

Designing an ESP Course for Medical learners Based on Need Analysis

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to conduct a need analysis for the first-year medical students at the University of Kordofan. The learners need English language during their study at the Faculty of Medicine and for their future careers. Considering the learners' needs will make learning easier and help teachers to teach effectively. The study used a quantitative and qualitative method, since the data are collected via means of two instruments, a questionnaire for the students, and an interview with the teachers. The sample of the study from which subjects were drawn can be divided into two categories; students from the Faculty of Medicine and other medical specializations (80 students) and teachers who teach at this college (10 teachers). The data obtained was analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The findings showed that medical students and other medical specializations at the University of Kordofan are not satisfied with the current English language course and it does not meet their language needs, the teaching staff were agreed that the current English syllabus does not cope sufficiently with the students' medical English needs and the ESP programme is suitable for them. So, the study also found out that English language is important for them in their university studies and in their future careers, English language courses at the Faculty of Medicine should be relevant to medicine. The study is concluded with a set of recommendations including: there is strong need to have a high level of English language proficiency to perform medical job effectively, also. The researcher recommends that further research should be conducted to design an ESP programme based on this needs analysis, Medical students need to be updated to cope with the current changes in the field of medicine. Students should consult references and search their way to be autonomous learners English courses in Faculties of Medicine should focus on the major English language skills and give priority to communication skills.

Keywords: need analysis, esp course, means analysis, strategy analysis

1. Introduction

Considering the rapidly changing environment of modern society and the ever increasing differences in backgrounds, experience, learning styles and needs of the students studying at universities, English teachers should be strongly encouraged to take apart of these changing needs of their students and adapt their teaching accordingly. However, by taking into account the learners' experience, talents, needs and learning styles, the learners' intrinsic motivation can thus be triggered and heightened. A learner-centered curriculum is described as a collaborative effort between teachers and learners (Nunan, 1988). Therefore, if EFL teachers can concentrate on some of the specific skills that students feel are needed, it can lead to greater motivation and successful learning. On the other hand, teaching materials determine the content of the course and affect teaching methods, students' motivation, vocabulary and language functions taught. That is to say, the evaluation of teaching materials allows the teacher to constantly improve the ESP course, to better understand the English language needs of university students. Hutchinson and Waters (1992)^[6] state that, learners know exactly why they are learning a language and it is the awareness of a need that ESP distinguishes for. Due to the acceptance of English in the twentieth century as international language of science and medicine, a considerable body of medical research and literature has been produced in English. This dominance of English in medical accounts paves the way for emergence of a new ESP branch (English for Specific Purposes) as EMP (English for Medical Purposes). The basic insight into this

trend is to offer course design, content and materials by being responsive to target language learners' own agenda. Therefore, it is necessary to find out first what is specifically appropriate, available and applicable for the target situation and target language learners in terms of their needs.

1.1 Differences between general English courses and ESP courses

EGP (English for general purposes) is a language that we use in our daily life for communication in real life situation. However, it concentrates on the four-language skills; listening, reading, writing, and speaking and it uses teacher-centered approach. There is no specific needs for the students just to pass exams. While ESP programme uses needs analysis to determine which skills are needed by the learners, then the syllabus is designed accordingly. ESP is used in specific teaching situations and in a different methodology from General English. General English stresses on grammar and vocabulary, so the students' need is just to pass the exams. However, Hutchinson and Waters (1987:53) state that "What distinguishes ESP from General English is not the existence of a need as such, but rather an awareness of the need". Then they mention the following characteristics of ESP:

- a. ESP follows time specific
- b. ESP is task specific
- c. ESP develops students' communicative competence
- d. ESP has language based objectives
- e. In this course, learners want to achieve 'real world' objectives requiring specific linguistic competences

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) ^[1]. Suggest that the presentation of the whole ELT should be on a continuum

that runs from General English courses to very specific ESP courses as illustrated in the following table:

Table 1: Continuum of ELT Course Types General Specific

Position 1	Position 2	Position 3	Position 4	Position 5
English for Beginners	Intermediate to advance EGP courses with a focus on a Particular skills	EGAP / EGBP Courses based on common-core language and skills not related to a specific discipline or profession	Courses for broad disciplinary or professional areas (e.g. report wrting for scientists and engineers, medical, legal English, negotiating skills for business English)	1- An academic support course related to a particular academic course. 2- One-to-one work with business people.

It is clearly seen that position 2-3 can decide whether the course be classified as ESP or not. At position 4, the course is specified according to skills, so the students can choose their suitable texts dealing with their specific profession. For example, doctors can read medical journals, others can read oral skills to talk with their patients etc. At position 5, the course becomes specific depending on the specific groups` needs.

1.2 ESP Teachers vs GE Teachers

(Strevens 1988 ^[17], cited in Esteban & Martos 2002), argues that ESP practitioners are only GE teachers been involved in special training courses to teach English for specific purposes to specific groups of learners. In the same vein, Antony (1997) adds that ESP teachers can be described as GE teachers using an ESP approach, basing their syllabi on needs analysis and their own knowledge of using English in specific context. However, ESP teachers teach English according to their students` needs to prepare them for their future careers. Also, they design courses and provide suitable materials based on the content materials presented by the professors. On the other hand, GE teachers` role is limited in the classroom in teaching lectures, but most researchers think that ESP teachers and GE teachers are no longer the same. William (2010) explains that GE teacher prepares only for the lessons and evaluation, this means they spend less effort than ESP teachers do. Savignon (1987) ^[16] adds that GE teachers provide their learners only with language features that are grammar, allophones, and morphemes, while ESP teachers teach communicative competence. In conclusion, there is no title for ESP/GE teacher, but teachers teach different types of English according to the learners` needs.

1.3 Needs Analysis in ESP Setting

Revieve (1996:5) defines needs analysis as "A gap between ideal that is both acknowledged community values potentially amenable to change". West (1994:27) states that the term "analysis of needs" first appeared in the 1920`s in the West Bengal, a province of India when Michael West introduced the concept of "needs" to cover what learners will be required to do with the foreign language in the target situation and how learners might best master the language during the learning period. Robinson (1991:7) ^[14] illustrates that "needs analysis is generally regarded as critical to ESP, although ESP is by no means the only educational enterprise which makes use of it". Stevens (1980) suggests that needs analysis is a necessary first step for specific purposes language teaching; it is more connected with the nature of scientific discourse. Hutchinson and Waters (1987:53)

Mention that "any language course should be based on needs analysis". Hamp-Lyons (2001:11) opines that needs analysis is fundamental components of an ESP/EAP approach in term of course design. Dudley-Evans & St Jon (1998) define needs analysis as "the process of establishing the what and how of a course". They argue as, "needs analysis is neither unique to language teaching-needs assessment, for example, is the basis of training programs and aid-development programs-nor, within language training, is it unique to LSP (Language for Special Purposes) and thus to ESP" (ibid). Dudley-Evans and St Johns (1998) ^[1]. Illustrate that the main sources for needs analysis are the learners, people working or studying in the field, ex-students, documents relevant to the field, clients, employers, colleagues and ESP research in the field. The main instruments for conducting a needs analysis study are questionnaires, analysis of authentic spoken and written texts, discussions, structured interviews, observations and assessments. (ibid). It is important to carry out a needs analysis before designing an ESP syllabus, a course, selecting a teaching approach and other relevant processes that require needs analysis. It can be said that needs analysis is the cornerstone in the ESP/EAP context, because it determines the aspects of language that are crucial for a particular area of teaching. Thus, all scholars agreed that needs analysis is essential in designing or developing any ESP course in order to meet the students' needs.

1.4 Learning Situation Analysis (LSA)

LSA refers to subjective, felt and process-oriented needs and it also directs what learners want to learn. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998:124) ^[1] illustrate that:

"LSA means effective ways of learning the skills and language. According to them, LSA also refers to why do learners want to learn. Subjective and felt needs are derived from insiders and correspond to cognitive and effective factors. Thus 'to feel confident' is a subjective/felt need. Process-oriented needs originate from the learning situation".

The following are statements developed by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998:124) under the headings TSA (Target Situation Analysis), LSA (Learning Situation Analysis), and PSA (Present Situation Analysis):

- a. I need to see vocabulary written down (LSA-leaning need)
- b. I have occasional meetings with British colleagues (TSA- target need)
- c. I find it difficult to write persuasively (PSA- present need)

d. I pick things up by listening (LSA-learning need)

1.5 Language Audits

Jordan (1997:29) illustrates that "language audits are large-scale research in examining language needs". He suggests that language audits are executed for companies, regions or countries. Pilbean (1979) also suggests the similar views on language audits, so that language audits are used to plot the role played by foreign language in a commercial or industrial enterprise. (Pilbean 1979, cited in Robinson 1991) ^[14] Explains that:

"Language Audits provide data about the current situation of language needs in the sector and to a certain extent; language audits do help lead the government to develop an integrated policy or strategy which would take months or years to implement".

West (1994) also explains that language audits should not be of great concern to most ESP/EAP teachers. This because ESP/EAP contexts are small or medium scales in nature, and there is no immediate concern to carry out the language audits.

Eventually, the main role of all these components is to meet the learners' language needs and to develop English language courses. For example, TSA focuses on identifying the learners' needs at the end of a language course, while PSA answers what students are like at the beginning of the course. Whereas, LSA, investigates why students want to learn. Means Analysis concentrates on course design and how it can be implemented and Language Audits are considered as a large scale which applied in industrial or commercial sectors.

1.6 Needs analysis and Course Design

A needs analysis is one of the greatest contributions of ESP to language teaching and it has been its emphasis on careful and extensive in course design. Johns (1991) ^[7] states that "when students become more involved with the course, their attitudes and approach may change. As the needs analysis is of great significance for the course, teaching materials, teaching and learning should be an ongoing process".

Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985:196) add that needs analysis aims to design ESP courses based on detailed empirical analysis of language situations in actual language use. Furthermore, it is important to explain the place that a needs analysis occupies in the whole process of ESP teaching and learning and the role it plays as an important means of investigation and data gathering (ibid). Strevens (1977:145) develops this principle, explaining that needs analysis finds its reason for being in the history of ESP, particularly in its development. ESP is said to be a "reaction against conventional foreign language instruction".

(Brindley 1989, cited in Robinson 1991) ^[14] Speaks about two types:

"objective and subjective needs. Objective needs include all factual information about the learner, (i.e. language proficiency, language difficulties, and the use of language in the real life). While, subjective needs include cognitive and affective needs of the learner in language learning, such as confidence, attitudes, and expectations. Robinson (1991) ^[14]

mentions perceived (prescribed) and felt needs. In addition, Long (2005) mentions four reasons for performing needs analysis:

- a. To determine the relevance of the material to the learners' situation.
- b. To justify the materials in terms of relevance for all parties concerned (learner, teacher, administration, parents).
- c. To account for differences in learner needs and styles.
- d. To create a syllabus that will meet the needs of the learners

Fully within the context of the situation. Jordan (1997) divides the needs analysis into:

- a. deficiency analysis (it is concerned with the necessities the learner lacks)
- b. strategy analysis (seeks to establish the learners' preferences in terms of learning styles and strategies, or teaching methods).
- c. Means analysis (examines the constraints and local situation to come up with ways of implementing the language course)".

According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) ^[1], needs analysis encompasses a detailed description of learners needs: the tasks and activities the learners are/will be using English for, personal information about learners, cultural background about the students, their current language skills, their perceived language needs, etc (ibid). Clear understanding of goals and objectives will help the teacher ascertain what materials to teach, and when and how they should be taught. The course objectives, according to Ellis and Johnson (1994:221), are the goals of a course in English as indicated by the needs analysis and expressed in terms of what the learner should be able to do.

It can be said that needs analysis establishes what and how of the course, therefore, it is essential while designing the course and setting the goals and objectives.

1.7 Using Authentic Materials in ESP Courses

Carter and Nunan (2001) explain that "With the advent of communicative language teaching there appeared a change in focus from English as a system to be studied to English as a means of communication in syllabus design. Hence, content selection was done based on the learners' communicative needs".

According to Tarnopolsky (2009) ESP is designed to build up students' skill in order to enable them to communicate in English language and the materials that are included are basