there should be a continuous integration of all the skills. The integration should be in such a way that identified skills are given a chance to develop equally, without one being emphasised to the detriment of another (cf. Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989: 23). The four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are essential to getting along well in the world (cf. Glasser, 1993: 48). This, therefore, augers well for supporting BE students at UL.

English Language Support Courses (ELSCs) are offered in various disciplines across campus at UL. These courses ought to be different from General English (GE). In GE, students are offered GE language skills; these are general every day vocabulary and

sentences. However, in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses such as BE, students are taught English that is tailored to their specific needs relevant to a financial or commercial environment. Since most students encounter problems when using English in their content subjects, it is significant to determine the different needs of UL BE students (see 1.2).

Characteristics of ESP suggest that it is designed to meet the specific needs of students in addition to the content of their subjects in a field of study. This could be applied to the context of BE. Therefore, goals, objectives and content of ESP courses should be related to the requirements of students' communicative needs in real world settings (Nunan & Carter, 2001: 10; see 1.2.2). Hence BE, which is the focus of this study, will attempt to improve students' English language competence so that they should meet their current and future language needs in the world of finance and commerce. This would help improve the students' work-related English language usage.

Nunan and Carter (2001: 11) argue that the growing demand for English courses tailored to specific needs encourages scholars in specific fields to suggest new ideas of how to satisfy the language needs of the students in different fields of study. This implies that BE lecturers are faced with the challenges of designing an appropriate curriculum that would meet their students' needs.

The increasing demand for English language teaching which is tailored to specific needs of disciplines is common in many tertiary institutions. English for General Purpose (EGP) courses are mainly taught at UL. Commercial students have special English language needs which should be identified for study purposes in a bid to meet the requirements of their work in the financial sector. This included formal written English, which in turn requires the knowledge and application of the English language in this context. It is against this background that this study sought to determine the language needs of UL BE students.

The success of BE, particularly at UL, depends on students' and lecturers' ability to manage content, language and cultural barriers. BE and GE are linked to language skills and competencies with respect to students' professional areas (Galova, 2007: 28), and must ideally be linked and seen in the overall teaching and learning context of BE as important aspects.

This study sought to determine English language needs of students enrolled for BE as well as lecturers' perceptions of what those needs are for each of their subjects in order to enhance the current BE course.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF STUDY**

### **1.2.1. Aim**

The aim of the study was to analyse and explore language needs of the university of Limpopo Business English students.

### **1.2.2. Objectives**

The objectives of the study were:

1.2.1.1 To determine language needs of UL BE students.

1.2.1.2 To explore language needs of UL BE students as perceived by content lecturers in Accounting and Financial Management.

## **1.2 METHOD OF RESEARCH**

Literature on needs of BE in general was surveyed to explore BE students' needs. In line with an exploratory research design, a questionnaire was used to gather first-hand information from students registered for BE. In addition, interviews were conducted with content lecturers who teach BE students in the School of Accountancy and Financial Management.

## **1.3 PROGRAMME OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 2 discusses needs analysis in a Business English context.

Chapter 3 focuses on research methodology of the exploratory study.

Chapter 4 analyses the data collected and presents the results of the study.

Chapter 5 concludes the study and makes recommendations for future research.

The next chapter analyses the needs of Business English students.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ANLYSING NEEDS FOR BUSINESS ENGLISH STUDENTS**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Needs Analysis (NA) ought to be at the core of teaching and learning activities as it pre-supposes a learner-centred approach. There are various ways of analysing the needs of students from different disciplines. The aim of this chapter was to discuss NA of Business English (BE) students in terms of main approaches, ESP, BE at UL and theory of the study.

#### **2.2 NEEDS ANALYSIS**

Brown (1995) identifies the term Needs Analysis (NA), also known as needs assessment, as the activity involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum which meets the learning needs of a particular group of students. Once the needs are identified, they are specified in terms of goals and objectives of an ESP course which, in turn, will serve as the basis in developing course materials, course teaching activities and assessments, as well as evaluation strategies. The purpose of the NA process is to fill the gap of what a language course lacks. Therefore, the study aims to fill the gap in the UL BE course.

The definition of NA distinguishes between analysis from evaluation. According to Brown (1995), NA aims at determining the needs of a defined group of students while an evaluation determines to what extent a programme meets their needs.

Furthermore, Soriano (1995) indicates that NA is the process of collecting and analysing information from the students about their learning needs to help in determining what they want and need to learn. Needs Evaluation (NE) is the process of measuring the effectiveness of the existing language course to meet the needs of the students.

Hutchinson and Waters (1992) define needs analysis on the basis of necessities and wants in order to classify what the students have to know and what they feel they need to know. The focus is on the students' lacks, which represent the gap between the required language proficiency in the target situation and their existing language proficiency. It is a process of intercession between the students and their language



teacher. This definition is closer to one by Witkin and Altschuld (1995), who define NA as a systematic set of procedures undertaken for the purpose of setting priorities and making decisions about the content of the language course in the process of improvement and allocation of resources (c.f. 2.3.3). West (1994) asserts that the term 'needs' lacks a unified definition and remains ambiguous. Further, Richards (2001) argues that the definition of 'needs' depends on the perception of those making the judgment. In the process of NA, students' different interests and values are reflected. Teachers, students, administrators, employees, parents and stakeholders may all have different views as to what language needs are. Accordingly, the difference between what students can presently do with the language and what they should be able to do cannot be looked at from one angle. Braine (2001) indicates that linguists' disagreements will always be there but they all agree that there are many external factors that influence the definition and people's views of language needs. Some of the factors such as staffing, time, and cultural attitudes should be taken into consideration when conducting NA.

It could therefore be deduced that NA is required in any ESP course as an attempt to fill the gap needs between the students' current state of affairs and their desired state of affairs after taking the course. The above base the concept of NA on the terms 'necessities', 'lacks', 'wants', and 'gaps'. However, all these terms have different interpretations from one individual to another (Brown, 1995; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

### **2.2.1 MAIN APPROACHES TO NA**

Needs analysis plays a vital role in designing and carrying out any language course (Li, & Lu, 2011: 1091). Based on the Munbian Model, Hutchinson and Waters (2002: 62) created a more applicable framework of analysing learning needs. Primarily used within ESP, NA has become applicable to both ESP and EGP. According to Bindaka and Christopoulou (2002: 1), currently NA is an umbrella term covering the following approaches: TSA, PSA and Learning Situation Analysis (LSA), which is divided into sub-approaches, Strategy Analysis (SA), Deficiency Analysis (DA) and Means Analysis (MA). These NA approaches are significant in delivering a fruitful EPS programme.

### 2.2.1.1 Target Situation Analysis

TSA is a famous Munby's effective method and model that focuses on the student's needs at the end of the language course. This approach is based on learners' target level of performance in the English language. The TSA model is comprehensive and complex because the aim is to provide a wide range of needs profiles (West, 1994). Different profiles based on individual circumstances should be used. This model analyses the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in various job-related activities in terms of receptive and productive skills, culminating in generation of a general profile of the language situation to be used as input in course design (Jordan, 1997).

In language teaching, the information guides the teaching process in the classroom to set priorities in scaling the communicative modes where the interpersonal mode links the receptive and productive skills, while the interpretive mode relies on receptive skills, and the presentational mode relies on productive skills.

### 2.2.1.2 Present Situation Analysis

PSA was proposed by Richterich (1972: 80), and focuses on the students' competence concerning skills and language at the beginning of the course. The information used to define needs is drawn from a wide range of sources such as the students themselves, the teaching establishment and the place of work (Jordan 1997). Since the sources of data collection are multiple, the PSA model provides detailed guidelines and techniques about the kind of information to be included.

Furthermore, in line with the PSA approach, the aim is to seek information about levels of ability, available curricula, teaching methods and resources, views on language teaching and learning, surrounding society, and cultural elements (Jordan, 1997).

### 2.2.1.3 Learning Situation Analysis

LSA is a learning-centred approach which was proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). The LSA approach is viewed as 'a process of negotiation between individuals and society', where the latter includes syllabus, materials, teaching methods and so on. The approach affords one the opportunity to divide needs into necessities, lacks and wants.

#### 2.2.1.3.1 Strategy Analysis

The SA approach was brought forward by Jordan (1998: 25). According to Nunan (1991: 167), a learning style is identified as any individual's preferred way of learning, while a learning strategy is the mental process the learner employs to learn the language.

#### 2.2.1.3.2 Deficiency Analysis

The DA approach of NA was proposed by Nunan (1991: 168). This approach maps existing proficiency against the target learner proficiency by determining deficiencies or lacks. It establishes the priority that should be given by using a three-point rating scale. The three-point rating scale can be divided into categories: none, some and lots. This scale establishes the priority that should be given to the language course.

#### 2.2.1.3.3 Means Analysis

The MA was established by West. This approach attempts to study the local situation such as facilities, teachers and teaching methods in order to determine how the language course can be implemented (West, 1994: 10).

The MA tries to investigate practicalities and constraints in implementing needs-based language courses (West, 1994). Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 125) suggest that means analysis provides information about the environment in which the course will be run, and thus attempts to adapt the ESP course to the cultural environment in which it will be run. One of the main issues that the MA is concerned with is acknowledging that what works well in one situation may not necessarily work in another (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998: 124). Jordan (1998) points out that by following the MA approach, a tool for designing an environmentally sensitive course will be provided.

In line with the above, this study was grounded within two parameters: the DA and MA (c.f. chapter 5). According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), the DA is the method of NA that is used to move students from the present situation to the target situation of the use of language, always keeping the learning needs in mind. The DA forms the basis of a language syllabus as it provided data about both the gap between present- and target language knowledge, mastery of general English, language skills and learning strategies (Jordan, 1998).

### **2.2.2 MODELS FOR NEEDS ANALYSIS**

There are different models under the ESP umbrella approach in this field. As already discussed, Jordan (1994) indicated that the main two approaches in NA are the Target Situation Analysis (TSA) and the Present Situation Analysis (PSA). Other approaches are the Learning-Centred Approach (LCA), the Strategy Analysis Approach (SAA) and the Means Analysis Approach (MAA). These are regarded as transformations of the TSA and the PSA (Jordan, 1994).

The TSA model began with Munby's (1978) model of Communication Language Needs Process (CLNP). This model contains a detailed set of procedures relating to the discovery of Target Situation Needs (TSN). It is based on analysis of language communication needs in the target situation in order to provide a clear language communicative needs profile for a specified group of students. This Communication Language Needs Analysis Process (CLNAP) seeks to present valid specifications of skills and linguistic forms that a group of students needs in the intended Target Situation (TS).

The Communication Needs Process Model (CNPM) contains nine components. Each component asks questions about the use of the Target Language (TL) in order to identify learners' real world communicative requirements in the real world. The outcome is used as input to prepare the intended group of students for their intended use of the TL language by converting the needs profile into a communicative language competence specifications that is presented in the form of a syllabus (Jordan, 1997). Munby's categories of communicative activities and their relation to the communicative events of the target situation reflect categories of real world language use (West, 1994). In other words, they reflect the shift in the ESL field from language system to language use. As a result of this shift, most studies continue to follow this model in relating communicative needs to analysis of communication in the target situation. Consequently, NA has become an integral element of the field of ESP as a basis for designing ESP courses (Dudley-Evans, 1991).

The TSA and the PSA are the two landmarks in NA studies. Researchers continue to use one of these models as their theoretical base, depending on the circumstances of the research. This study adapted a similar theoretical base to the TSA approach

because it is more appropriate for the objectives of the study, the size of the sample population, and the available resources.

### **2.3 ENGLISH AS A LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING**

As part of the process of globalisation, an increasing number of higher education institutions are adopting English as the medium of instruction for parts of their education within most universities in South Africa. Thus, English is used as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), and is not a First Language (L1) or Home Language (HL) to many students. A large number of these students experience barriers to perform well academically. According to research findings from a study by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), most South African parents prefer their children to be taught in English even though it is their second or third language (Pather, 2008).

In most universities in SA, students are taught in the medium of a language that is not their home languages. This is not out of their choice, but because they do not have any alternative. This fact brings some learning difficulties to students that are often not seen as system-related, but as student-related. Such students are often mistakenly labelled slow students, or are referred to as students who need special attention. This might be because of the language that is used for learning and teaching. This is why an extra effort is required in English classes to ensure that the students get the language support that they need, so that they too can gain a bit of English proficiency as it is the medium of learning and teaching.

Research by Mahabeer (2003) indicates that contextual, language, school and intrinsic factors are linked to problems that Foundation Phase English second-language learners experience in acquiring English reading and spelling skills. Mahabeer found that students whose home language is isiZulu and whose language of instruction is English experienced difficulties in reading, comprehension and spelling. These learners had either inadequate or no exposure to English before entering school (Mahabeer, 2003: 2). It was found that students who learn English as an L2 experience difficulties in learning English as LoLT. This is a barrier to students learning generally even in other courses. This means that English learning support is required.

According to Lerner, quoted in Theron and Nel, 2005: 222), many English Second Language (ESL) students have difficulties in both receiving and expressing

themselves in the English language. This is due to limited exposure to English at high school level. According to Donald et al (2006), these students are expected to learn in a language that is unfamiliar and different from their home language, their social interaction as well as their culture.

Moreover, many students in South African universities come from disadvantaged home environments where they lack literacy support and experience (Du Plessis, Naude & Viljoen, 2003). With the little teaching experience one obtained at the UL, one can indicate that most students only come into contact with English during class hours. Crucial foundation for reading and writing should be given in the lower grades as a lack of parental involvement and support tend to have a negative impact on learners' mastery of the English language.

Unfavourable socio-economic circumstances play a role in the learning of English as a Second Language (L2). Learners raised in unfavourable socio-economic conditions usually show signs of lack in emergent literacy. This is prior learning about reading and printed literature acquired in the home environment (Engelbrecht et al, 2007: 80). The poor socio-economic home environment of most students at the UL should be added to the aspects mentioned above.

Furthermore, according to Theron and Nel (2005), limited English proficiency has an adverse effect on the skills students need to perform daily in informal conversations as well as in the formal, more sophisticated language necessary for academic achievement. Researchers argue that while it may take a child approximately two years to reach L2 proficiency for everyday use, it would take five to seven years for L2 learners to gain adequate proficiency for academic and social achievement (Lemmer, 2002: 44). English L2 students at the UL are faced with a challenge of learning an L2 while simultaneously using this language, in the process of mastering their academic content.

Yet in many Universities, English is used as the LoLT. Most of the students in universities around South Africa are from township schools where they use HLs more than they use English. This is why often some of the students have not yet mastered English to adequately understand and follow instructions in the language (Landsberg et al, 2005; Donald et al, 2006).

## **2.4 ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES**

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can be defined as teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language for the purpose of using it in a particular domain. Since the 1960s, ESP has become a distinctive part of teaching English due to the fact that this language has become the contemporary lingua franca. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 23) state that the first ESP group of students was identified in the early 1990s. The growth of ESP over the years has been rapid and outstanding. ESP language teaching should be tailored to the specific learning and language needs of students in a specific vocation (Belcher et al., 2012). The communicative style in teaching and learning English has resulted in different reasons for acquiring English language proficiency for daily communication, academic or business purposes. As a result, ESP was created to deal with the above mentioned.

There are various definitions of ESP. According to Harmer (1983), ESP refers to situations where students have some specific reasons to learn a language. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) are more specific in that they regard ESP as an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and methods are based on the student's reason for learning. The same idea is supported by Strevens (1992), who states that ESP is a general category of special-purpose language training. The same principles apply no matter what the reason might be for language learning, either in English for General Purpose (EAP) or ESP (Ardeo, 2012: 234). Further, Dudley-Evans and St. John (2009) give a similar definition, which is to offer absolute and variable characteristics of ESP. However, researchers seem to agree on the following two characteristics: ESP is based on a particular context and on learners' specific needs.

Moreover, the characteristics of ESP suggest that it is designed to meet the specific needs of students in addition to the content of their subjects in their field of study (Harding, 2007). This can be applied to the context of BE. The goals, objectives and content of ESP courses should be related to the requirements of students' communicative needs in real world settings (Carter & Nunan, 2001). Therefore, BE, which is the focus of this study, attempts to help improve students' English language competence to meet their current, and future, language needs in the world of finance and commerce, and to improve students' work-related English language usage.

### **2.4.1 NA IN ESP**

NA plays a vital role in the process of designing and carrying out any language course, whether in an ESP or in a GE course. When assessing students' specific needs, the assessor has to come across the term NA, which has been dealt with differently in decades, since the origin of ESP. At the initial stages of ESP between the 1960s and early 1970, NA consisted of assessing the communicative needs of students and the techniques of achieving specific teaching objectives. Nowadays, the tasks of NA are much more complex. The aim was to collect information about the students, and to define the target situation and the environment of studying ESP.

According to Tarone and Yule (1989), NA is by its very nature, a pragmatic activity based on highly localised situations. The broad principle of NA is that most of the ESP curricula develop from the identified language needs of the targeted students. More narrowly, any system of NA is related to the theory of the nature of language from which the categories of the language employed in the procedure are derived (Tarone & Yule, 1989: 12). Although these are important steps, their main idea is the construction of NA. This model can be adapted to study the needs of language students for courses such as the BE as it seeks to define the objectives and the approaches. As this study was based on an analysis of the needs of BE students, these needs were expressed in terms of steps that the BE lecturer need to follow in order to deliver useful language knowledge and skills of English which are needed by the targeted group of students.

In broad terms, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) aver that there are eight key approaches in today's concept of NA which have been grouped into five wide areas: TSA and Objective Needs Analysis (ONA) to refer to the tasks and activities that students will use English for, Linguistic Analysis (LA), Discourse Analysis (DA), Genre Analysis (GA) which refers to the analysis for knowledge of how language and skills are used in target situations. Subjective Needs Analysis (SNA) is used to refer to the students' wants, means and subjective needs-factors that affect the way they learn. For example, this could refer to their previous learning experiences, reasons for attending the course and expectations. PSA is used for the purposes of identifying learners' current skills and language use. However, MA reveals information about the environment where the process of teaching and learning of the course will take place.



There are many ways of collecting data in NA. This in NA research can be gathered in a number of different methods which could be classified as either inductive method, or deductive method. In inductive method, the data can be collected through the use of approaches such as case-studies, observations and so on. However, deductive methods include approaches such as questionnaires and surveys.

According to West (1994: 7), there are many other ways of collecting data in NA. Data can be collected through the use of pre-course placement or diagnostic tests in ESP. This method is used to estimate the language level of the students. Entry tests on arrival can also be used to determine a diagnostic value, and can identify students' language weaknesses and lacks. Observation of classes has a great value mainly on language deficiency analysis. A survey, which is based on the use of questionnaires, is viewed as the most common data collection method that helps in drawing a profile of students' needs, lacks, wants, learning styles or strategies. Structured interviews, which consist of pre-planned questions, can also be used; the answers can either be recorded or written down.

The methods outlined above can be used to collect ESP data, leading to the process of giving feedback and providing information on the evaluation of the course. These can also help to design and improve an existing course. Depending on the method of data collection, NA can be 'off-line'. This is conducted in advance of the course so that there is plenty of time for syllabus design and materials preparation. The 'on-line' or 'first-day' method is carried out when students start the course. 'On-going needs re-analysis' reformulates objectives periodically as awareness of the demands of the target situation increases and the needs become more focused (West, 1994: 5).

#### **2.4.2 NA IN A BE COURSE**

Analysis of students' needs is always the first priority in BE course design (Chen & Wu, 2013: 13). Identifying students' needs can be challenging as one has to do SA, which refers to looking into students' wants, that is, what the student feels he or she expects to learn in an English class. Students' needs are determined by their own perceptions (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In other words, the student might have different background knowledge of his or her needs. Therefore, needs are determined by students, management and course lecturers. The needs of learners help the

instructor to make decisions on designing or selecting materials for English needs for students to acquire grammar knowledge (Belcher, 2006: 21).

One of the characteristics of communicative methodology is a concern to identify the needs of students and to focus on them. It is also concerned with individualisation and autonomous learning (Brumfit, 2001: 48). Such an approach to defining communicative methodology entails learner centredness, which is about information by and from students, which is used in planning, implementing and evaluating language programmes. This implies that information by and from students is built into every phase of the curriculum process as one of the first steps towards achieving learner-centredness by conducting NA (Nunan, 1995: 13).

The information obtained can guide the selection of content. Additionally, the lecturer can use it to modify the syllabus and the methodology to make them more compatible with learner needs and interests (Nunan, 1991: 21). Thus, NA can help students become co-creators, to a degree of the educational process rather than its passive recipients. NA in ESP is the foundation of all subsequent decisions. ESP lecturers are frequently in the first place needs assessors, and in the second; designers and implementers of specialised curricula which are a response to identified needs (Belcher, 2006: 135).

Stevens (1988: 39) asserts that in order to make success of ESP, lecturers have to be able to observe and recognise students' progress. In order to diagnose their problems, lecturers have to know which response to select at any particular time in order to meet the particular learning requirements of a given group of students.

Similarly, Johns and Price-Machado (2001: 44) claim that the first absolute characteristic of ESP is the fact that it is designed to meet the specific needs of learners. They further argue that in every genuine ESP course, NA is obligatory. ESP practitioners should try to determine what and how students will need to do in English language contexts, or with English language literacies, and how.

The growth of ESPs began in the 1960s. The main reason for the development of BE was the massive expansion of international business. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) indicated that BE can be divided into specialist English from GE. BE is a bridge language between the technicality of particular business and the general language of public. It is therefore implicit that the BE may include specific English and GE.

Chen and Wu (2013) argue that the knowledge of language does not only refer to the ability to understand content of the subject field. It is more about communicating among business colleagues, knowledge of specific vocabulary and terminologies in specific business sectors. This suggests that BE needs to be taught just like GE, especially to communication ability in their fields. The ability to communicate became more and more important after the 1990s. According to Hadley (2001) and Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), BE courses are one type of content-based instruction which is the integration of learning of language with specific business content. Language content should be a vehicle to drive language teaching. Therefore, in a BE content-based course, the language is the tool while the content is the main focus.

It is vitally important to determine the needs of BE students in a business context. This implies that BE lecturers are faced with the challenge of designing an appropriate curriculum that will meet students' needs. Since the need for ESP has been identified, Carter and Nunan (2001: 11) argue that the growing demand for English courses tailored to specific needs encouraged scholars in the field to come up with new ideas on how to satisfy language needs of students in different fields of study.

Institutes and universities of higher learning in SA are aware of the crucial role of courses such as BE in cultivating students' English ability to speak and write in their disciplines and field of work. Many students across various disciplines are eager to study field-specific English in order to increase their English competency when pursuing dream careers (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). This is also the case with UL students. ELSCs are offered in various disciplines across campus at UL. The courses are different from the GE ones (c.f. Ngoepe, 2017: 186). In GE, students are offered general English language skills such as writing using general every day vocabulary and sentences whereas in ESP courses such as BE, students are offered English that is tailored to their specific needs relevant to the financial or commercial environment. Since most students encountered problems when using English in their content subjects, it was important to determine the different needs of BE students in order to design relevant courses for them.

### **2.4.3 ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES**

The term ESP can be used to find aspects of English language that should be offered in BE. There seems to be an agreement among ESP researchers and specialists

worldwide that Business English is a branch of ESP (Pickett, 1989; Robinson, 1991; Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991; St. John & Johnson, 1996; Wang, 1997; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Feng, 1999; Huang, 2000; Ellis & Johnson, 2002).

The teaching of BE requires a sound description of English in use in a business context. McCarthy and Carter (2004: 3) assert that knowing how language works and how students use it is a first and indispensable step towards deciding what shall be taught. This is one of the components, along with knowledge of the psychology of learning and the social as well as cultural contexts of learning, which feed into how language is taught. It is not easy to figure out the form and content of language teaching syllabuses and materials for BE without subjecting them to raw materials in the form of GE as the TL to be learned.

The uses of English language in the business environment takes into account both language and the business context. Conception of register is relevant in this discussion in that it is used to relate language forms to the context in which they are used. Variables such as subject matter, interpersonal relations, and the channel of communication also play a role in the use of language in a business context. Although it seems to be simple for people to conceptualise BE as the use of language for professional purpose, the concept of register provides a useful framework for discussing the features of language needed in that context (Halliday, 1978).

BE carries the semantic content of the business world, which could be contrasted with the GE of the everyday world. Nelson (2000) demonstrates how the two worlds differ in terms of terminologies used. Thus, business vocabulary and non-business vocabulary differ. In the business world, the participants are rather institutionalised, and the public such as the customer, contractor, manager, seller and buyer are personal and private in the everyday language. The processes are more action-oriented in the business world. They involve, for example, selling, managing, manufacturing and delivery, confirming rather than the everyday life world which is about knowing, seeing, praying, feeling, dying, lying and marrying. The goings-on of the two worlds are essentially different.

The use of language for interpersonal relations in the business world is a bit complicated compared to the everyday use of language. In business, there are lot of interpersonal relationships as compared to the everyday world such as business-

customer relations, business–business relations, and relations between different departments or sections of the same business. The participants in these relationship networks differ in many aspects, including language and cultural conventions in relation to intercultural communication (Ellis & Johnson, 2002).

The interpersonal relationship in business interactions is not rigid, though. Studies in business discourse reveal the way participants design their turns and orient to the task, the other party and the local context during their interactions. While the situation of buyer's market gives the buyer more power over the seller in sales negotiations, the seller can make full use of his turns to his advantage. In other words, this turn-by-turn interaction has the potential of subverting the relative power of institutional participants (Charles, 1996).

#### **2.4.4 THE ESP APPROACH**

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 14) as well as Blagojevic (2013: 115) assert that it cannot be simply assumed that describing and exemplifying what people do with language will enable someone to learn it. The process of selecting an English teaching approach should enable business students to learn the English language closely similar to the one that they are learning in language in a GE class. Teachers of ESP programmes are faced with many challenges. Several scholars discussed the characteristics of effective ESP. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) identify ESP teachers' five different roles: teacher, collaborator, course designer and materials provider, researcher and evaluator.

In order to meet the specific language needs of learners, teachers must in the first place closely work with field specialists. Additionally, an effective ESP teacher should substitute a learner-centred environment of language teaching in addition to the discipline-specific content of their area in order to keep the course up-to-date with constant changes in knowledge domain, and to assist learners in their professional development. Effective ESP teachers should also be providers of accurate language teaching materials (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, Mohammad, 2014: 1682- 3257).

In a study on BE courses, Chang (2000) argues that writing and reading are regarded as important language skills because learners needed to write business letters. A study by Tsai (1998) quoted in Chen and Wu (2013), which investigated BE students'

needs, discovered that students needed to improve their English ability before absorbing business background knowledge. The results were consistent with the findings of other studies that students' low GE proficiency was a huge barrier to acquiring professional English and grammar rules (Huang, 2007; Lai, 2005). Chen and Wu (2013:13) concluded that determining what to teach seemed to be a big question for every English language teacher who is teaching ESP.

#### 2.4.4.1 Suggestions for teaching an ESP course

There are other areas of concern for an ESP teacher to deliver good content for an ESP course. According to Jordan (1998: 252), ESP lecturers should practise team teaching. This suggests that an ESP lecturer should have a strong bond with content subject lecturers.

Furthermore, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that ESP lecturers do not need specific subject knowledge. They only require three things to become good teachers: a positive attitude towards the ESP content, a knowledge of the fundamental principles of the subject area and an awareness of how much they probably already know (Knight et al, 2010). This is implicit that an ESP teacher should not become a lecturer of the subject matter but rather an interested student of the subject matter (McDonough, 1984).

##### 2.4.4.1.1 Team-teaching

Cooperation between the two departments is the key issue in ESP team teaching. According to Jordan (1998), this collaboration will help an ESP lecturer to successfully identify students' problem areas and the provision of information about their target situation. Team teaching helps in providing an ESP teacher, information about students' progress level in English in other subjects.

##### 2.4.4.1.2 Discipline-specific content

If a class consists of students from one discipline, ESP lecturers can use discipline specific texts as part of teaching. These include prescribed textbooks and other texts that might be suggested by the department served. If, however, students are from several different departments or disciplines, it may be possible to group them along broad subject lines. In this case, topics will need to be broad-based. Jordan (1998:

254) suggests that the only way to deal with a challenge of dealing with students from several disciplines is to select a topic which may be approached in different ways by a number of disciplines.

#### **2.4.5 THE BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSE AT THE UL**

The curriculum of the UL Bachelor of Accounting Science (BAccSc) programme aims to equip students with the necessary skills and qualities needed to function in a dynamic and challenging Accounting environment.

In the BE classroom, there are new groups of students who have different needs every year. The main aim of the course is to help students improve their English communication skills within a business setting. It focuses on a corporate setting as opposed to a casual, everyday language environment (School of Accountancy Calendar, 2016: 38). This course was taught over two semesters.

The content of the BE course in the first semester covered common areas such as Business language, how to use a special Business English dictionary, introduction to business phrases and vocabulary as well as revision of the English grammar rules.

In the first semester, students were introduced to business interaction. Since many Business English students want to gain speaking skills, they were introduced to speaking skills in the business context through the use of a prescribed book titled 'Communicating @ work' by Grant and Borchers (2015). The prescribed textbook had various chapters on business interaction. In one of the chapters, students learnt how to interact with one another, as well as with clients.

At the beginning of the second semester, students were introduced to various ways of making effective oral communication in Business. These included speaking over the phone with colleagues or clients, speaking during meetings and negotiations, and other similar skills pertaining to English, which were used in a business setting.

Towards the end of the second semester, students were taught various forms of written communication in the business world. They were taught the importance of communication and how to communicate effectively in the business environment. Thus, they were introduced to correspondence formats in the business context such as writing business letters, memorandums, proposals and reports, which are typical written forms of communication used in a business setting. These were some of the

key elements in corporate communication in English, which are linked to professional communication behaviours in the business world today (School of Accountancy Calendar, 2016: 38).

Teaching BE involved being creative and combining various language teaching methods as well as strategies such as communicative language learning, role plays and so on (Galova, 2007). Sometimes a lecturer could impart information, or at times in a seminar form some chapters or sections can be practised by students.

The number of students ranged from 150 to 200 in one lecture hall. Thus, the lecturer first teaches the students in a large group twice a week and then divided them into smaller groups for tutorial sessions held once a week for each group. In the tutorial sessions, the tutor summarised and demonstrated activities such as business vocabulary and academic language chapters that have been taken from the book, and that have been covered in the classroom. In this way, the course attempts to meet the essential requirements and to accommodate students' different language needs.

Most content lecturers who taught BE students At UL arguably found that students' English language knowledge and writing skills were poor. This provided fertile ground for strategically factoring in ELSCs such as BE. Emphasis could also be put on students' writing skills to ensure that they are able to meet the demands of the written tasks. These content lecturers do not usually focus on language aspects of the tasks that they set, but on expanding students' Accounting skills.

Communication skills are assessed through oral presentations in all courses in the School of Accountancy. The emphasis on language skills in BE is valid and can be justified by the fact that an accountant should be able to articulate a point of view clearly, coherently and persuasively in negotiations and discussions as well as in writing (School of Accountancy Calendar, 2016: 38).

The University of Limpopo's School of Accountancy Calendar (2016: 16) outlines that the Bachelor of Accounting Science (BAcc) is a four-year degree for students studying towards the Chartered Accountancy qualification. This curriculum aims to equip students with the necessary skills and qualities needed to operate in a dynamic and challenging accounting environment. These BAcc students were expected to acquire and develop accounting analytical skills, adopt a creative approach to varying and



rapidly changing situations, communicate effectively, and lead successfully in the work place.

Furthermore, the BAAcc curriculum in the School of Accountancy at first year level aims to ground students in theories of Accountancy, concepts of Accountancy and working tools that are essential for operating in the accounting field. Most importantly, and relevant to this study, this curriculum aimed to ensure that successful graduates would be proficient in Accounting and are well equipped with English skills for oral and written communication. Thus, they would be equipped to solve some of the business problems that need communication and language skills in English. As outlined in the UL's School of Accountancy Calendar (2016: 38), the first year level curriculum consists of the following 10 course units: Accounting, Business-calculation, Economics, Business Management, and Business English, that is, five courses per semester. All areas of curricular requirements are pursued simultaneously throughout the period of study, but they only study BE during the first year level, irrespective of the inadequate language skills that they have.

The elements of ESP such as needs analysis, syllabus design, course design, materials selection and development could be incorporated in the planning and delivering of the course such as BE (Basturkmen, 2010). However, BE differs from other GE courses in that it equips students with specific business vocabulary, commercial content and English language skills (School of Accountancy Calendar 2016: 38).

Business English at UL consisted of two modules taught in the first and second semester. According to the School of Accountancy Calendar (2016:38), Business English in the first semester (CBEN011) aimed to equip students with the necessary language skills. The following aspects of business were covered: Introduction into business communication, Business vocabulary to assist the comprehension of English as it is used in financial and commercial documents and the general business environment, and English writing skills needed to write business documents.

English was considered to be essential in trade and commerce and the number of people who are expected to learn the language increases daily. Employees of firms who deal with international companies are required to be fluent and proficient in English. As the world functions more globally, being proficient in English is obligatory

(School of Accountancy Calendar, 2016:38). BE is one of the 10 compulsory courses for students' first year level Accounting, Business-calculation, Economics, Business management and Business English. Five of the courses were taught in the first semester.

In addition, the School of Accountancy Calendar (2016: 38) indicated that in the second semester, it provided students with knowledge of effective communication in the world of work. Hence, it was important for business students in BE to learn the importance of interpersonal communication in the workplace, the barriers to effective communication, interpersonal communication in the workplace, approaches to conflict in workplaces, non-verbal communication, and letters in, and grammar of, English in the business context. This supported the aim of ESP as meeting various demands and needs of students, and highlights the necessity of ascertaining students' language needs in curriculum planning. BE courses in the UL were provided to improve students' occupational English ability.

## **2.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY**

The theory of this study was premised on DA and MA. According to Allwright (1982, quoted in West, 1994), DA refer to an approach to NA that was developed to consider learners' present needs or wants. This implied some analysis of their deficiencies or lacks. MA sets out to investigate matters of logistics and pedagogy about practicalities and constraints in implementing needs-based language courses (West, 1994). These approaches was dovetailed with data collected from UL BE students as well as their content lecturers (c.f. chapter 5).

### **2.5.1 Framework for analysing learning needs**

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 62), a framework for analysing learning needs is made up of reasons why the students are taking the course, how they learn, what resources are available, who the students are, where the ESP course will take place and when the ESP course will take place. The framework of this study needsto take into account the needs of BE students as a course which is designed to meet their specific needs.

#### 2.5.1.1 Why students take a course?

There are different reasons why students take an ESP course such as BE. The question why students take a course has the following sub questions: What do students think they will achieve when taking this course? What is their attitude towards the ESP course? Do they want to improve their English or do they dislike the time they have to spend on it?

#### 2.5.1.1 How do students learn?

Another aspect to be considered when analysing students' learning needs is to look at how they learn. The lecturer should consider what their learning background. What do they understand about the concept of teaching and learning? The other important issue is what teaching methods would they like and what sort of teaching techniques will push them away?

#### 2.5.1.2.1 What are the resources available?

Resources are important tools that assist in delivering good service in teaching and learning in ESP. These refer to the number of teachers available to teach the course. This includes professional competence level of the available teachers as well as teachers' attitude towards the ESP course such as their knowledge about the course and the content. The researcher also has to determine whether there are enough available materials for the course.

#### 2.5.1.2.2 Who the students are?

The identity of the students who are taking the course is one of the important aspects that the ESP practitioner should consider. Students' learning needs is about their identity. When looking for their identity, the researcher has to take into consideration their age, sex and nationality. Further, the important question is the subject knowledge that they have. The students' knowledge level of the English language is important as well as the teaching styles they are used to? This might help to adapt the teaching style that they are used to. The lecturer should also determine their socio-cultural background and their attitude to English or to the cultures of the English speaking world.

#### 2.5.1.2.3 Where the course will take place?

The environment in which the learners are going to learn is another questionable aspect. This focuses on the classroom environment. For example, a noisy environment can disturb the process of teaching and learning. It is also advisable that the lecturer take steps to check if the environment is favourable for learning purposes before delivering an ESP course.

#### 2.5.1.2.4 When the course will take place

The time of the delivery of the course is vital. This refers to when the course will be delivered. This implies that the lecturer should focus on the time he or she is going to deliver the course, how many times, and so on.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

Although NA implies a learner-centred approach, students in different disciplines need relevant support courses tailored to their specific needs. On the whole, TSA, PSA, MA and DA can help lecturers identify students' needs in BE. These could be dovetailed to discipline-specific content as well as materials that would deliver the relevant course at UL.

The next chapter focuses on the study's research method.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **3.1 INTROUCTION**

The aim of this section is to discuss the research methodology of the study. This section explains the research methodology adopted in this study. It focused on explaining the following sub-sections: research design, sampling, data collection method as well as quality criteria.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative research approach was used to determine the BE students' needs and the business content lecturers' perceptions of the needs of the students in the field of Accounting and Financial Management.

##### **3.2.1 Research design**

The research design of this study was exploratory. Qualitative research has traditionally been regarded as an effective way of exploring new and uncharted areas (Dorney, 2007: 39). To balance this exploration, the students filled in a questionnaire on their language needs while content lecturers who teach BE students were interviewed about what they deemed their students' language needs to be (cf. Richards et al, 2012: 308). This was useful in order to analyse language needs of BE students and to generalise the results to different groups at UL.

An exploratory study was considered to be relevant to determine the needs of UL BE students. Currently, little is known about the phenomenon because it has not been studied in detail before (cf. Dorney, 2007: 308).

##### **3.2.2 Sampling**

Purposive sampling was used. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013: 146), the logic of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for an in-depth study. The researcher selected a sample from students who registered for BE at UL. Students were asked to fill in a research questionnaire, and interviews were arranged with four content subject lecturers who teach BE students. These students learnt English as a First Additional Language (EFAL) at the matriculation level but still need

to learn English as a core course in the School of Accountancy and Financial Management.

The sample was calculated using the Raosoft calculator for sample size. According to the software, only 140 students could be used to represent the total number of 218 students who were registered for BE at UL (cf. [www.raosoft.com](http://www.raosoft.com)).

### **3.3 DATA COLLECTION**

The following data collection instruments were employed: a questionnaire for students and an interview for content lecturers who teach BE students.

A questionnaire was developed for the students because questionnaires are commonly used to gather first-hand information from a large audience. There are different types of questionnaires in practice (Oppenheim, 1992:15). The type of questionnaire to be used usually depends on the purpose of the survey and the type of data to be collected. The questionnaire in this study was structured in a closed-ended questioning format. Closed-ended questions help to arrive at the participants' opinions about the research matter in a more efficient manner (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 145).

To balance the data collection process, interviews were also conducted with content lecturers who teach BE students in the School of Accountancy and Financial Management to learn more about the actual needs of the students.

Structured interview questions were developed. The researcher interviewed the content lecturers individually to determine their views on the English language needs of the BE students. These interviews were used to obtain their perceptions of the students' language needs. To ensure consistency, the lecturers were presented with the same questions in the same order throughout the interview sessions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 148).

### **3.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data collected were analysed thematically in line with Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a six-step thematic analysis process of mainly identifying, analysing and reporting qualitative data using thematic analysis. The steps involve familiarising oneself with the data collected, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming themes as well as producing the report.

Data collected through the questionnaire as contained in the students' responses to the questions about their language needs was analysed thematically. The students' and the lecturer's responses were used to analyse language needs was through categorising the responses under four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). (see Appendix A).

In addition, data collected through interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically under the four language skills (see Appendix B).

### **3.5 QUALITY CRITERIA**

This study used a qualitative approach (see Research Methodology). Guba and Lincoln (1985: 93) propose four criteria of judging the quality of research in a qualitative research approach, as these are the most important reflections on the value of well-designed qualitatively-oriented criteria. Thus, to ensure quality of the study, the following four quality criteria were utilised: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

#### **3.5.1 Credibility**

The credibility criteria provide the assurance that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. From the qualitative perspective, the purpose of research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participant's eyes. Thus, the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results (Guba & Lincoln, 1985: 94).

In this study, the researcher ensured credibility by applying data triangulation through the use of interviews and questionnaires. This was done to make sure that the data that was collected produced a true image of the phenomenon that was being researched, which is the language needs of the UL BE students.

#### **3.5.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings. From a qualitative perspective, transferability is the responsibility of the researcher in that a clear method that has been used to collect and interpret data before generalising must be provided. The

qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by doing a thorough description of the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research. This process was followed to make it possible for another person who may wish to transfer the results to a different context to do so (Schwandt, 2015: 46).

### 3.5.3 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. Many people believe that qualitative researchers just assume the results and bring their own perspectives to the study. Therefore, there is a need for strategies to stop such assumptions by enhancing confirmability. To enhance confirmability of the study, the researcher documented the procedures of checking and rechecking the data throughout the study as well as applying instrumental triangulation. The data was kept safe and available for anyone who may wish to conduct a data audit or examine the data collection and analysis procedures as well as make judgements about the potential for bias or distortion (Guba & Lincoln, 1985: 93).

### 3.5.4 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the process of demonstrating that the evidence for the results reported in the study is sound; and the arguments made on the results of the study are strong. Trustworthiness in analysing data in this study was done through refining the data within categories in a systematic order, and in a way that the data was first organised into groups according to similar attributes that are already available. The process of ensuring trustworthiness involved categorisation of data from general to more specific themes as the data should be grouped (Dey, 1993: 102; see Appendix A).

## **3.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The results of this study could help improve the process of designing BE course content in general, and would, in the long term, benefit Accounting and Management students at UL, where English is the medium of instruction.



The study results could also contribute to the body of knowledge about BE students and benefit content lecturers. Above all, students could be equipped to function effectively in a BE context on the basis of identified language needs.

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

As the study's research subjects were students at the UL, ethics were a key consideration in the design of social research. Two fundamental ethical guidelines were that participation in social research were voluntary and research subjects were not harmed (Babble, 2007: 64).

In line with the above, the researcher firstly requested permission from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) to collect data at the institution. The researcher distributed consent letter that explain the intention of the study to the participants. The participants consent letter that explain the intention of the study. In addition to that the researcher distributed consent form to the participants to sign in order to acknowledge that they are agreeing to participate in the study'. The researcher then assured participants that their identities would be kept confidential by ensuring anonymity. (See appendix E, F and G)

The next chapter presents research findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents results of the study made up of students' questionnaire responses as well as subject content lecturers' interview responses in the School of Accountancy.

#### 4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENT DATA

This section focuses on the information provided by the students in response to questionnaires. It entails background information, four basic skills, and challenges pertaining to using English in commerce and suggested improvements to the course.

##### 4.2.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section focuses on students' background information. Their background information consists of degree options, department they are registered in, year registered, study level, type of school, matric symbol and gender.

In terms of degrees students registered for, Forty percent of the students registered for Bachelor of Accountancy (BAcc), 59% for B Com degrees while 1% gave irrelevant answers.

The number of students in the Department of Accounting was by far higher than that of students in Management that is, Accounting has many more students than those in Management; 72% and 12%, respectively. However, 16% of the students responded irrelevantly.

Year	No. of Students	%
1998	1	1
2014	2	2
2017	5	5
2018	96	91
Irrelevant	1	1

Table 1: Year students registered at UL

In Table 1, the years in which students registered at UL were presented. Ninety one Most students registered for the first time in 2018 while negligible numbers registered in 2017, 2014 and 1998, respectively. Only 1% of the students gave irrelevant answers.

School type	No. of Students	%
Private	8	8
Public	95	90
Irrelevant	2	2

Table 2: Types of schools students attended

Table 2 depicts the types of schools that students attended. The Faculty of Management Sciences is mainly patronised by public schools; the number of students who went to private schools was negligible. The majority, which was 90% of them went to public schools.

Ninety percent of the respondents were at 1<sup>st</sup> level, 4% at 2<sup>nd</sup> level and 1% of them gave an irrelevant response.

Matric symbol	No. of Students	%
B	100	95
E	1	1
Irrelevant	4	4

Table 3: Symbols at National Senior level

In Table 3, students' symbols at National Senior level are presented. Nearly all the students' that is 95%, who responded relevantly to the question got symbol B in General English (GE) while 1% got symbol E.

Gender	No. of Students	%
Males	49	47
Females	55	52
Irrelevant	1	1

Table 4: The students' gender

Table 4 focuses on BE students' gender. Of the 99% that responded to the questionnaire, the number of female students is slightly higher which is 52%; than that of the male ones which equals 47%.

## **4.2.2 THE FOUR BASIC SKILLS**

The four basic skills entail listening, speaking, reading and writing.

### **4.2.2.1 Listening needs**

The BE students participated in the following listening activities: lectures, presentations, question and answer sessions, dictation, memory quizzes, meetings, tutorials, one-on-one consultations, videos, and activities done through the projector. However, only 10% did not respond to the question.

Suggested additional listening activities that students would like to do were listening to reports and proposals, presentations, question and answer sessions, debates, revisions, audios, pronunciation sessions, motivational speakers, students being given a chance to talk in class, reading, work place activities, listening, elaboration on examples, speeches, recordings, spellings and tutorial sessions. Seventeen percent of the students did not respond to the question.

Although 15% of the respondents did not answer the question regarding what they would like to do in terms of listening, students indicated that listening skills improve concentration and reading skills in class. They provided practice in reading; they could share inspiration through motivational talks and improve speaking skills; they could help to identify whether the students have listening skills or not; and they should track those who did not cope due to lack of listening skills.

Listening skills can enhance students' understanding and improve their listening skills in general. However, students need more presentation skills, and these could be improved. This would help them to understand and to improve their speaking and language skills, and to boost their confidence and communication skills. Listening to a new voice on online videos could lead to better understanding brought about by new knowledge and the understanding of new concepts. Tutorials presented by a new person could also boost understanding.

Additional listening skills would help the students understand BE. These could enhance understanding of visual knowledge and videos. Listening to the audios would enhance understanding as well as entertainment, and could result in learning and better understanding of different types of questions.

Videos and audios could help students to understand the language better. They could understand better if taught by a new person. Some students understand more when watching videos, and better understanding increases participation. This could also help students understand how meetings are run; some students understand more when watching videos during their spare time, while others understand something when they see it physically.

Students stated that they needed more time for programmed audios for pronunciation practice so that they could gain confidence to speak and read, as well as ask questions. Debates would also allow them to raise their opinions in class and contribute in decision-making. Students could be given time to speak and engage others through discussion.

Frequent practical presentations would encourage listening with the aim of answering questions and boosting their confidence by participating in class. This would help with spelling, pronunciation of difficult words, and increase students' vocabulary. Role play in acting would encourage consultations as students would pay attention to what student actors say.

Students could watch videos and listen to audios later in their rooms as these would help when studying. These could also help them when revising, as these could be watched step by step and repeatedly because watching videos is better than reading books.

Recordings can be played later and students can listen and answer questions. These could help students who missed classes to catch up as they prefer to hear different perspectives. Further, formal videos on presentations would help students with hearing problems. Students could be trained to become good listeners because they like listening to videos rather than lecturers. Videos support facts and stick to them. Students indicated that it is not easy to forget what one has seen and heard.

Students who would not have seen the slides could resort to videos that could remind them. Listening to videos more than once would provide step by step explanations. They could watch the videos later during study time, and websites could help augment this with relevant information. Thus, videos could give clarity on some topics.

Students suggested additional listening activities which would motivate them to work harder. These include uploading quizzes, note-taking, and practical examples on Blackboard, and learning more about Accounting, workplaces, everyday examples, relationship between words and situations, and getting hard copies of slides to avoid taking notes during lectures.

Listening activities done were not enough; activities could promote students' involvement in class; and speakers could be audible. Activities should also help to determine whether the students have been listening or not. They could be trained to listen.

In explaining their responses, students pointed out that a new lecturer could make them concentrate in class, as students sometimes get tired of listening to lecturers. To avoid disorder in group meetings, questions based on a passage that was read in class could be asked. Peer teaching could encourage learning, help the students pay attention and boost remembering for assessments. Thus, it should help students grasp their work as they learn differently.

Students could be familiarised with the use of wording in questions. This would boost the students' confidence and self-awareness; they could be active and be stimulated to be creative. They could also be given feedback on the challenges they face during assessments to boost their confidence in BE.

#### **4.2.2.2 Speaking needs**

The speaking tasks students performed in BE class are oral presentations, answering and asking questions, reading aloud, discussions, speaking, spelling and pronunciation of words, communicating verbally, giving opinions, consultations and debates. Only 3% of the students did not respond to this question.

Moreover, examples of speaking tasks that students would like to do were presentations, being given a chance to speak, asking and answering questions, more group work, a chance to teach, consulting with lecturers, reading in class, getting oral feedback, making speeches, debates, drama and poetry as well as language competition. Fifteen (15%) of the students did not respond.

Eighteen percent (18%) of the respondents did explain their options regarding speaking tasks they would like to do in BE. They explained that the speaking skill would improve their understanding of peers; it would boost their understanding of theory and that students who perform better could share their understanding with fellow students. Understanding more concepts implies that students who could present chapters would better other students' understanding of topics in their course content. This would also encourage pre-reading and make the students to understand lectures. Discussions will increase the level of understanding and help the students to understand different questions and how to respond.

Since students lose focus when listening to the lecturer for a long time, they would like to get a chance to give their views. Hence improving language and speaking can make studying easy when given a chance to talk more in class. Students would spell better and be confident to address fellow students.

Speaking is fun and is enjoyable during learning. It can teach students to be confident to communicate. In future, it would be fair if each student could present alone. Students' morale and self-confidence would be increased. Hearing students' different views about a given topic will be allowed. Thus, to contribute knowledge during lectures, students could be given topics to debate and discuss; debating would enhance their speaking ability. So will answering questions and oral quizzes.

Speaking could help boost students' self-esteem for the corporate world. It would refine their speaking skills and enable them to participate in class. It would also boost

their vocabulary and help them gain confidence. Such an experience could make students feel comfortable when in front of an audience.

Their public speaking abilities can be boosted and this would help motivate them to work harder. Students would also empower each other through speaking and communication. The lecturer would be able to witness the progress students could make because some students are afraid to speak in front of people.

On the whole, opportunities to speak would help improve the students' English language use as it is relevant in their work environment. Students would be able to speak openly while gaining more confidence to continue speaking. This could get them ready for interviews, how to give talks, to interact with each other and fluently in the English language.

Engaging with business issues through debate would help develop students' presentation skills. Debates would build their vocabulary, their confidence to speak, and being able to speak their minds through question and answer sessions. This is a chance to give oral inputs which would increase the ability to speak in English.

Consultations which would help with pronunciation of words. Getting used to public speaking should be mandatory. The students' social interaction skills, together with their self-esteem and confidence, would be boosted. Students also need communication skills. They would be able to exchange ideas about the topics taught because discussions increase levels of interaction and promote public speaking.

Furthermore, speaking encourages team work and getting feedback. These would in turn encourage students to become professionals in business. Students could get a chance to prepare for their lectures and to attend tutorials which could further enable them to be on track with the work covered. It would also encourage them to research pertinent topics before attending lectures. This tends to be beneficial to them when they graduate from university.

All activities could be done to enhance performance and encourage students to grow professionally. For example, drama could demonstrate how things were done in the business environment, pitching a business proposal and plan, and getting answers from one's peers motivates them. Group work makes students work reasonably well together and assists with grammar and vocabulary challenges. Sentence correction



helps the students to grow mentally. As they exchange ideas, they get familiarised with content, summarising complex information and preparing them to get ready for examinations. They could also share their visions in the process.

#### **4.2.2.3 Reading needs**

Only 16% of the students did not respond to the question on reading needs they would like to engage in and 10% did not participate in any of the activities. Reading activities that the students participated in include reading textbooks, slides, important points, dictionaries, questions, poetry, drama, novels, one on one reading, and notes.

Although 22% of the students did not respond to the question on additional reading activities, the reading activities that they would like to engage in included reading textbooks, business documents, reading aloud, newspapers and magazines, dictionaries, speeches, poems, prepared reading, individual reading, competitions and stories.

Twenty six percent (26%) of the respondents did not advance reasons in this section. Students would like to engage in reading activities to enhance their reading ability and understanding, to be prepared for work, to improve spelling and vocabulary building. Since students were more comfortable in reading than in writing, this can increase the level of interaction in class and improve their reading skills. It would test their reading ability and where possible, help them to construct meaningful sentences and better their understanding. It would help them understand how business documents look like, understand a topic before studying it, make students get used to reading, and increase their understanding of modules in question.

Presentations based on reading promote students reading habits and can expose their reading problems. It would also improve their language, grammar and vocabulary. Since visuals are easy to understand, they would help students to think, improve their reading skills and language use in a business context, thus improving their English. This would in turn motivate them to read and to prepare better.

Reading would motivate students to read textbooks, to read actively and to explore knowledge in different books. It would better their understanding of BE, help with advertising skills and help them to know where they went wrong.

Reading skills would sustain good participation, reading out aloud would make students comfortable to use the corporate language and to have a picture of what is happening in the business world, thus relating to real life. They would know the purpose of studying BE, familiarise themselves with what is happening in business, because students want to engage more with reality.

Students' reading needs to focus on reading novels and pamphlets, which give clear information, and lecturers pointing out to students what to read aloud. Students could also learn through competitions, reading different books, more reading, studying every day and getting many Business English related books in the library. Sometimes it is easy to get information when it was read by different people and extra sources are summarised.

#### 4.2.2.4 Writing needs

Writing activities that students participated in include report writing, business proposals, assessment of writing, taking notes, writing assignments, tests, quizzes and answering multiple choice questions.

<b>Additional writing activities</b>	<b>No. of students</b>	<b>%</b>
Essay writing	6	6
Reports writing	5	5
Activities are enough	4	4
Business articles	6	6
Assignments writing	15	14
Proposals	7	7
Tests	15	14
Quiz	10	10
Assessments	2	2
CVs	2	2
Business plans	6	6
No answers	21	19
Essay writing	6	6

Table 5: Suggested writing tasks students would like to perform

Table 5 captures suggested writing tasks that students would like to perform. Although 19% of the students did not respond to this question, an equal number of students

suggested essay writing, business articles and writing business plans as activities they would like to perform.

Furthermore, assignment writing and tests were suggested by an equal number of students. Quizzes were suggested by 10%, report writing by 5% while writing of assessments and CVs were suggested by another equal number of students.

Only 25% of students did not explain their options with regard to writing tasks they would like to perform. Students further explained that writing skills would help in document writing, improve their writing such as business writing. It would improve their thinking ability and reflection, and it would help them prepare for the future and boost their marks.

Moreover, preparatory assessment would help students to prepare for exam, improve their knowledge in writing such as in report writing; it would help identify the students who struggle to understand to improve their marks; and augment their knowledge of writing and improve their English.

Writing tasks would develop students' writing skills and their English language, identify those who need help, improve their performance and their writing skills. It would help them master the structure of assessment, search for information and gain knowledge, show their level of understanding and improve writing of letters. It would also help students to grasp the information given in class.

Writing will improve creativity in students' writing; enhance writing skills by giving basic knowledge when applying for a job to prepare for their future in business; improve their spelling skills and prepare them for tests and examinations, familiarise them with questions and boost their performance.

Students will prepare for formal assessment through practical writing. They will engage more in writing, which tests their understanding. Students who study only when they are about to write a test could learn new things through individual assignments as well as group assignments.

In preparation for the business world communication, lecturers need to check the progress of their students through socialising and applying their knowledge in business. This would motivate them to study, participate and attend lectures. Students

should follow instructions, monitor their progress and get a chance to write on the board as a way of familiarising themselves with questions. When students do their work individually, they stand a better chance of succeeding. Students who miss classes should be reminded and updated to prepare, do practical activities such as preparing to look for a job and rectify mistakes. Students could be exposed to business documents, write more to improve, research and be given feedback through Blackboard.

### **4.2.3 CHALLENGES PERTAINING TO USING ENGLISH IN COMMERCE**

Challenges pertaining to using English in commerce were understanding business terminology, speaking, writing and using English in a commercial context, course content and general challenges.

#### **4.2.3.1 Understanding business terminology**

Challenges experienced were understanding what was required when answering questions. It was, however, difficult to understand the content of courses in commerce because of poor matric English results. Failure to understand instructions in a test and examination leads to failure to understand what was required. It was also difficult to understand the instructions in Business Management because of the difficult words that were used.

Moreover, challenges include answering questions in class, answering language and grammar questions, testing questions and exam test questions and misinterpreting some of the questions. The use of correct grammar and spelling remains challenging. Inability to analyse questions in exams in Economics was also a challenge.

Students found Business words in Commerce difficult because they were unable to understand the big words used in the textbook. It was challenging to use the words in day to day communication in a business context. Thus, using correct words in sentences or context was required.

It was also challenging to write a test without dictionaries because there were difficult words which students do not understand. The 'big words' that were used sometimes confuse students. For example, words that were used in commerce were sometimes

difficult to understand; they needed much explaining. It was therefore difficult to use certain words in commerce as wording slightly varied from course to course.

Other challenges include learning the jargon that was associated with commerce and the use of business terminologies. Terminology in commerce was challenging because some students did not do commerce at high school level. Therefore, students sometimes failed to understand the terms used.

#### **4.2.3.2 Speaking**

Students indicated that they find it hard to speak in English to friends in class. They use slang and were too shy to speak in front of fellow students using correct English.

#### **4.2.3.3 Writing**

Challenges related to writing include writing proper, easy and simple English, constructing short sentences, and writing a long document. Sentence structure and paragraphs were generally too complex to understand.

Other challenges were report writing, writing a test without a dictionary, writing difficult tests and having to submit a difficult assignment.

#### **4.2.3.4 Using English in a commerce context**

Students were not familiar with commerce courses and the language used; the commerce language was too deep and not easy to comprehend.

The formality of BE as compared to normal communication was challenging, and applying this to projects that students were given remains challenging.

The BE lecturer offered me an effective consultation session but it was hard to engage with other English lecturers because I have attitude towards English from high school.

Business English was different from GE, and students find it difficult to apply it in context. Therefore, English for commerce includes too many activities from different courses. English in commerce was difficult compared to English used for everyday communication.

#### **4.2.3.5 Course content**

The content of the BE textbooks was sometimes not easy to understand. Students need to have special business dictionaries. They find it hard to link together different chapters as they were not related to each other and the content is difficult to understand.

The theoretical part of commerce was more than the practical part. The content was difficult to manage. Engaging with business documents such as reports, and time management were some of the challenges. The content demands time and effort as the lectures are long. Additionally, the application of English in a business context was necessary.

Students were always under pressure because they were given too many tasks within a very short period of time. Additionally, challenges include completing tests and exams in time. Some students always arrive late, lose concentration in class, especially towards the end of the lectures. Others do not use the study week to study and submit work late.

Lack of opportunities for self-study and lecture slides which were sometimes provided late puts pressure on the students, which is sometimes too much. Sometimes students are under pressure with tests and assignments that were scheduled close to each other.

Access to material and information, getting tutors for all the modules, mentors who were always available for students, students being aware of what was happening around them and thus being provided with enough information.

Not knowing how to use the dictionary, not affording to buy textbooks and some slides not being on Blackboard. Students sometimes failed to understand textbooks, to use different textbooks and to find previous question papers.

#### **4.2.3.6 General challenges**

Although 5% of the students did not experience any challenges, 1% have not yet experienced any challenges and another 1% indicated that there were many benefits. General challenges experienced by students were reading what was required when answering questions, memorising the structure of business documents, using correct

headings and subheadings, struggling to use figures of speech, not getting support from lecturers and learning referencing methods.

There was also too much theory for students to remember. Lecturers were sometimes not audible for students to get what was being taught, poor preparedness by the lecturers, lack of practicals and too much theory, which lead to misunderstanding and non-participation in class make one feel lazy to even study.

Students not attending group meetings, finding it difficult to study for a test, not focusing during lectures, inability to identify essential topics and failure to understand some topics, and focusing on what was happening in the Accounting field, some students not participating in groups were taught what to do but not how to do things. Listening needs much attention and students should study every day to prepare for assessment questions.

#### **4.2.4 SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE COURSE**

Suggested improvements to the course consist of tutorials, materials, extra classes, presentations, practicals, assignments, approaches and improvements to the course.

##### **4.2.4.1 Tutorials**

In the main, students indicated that they needed tutorials to help them understand the BE course content. They also stated that they needed mentorship sessions, extra classes, mentors, weekly concept tests, videos and mentorship programmes. They indicated that videos and audios could be uploaded online, and visuals be included in teaching to enhance their understanding. Lecturers should also be more audible and active, and lecture halls could have speakers or sound systems.

##### **4.2.4.2 Materials**

Regarding materials, students could be provided with enough materials to study. There could be more teaching and learning resources, slides should be posted on Blackboard as students do not have textbooks. These could be sent to students in time.

Although students have different reference books, materials could be provided at the beginning of the semester for students to prepare themselves in general, and slides

could be provided before they could attend for students to prepare for class. Textbooks could also be summarised for students and past question papers be revised.

#### **4.2.4.3 Extra classes**

Lecture times could be increased for more student and lecturer contact sessions. Students could be taught by the same lecturers in both semesters. They could as well engage the students during lectures. There could sometimes be weekend lectures, more practical-based classes should be planned, extra classes be arranged to provide students with sufficient information. Revision week, instead of study week, could be introduced.

More reading and writing activities are necessary. As a result, students could be given homework and a lot of work; they need more tasks for them to learn. These reading activities would improve their English. They could also be given more tasks to do in preparation for examinations. Creating question banks could be vital for students to know how the questions are set when given tasks.

More class activities and trialling of previous question papers could be included. The activities could build students' self-esteem, and better their vocabulary and eye contact. More weekly concept tests could be written to help prepare for the examination; a concept test could be written after each chapter to check their understanding.

#### **4.2.4.4 Presentations**

More presentations could be made in class to encourage students' participation. Every student could be allowed to present. They could be given speaking and writing tasks and do regular formal presentations. More assessment tasks could be given. These could cover practical activities, assignments and class activities.

#### **4.2.4.5 Practicals**

Lecturers could ensure that there were more practical activities such as presentations in the BE course. It could be ensured that there was less theory by including more practical questions. Students could undertake business trips to some companies and small businesses. Visits could be extended to workplaces for observation purposes.



#### **4.2.4.6 Assignments**

Additional assignments, which were not part of the semester marks, could be written weekly. Students could be given assignments on written essays and mini essays, as well as tutorials.

#### **4.2.4.7 Approach**

Students could be allowed to work in smaller groups while lecturers monitor them. Teaching skills could also be improved. For example, Harvard referencing could be taught at the beginning of the year.

Breaking down of concepts would help students understand what they were being taught. Students could practise how to link a chapter taught to a real life situation. They could also be taught more about sentence structure and tense.

More detailed lecture slides could also be given. Some explanation of simple concepts was also important as lecturer's duty was to make students understand the chapters that they teach. Lecturers could offer lessons to struggling students. Pointers could be used during lectures.

More resources for the course could be provided and lecturers could come up with events as a way of engaging students. Additionally, students must engage one another in class. Slides must be posted on Blackboard before class and before a new chapter was introduced in class. Lecturers must engage more students during teaching to make the course more interesting. More prescribed books to be read could be pre-viewed and questions that are course-related should be taught.

#### **4.2.4.8 Improvements to the course**

Irrespective of the percentage of students (23%) who did not respond to the question, respondents suggested a number of improvements. Since language skills tend to be problematic for students, lecturers should ask easy and understandable questions.

Moreover, students could be assisted with applications for internships. Attendance register could be kept in every class, students could be well disciplined and they could get more information from the surrounding area. Students could also be encouraged to take the course seriously, be taught interview proceedings and how to draft

curriculum vitae. There could be more fun in class; it should not be too serious. Thus, English could be used daily.

A few students (3%) indicated that there was no need for improvements because lecturers were good and the course was doing well. However, a negligible number of students (4%) also stated that there was no need for improvements.

### **4.3 ANALYSIS OF LECTURER DATA**

Interviews are made up of biodata, aims and objectives, themes and topics, topics taught, teaching materials, BE content, suggested additions, resources, teaching approaches, possible interactions with students, assessment and course value.

#### **4.3.1 Biodata**

The lecturers' highest qualifications ranged from a Bcom to Master's degree; 1 held a Bcom in Financial Accounting degree and 4 held Master's degrees.

Content subjects that were taught included Introduction to Accounting, Business Calculations and Statistics, Business Information Systems, Business Management and Introduction to Economics.

Their teaching experience in years ranged from 2 to 15; 2, 7,9,10 and 15, respectively. All the lecturers taught 1st level, 2 teach 2nd level, another 2 taught 3rd level and 1 taught 4th level.

#### **4.3.2 Aim and Objectives**

BE course aims to teach students basic words in commerce because this would help them explain accounting words and to express themselves well in class. The course could also provide students with communication skills which would make them communicate in a business environment effectively.

Students need to know how to communicate using English because this language is important in the corporate world. So, students need language skills.

The course could equip students with an understanding of the English language used in business and communication. It could also help to bridge or close the communication gap between students from private and public schools through the use of English.

The outcome of the course could be to equip students with listening skills and make them understand and read English words.

The students could be taught writing skills so that they could be able to write documents such as memos and letters, how to handle themselves in interviews, and how to conduct interviews and meetings. They could be taught communication channels in businesses such as hierarchy and flow of communication.

The students in BE course could be taught Communication skills so that they know how to communicate well in a business environment.

The outcomes of the BE course should teach students to learn how to communicate orally and report writing skills. They could be taught how to run meetings in business environments and be able to write various business documents. Therefore, students could be able to communicate better. They could also be taught how to write good business reports.

### **4.3.3 Themes and topics**

In Introduction to Accounting, the BE students were taught Financial reporting. However, in Business Calculations and Statistics, they focus on various themes such as Depreciation, Payrolls, Stock Exchange, Percentages, Fractions and Foreign Exchange.

Students in Business Information Systems were taught the theory of computers, Pastel Accounting and Microsoft Office. The Business Management Course teach them ways of reporting in business and the course in Economics teaches Micro Economics and Macro Economics.

#### **4.3.4 Topics taught**

Topics taught in the Introduction to Accounting course were Conceptual Frame work for accounting, Accounting Equations, Bank Reconciliation, Cash flows, Financial Statements as well as Trade and Payable Receivables.

In Business Calculations and Statistics, topics taught included Methods of Depreciation Schedules such as Side Line, Double Declining and Digits Method.

Business Information Systems taught students how to use PowerPoint skills, Excel skills, Access skills and Word documents, whereas in Business Management students are taught Marketing, Leadership, Operations management and Business management in general.

Analysing Individual Parts of the Economy, The Impact of Consumers and Demands, Prices, Business Decisions and firms' behaviour in decision making was taught in Economics.

#### **4.3.5 Teaching materials**

Teaching materials for Introduction to Accounting was Content Slides, Question banks and Tutorial questions. However, in Business Calculations and Statistics, Blackboard slides, Notes, Books and chapters from different textbooks were used. Blackboard and Slides were also used by the Business Information Systems lecturer.

Furthermore, in Business Management, the lecturer uses Blackboard, PowerPoint slides, past exam papers and case studies to teach while the Economics lecturer uses the Textbook, Blackboard for communication and assessments, library books and the Internet to teach.

Only 2 lecturers stated that they used different materials for both semesters while the other 3 used the same materials in class for both semesters.

#### **4.3.6 BE content**

Only 1 lecturer used different materials for both semesters. The other four (4) did not use presentations at all.

All the lecturers (5) did not agree that the BE students were taught anything to do with business meetings in their content courses.

Two (2) lecturers pointed out that they taught students how to entertain clients in their content courses, whereas the other 4 indicated that they teach students who were expected to be able to entertain clients.

Only 1 lecturer did not agree that students needed to write effective business reports. The rest agreed that students needed to be taught to write effective business reports.

Lecturers were unanimous that students needed to use the English language effectively for social purposes.

#### **4.3.7 Suggested additions**

One lecturer (1) stated that aspects added to the content of BE students could help students analyse sentences and understand syntax. The 2<sup>nd</sup> one suggested that BE content could make students use effective communication skills through the use of a formal language register. The 3<sup>rd</sup> did not know what to add to the BE students. However, the 4<sup>th</sup> one indicated that there was nothing that needs to be added to the BE course, and the 5<sup>th</sup> lecturer suggested that the course could incorporate the language used in the main commerce courses.

Three (3) lecturers indicated that students do not need to participate in any conferences, 1 stated that they needed to and the other 1 did not know how to respond to the question.

Four (4) lecturers gave a variety of responses regarding additional language tasks they would like the students to do in the BE course. Their responses were as follows: drama or poetry using English language, speaking, everything that was covered in BE and Business Information System. Students could be able to communicate effectively, understand and analyse situations in business, and that oral presentations could be added to the BE course content. Only 1 lecturer did not respond.

#### **4.3.8 Resources**

The total number of students taught in each class were 180, 185, 186, 220 and 450. Four of the lecturers taught one course alone and only 1 course was taught by 2 lecturers.

Four lecturers (4) stated that the teaching venues for BE students were conducive, whereas 1 did not agree. Further, 3 lecturers did not agree that there were relevant materials available in the library, while 2 agreed that relevant materials were available in the library.

#### **4.3.9 Teaching Approach**

All the lecturers (5) did not agree that they switch to another language to help students understand as they teach content. Since students come from different language backgrounds and the lecturer uses only English, it was difficult to code switch in a multilingual context. Interestingly, 1 lecturer cannot speak local languages; he sometimes tried to use the local language only to spice up the lecture. The medium of instruction in UL is English.

Three (3) did not agree that they advised students to try online English language tests to improve their English skills, while two (2) lecturers agreed that they sometimes advised students to try online English language tests to improve their English skills. Four lecturers (4) did not agree that they sometimes consult BE lecturers when confronted with language challenges in class. Only 1 of them mentioned that he sometimes feels the need to consult with the BE lecturer. Since Business Information Systems was a computer based or practical course, students do not speak more often as they are working on computers.

#### **4.3.10 Possible interaction with students**

All the lecturers (5) did not respond to this question since they have never observed any BE class.

Three lecturers (3) agreed that the students showed signs of change in the way they used English after taking the BE course. However, 1 lecturer did not agree because he or she has never observed signs of change, and another 1 mentioned that it was not easy to measure the signs of language use.

#### **4.3.11 Assessment**

All lecturers agreed that students get annual assessment schedules during their first meeting. The frequency of assessment ranged from 3 to 9 in one semester; they are 3,4,6,7 and 9.

Two (2) lecturers stated that they penalised students for language errors when assessing them, while another 2 lecturers did not. One lecturer (1) indicated that the students were also tested on computer skills.

The year mark/examination mark ratio for the 3 course is 50/50, 1 course, 60/40% and another one (1) 60/40% and 50/50%.

#### **4.3.12 Course Value**

All the lecturers (5) indicated that the BE course could be offered at 1<sup>st</sup> year level. However, 1 lecturer suggested that it could be offered across all the levels. All of them stated that the BE course is useful to students in the School of Accountancy, and that they could recommend the course to colleagues in the school.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

BE students have needs that were unique to their learning environment. These needs were identified by students as well as content lecturers, and pertain to aims of the course, themes, topics, content, tutorials, materials, extra-classes, presentations, practicals, assignments, teaching approaches and assessments.

The next chapter concludes the study and makes recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this chapter is to conclude the study and to make recommendations. Conclusions drawn and recommendations made will emanate from the findings of the study.

#### **5.2 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY**

Conclusions of this study mainly consist of needs derived from Deficiency Analysis and Means Analysis (cf. Chapter 2).

##### **5.2.1 Deficiency Analysis**

Business English students need teaching skills to be improved and concepts to be divided into units to help them understand what they were being taught. Students need to practise how to link a chapter taught to a real life situation.

More detailed lecture slides need to be provided. Some explanation of simple concepts was also important as lecturers had to make students understand the chapters they taught. Thus, lecturers need to ask easy and understandable questions.

More resources for the course needed to be provided and lecturers needed to come up with events as a way of engaging students.

Lecturers indicated that students need to know how to communicate using English because this language is important in the corporate world. So students need language skills.

The course need to equip students with understanding of the use of English language in business and communication. It should also needed to help to close the communication gap between students from private and public schools. Students needed to be equipped with listening skills and be made to understand and read English words (see Table 2).

They needed to be taught writing skills so that they could be able to write documents such as memos and letters, handle themselves in interviews and conduct interviews and meetings. They needed to be taught communication channels in businesses such



as hierarchy and flow of communication. They need communication skills in order to communicate well in a business environment.

Outcomes of the BE course need to be included that the students should learn how to communicate orally in context and to introduce report writing. They need to be taught how to run meetings in business environments and be able to write various business documents.

The majority of lecturers (4) did not use presentations in their teaching at all. Students need to learn how to run business meetings and are expected to be able to entertain clients. They also need to be taught how to write effective business reports and use the English language effectively for social purposes.

The content of BE students need to help students analyse sentences and understand syntax. The course content need make them use effective communication skills through formal register. The course need to incorporate the language used in the main commerce courses.

Additional language tasks that the students need to do include drama or poetry in English, and everything that is covered in BE and Business Information System. Students need to be able to communicate effectively, and understand and analyse situations in business. Oral presentations need to be added to the course content.

All the lecturers (5) concurred that the students got annual assessment schedules during their first meeting. The frequency of assessment ranged from 3 to 9 in one semester. They assess 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9 times.

The students were penalised for language errors when being assessed. The year mark/examination mark ratio for 3 courses is 50/50, 1 course, 60/40% and another one (1) 60/40% as well as 50/50%.

### **5.2.2 Means Analysis**

Students needed tutorials to help them understand the BE course content. They also need mentorship sessions, extra classes, videos to watch and weekly concept tests.

Sufficient materials are needed for study purposes. There should be more teaching and learning resources and slides on Blackboard. As students do not have textbooks, these should be sent to students in time.

Since students use different reference books, materials should be provided at the beginning of the semester in order for them to prepare in general. Slides should be provided before they could attend lectures to prepare in advance.

The duration of lectures need to be increased, and lecturers need to engage the students during the lectures. More reading and writing activities are necessary. As a result, students need to be given homework. More class activities and trialling of previous question papers should also be included in the activities.

More presentations needed to be made in class to encourage students' participation. Every student should be allowed to present. Lecturers need ensure that there are more practical activities such as presentations in the course. Additional assignments, which are not part of the semester marks, should be written weekly (see Table 5).

Students needed to be allowed to work in smaller groups while lecturers monitor them. They also need to be assisted with applications for internships. An attendance register should be kept in every class. However, they need to be well-disciplined and be encouraged to take the course seriously. They also need to be taught interview proceedings and how to draft a CV.

The classes taught were large in that the total number of the students taught in each class were 180, 185, 186, 220 and 450. Four of the lecturers taught one course each and only 1 course was taught by 2 lecturers.

Lecturers did not agree on the issue of relevant materials in the library. Three did not agree that there were relevant materials available in the library while 2 agreed that relevant materials were available in the library.

Lecturers (5) did not switch to another language to help students understand as they teach content.

Three (3) lecturers did not advise students to try online English language tests to improve their English skills, while 2 sometimes advised the students to try online English language tests to improve their English skills.

The majority of the lecturers (4) did not sometimes consult BE lecturers when confronted with language challenges in class.

All lecturers had never observed any BE class. However, more than half the number of lecturers (3) agreed that the students showed signs of change in the way they use English after taking the course. However, 1 lecturer had never observed signs of change and another 1 mentioned that it was not easy to measure the signs of language use.

Although the lecturers concurred that the BE course could be offered at 1<sup>st</sup> year level, 1 of them suggested that it could be offered across all levels. All of them stated that the course is useful to the students in the School of Accountancy, and that they would recommend it to colleagues in the school.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The UL BE could be developed in line with needs identified in this study; an offline NA could be conducted to make up for the identified gaps.

BE students could be taught in smaller groups in line with the learner-centred ESP approach. That would imply more staff for BE. Thus, UL could invest in developing relevant human capital for BE.

A survey of authentic BE materials could be conducted to investigate whether discipline-specific materials could be available through the UL library.

A faculty-wide NA could be conducted among the students as well as content lecturers who teach BE students.

The UL BE PSA could be carried among students and lecturers leading to TSA in context.

DA, together with MA, could be conducted for UL BE students and lecturers.

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## **7. APPENDICES**

**7.1 APPENDIX A:** Questionnaire for BE Students

**7.2 APPENDIX B:** Interviews with BE Students' Content Lecturers

**7.3 APPENDIX C:** Ethical clearance Certificate (TREC)

**7.4 APPENDIX D:** Approval from the University of Limpopo registrar

**7.5 APPENDIX E:** Approval from the School of Accountancy

**7.6 APPENDIX F:** Students consent form

**7.7 APPENDIX G:** Lecturers consent form

## 7.1 APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BUSINESS ENGLISH STUDENTS

This questionnaire is part of a needs analysis for a Business English (BE) course. Please provide information in Sections A, B, C and D. Write down your responses in the spaces provided.

#### Section A: Background Information

1. Degree registered for: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Department: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Year registered at UL: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Current level of study: \_\_\_\_\_
5. What kind of school did you attend? (Government or Private?) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Matric symbol/NSC level: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section B: Business English Skills and Tasks

##### 1. Listening

1.1 List the listening activities done in your BE class.

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1.2 Suggest additional listening activities that you would like to do in BE.

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1.3 Please explain your answer in 1.2

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**2. Speaking**

2.1 Mention the speaking tasks performed in BE.

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2.2 Give examples of speaking tasks you would like to do in BE.

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2.3 Please provide an explanation for 2.2

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### 3. Reading

3.1 List that reading activities that you participated in in BE.

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3.2 Mention the reading activities that you would like to engage in in your BE class.

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3.3 Kindly explain your response in 3.2

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#### 4. Writing

4.1 Mention the writing activities that you have taken part in BE.

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4.2 Suggest the writing tasks that you would like to perform in BE.

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4.3 Provide an explanation for 4.2

**Section C: Identifying challenges pertaining to using English in Commerce**

Mention some of the challenges you have experienced in your Commerce content courses.

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**Section D: Improvements to the BE course**

How can your BE course be improved?

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Thank you for your participation.



## **7.2 APPENDIX B**

### **INTERVIEWS WITH CONTENT LECTURERS OF STUDENTS OF BUSINESS ENGLISH**

This interview is part of a needs analysis of the UL Business English (BE) course. The information you provide is key to identifying the BE needs of your students.

#### **1. Background Information**

- 1.1 What is your highest academic qualification?
- 1.2 What is your content subject/discipline?
- 1.3 How many years have you been teaching the subject?
- 1.4 What levels do you teach?

#### **2. Aim and Objectives**

- 2.1 In your opinion, what should the aim of teaching the BE course be?
- 2.2 What should the outcomes of the course be?

#### **3. Themes and Topics**

- 3.1 Mention the module themes that you teach your BE students.
- 3.2 List the module topics that you teach your BE students.

#### **4. Teaching materials**

- 4.1 Mention the teaching materials you use for BE students
- 4.2 Do you have different materials for both semesters? Please explain.

#### **5. BE content**

- 5.1 Do students give oral presentations in class? Give examples.
- 5.2 Do students have to participate in business meetings?
- 5.3 Do students sometimes entertain clients?
- 5.4 Do students need to be able to write effective business reports?
- 5.5 Do students need to use the language effectively for social purposes?
- 5.6 What other language aspects would you propose for the BE content?

5.7 Do students participate in conferences? Give examples.

5.8 What additional English language tasks would you like your students to do in the BE course?

## **6. Resource(s)**

6.1 What is the total number of students in your class?

6.2 What is the total number of lecturers teaching you course/module?

6.3 Is the teaching venue conducive?

6.4 Are relevant materials available in the library?

## **7. Teaching Approach**

7.1 Do you sometimes switch to another language as you teach content to help students understand you? Explain this further.

7.2 Do you sometimes advise the students to try online English language tests to improve their English skills? If yes, expatiate on this.

7.3 Do you sometimes consult a BE lecturer when confronted with language challenges in class? Why?

## **8. Possible interaction with students**

8.1 Have you ever observed a Business English class?

8.2 If yes, what did you observe?

8.3 Please list the most important things that you have observed in a BE class.

8.4 Were there any signs of change in the way students use English after taking BE classes?

## **9. Assessment**

9.1 Do students get an annual assessment schedule during their first meeting?

9.2 How often do you assess students in a semester?

9.3 Do you penalise students for language errors when assessing them?

9.4 What is your year/examination mark ratio?

## **10. Course Value**

10.1 At what level of study would you like students to start attending a BE course?

10.2 Do you think the BE course is useful to students in the school?

10.3 Would you recommend BE to colleagues in the school?

Thank you for participating.

## 7.3 APPENDIX C



**University of Limpopo**  
Department of Research Administration and Development  
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa  
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: Anastasia.Ngoebe@ul.ac.za

**TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS  
COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**MEETING:** 05 July 2018

**PROJECT NUMBER:** TREC/126/2018: PG

**PROJECT:**

**Title:** Analysing language needs of University of Limpopo Business English students: An exploratory study.

**Researcher:** TV Meso

**Supervisor:** Dr LJ Ngoepe

**Co-Supervisors:** N/A

**School:** Languages and Communication Studies

**Degree:** MA in English Studies

  
**PROF. TAB MASHEGO**  
**CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

**Note:**

- i) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.
- ii) The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.  
PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

## 7.4 APPENDIX D



**University of Limpopo  
Office of the Registrar**

Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa  
Tel: (015) 268 2407, Fax: (015) 268 3048, Email: [Office.Registrar@ul.ac.za](mailto:Office.Registrar@ul.ac.za)

12 September 2018

Mr. TV Meso

Email: [Victor.Meso@ul.ac.za](mailto:Victor.Meso@ul.ac.za)

Dear Mr. Meso,

**GATEKEEPER PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

**TITLE: ANALYSING LANGUAGE NEEDS OF UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO BUSINESS ENGLISH STUDENTS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

**SUPERVISOR: Dr. LJ Ngoepe**  
**CO-SUPERVISOR: n/a**  
**SCHOOL: Languages and Communication Studies**  
**DEGREE: MA in English Studies**

Kindly be informed that Gatekeeper permission is granted to you to conduct research at the University of Limpopo entitled: **“Analysing language needs of University of Limpopo Business English students: an exploratory study”**.

Kind regards,

**PROF. JK MASHA**  
**ACTING UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR**

Cc. Prof. RN Madadzhe, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning  
Mr. T Mabila, Acting Director: Research Development and Administration  
Prof. TAB Mashego – Chairperson: Research and Ethics Committee  
Ms. N Monene – Office Manager: Research Development and Administration

## 7.5 APPENDIX E



### University of Limpopo

Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa

Tel: (015) 268 2771, Fax: (015) 268 3526, Email: [blessy.sekome@ul.ac.za](mailto:blessy.sekome@ul.ac.za)

### Office of the Director of School of Accountancy

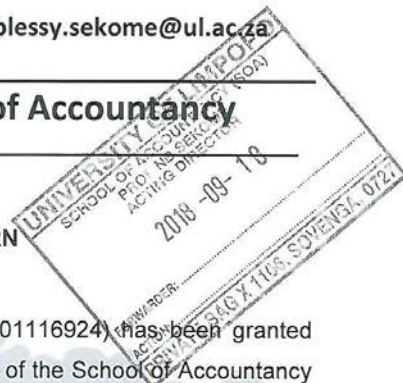
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that Victor Meso (Student Number: 201116924) has been granted permission to collect data from the students and lecturers of the School of Accountancy in line with his research topic for Masters in English Studies, within the confines of the approval by the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) dated 05 July 2018 (Ref. TREC/126/2018: PG).

For any further queries in this regard, kindly contact the writer hereof.

Kind regards,

N.B. Sekome (Prof.)  
Acting Director  
School of Accountancy



## 7.6 APPENDIX F

### PARTICIPANTS CONSENT FORM

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby agree to participate in a Master's study that focuses on exploring the language needs of Business English students.

The purpose of the study was fully explained to me and I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am not forced to participate. Furthermore, I understand that I can withdraw from participating in this study at any time. I also understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential.

I declare that this research project is not necessarily going to benefit me personally.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 7.7 APPENDIX G

### PARTICIPANTS CONSENT LETTER

School of Languages and Communication Studie

University of Limpopo

Private X1106

Sovenga

0727

Date: 28/08/18

Dear Participant

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this exploratory study which focuses on the language needs of Business English students. This study aims to analyse language needs of the University of Limpopo business English students.

You are kindly requested to answer all questions as honesty as you can. Your responses will remain strictly confidential. You are free to answer any question. Participation is voluntary and you are therefore free to withdraw from this study at any time.

Thank you for your cooperation.

  
\_\_\_\_\_

T.V Meso (Masters Student)

28/08/18

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Dr L. J Ngoepe (Supervisor)

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: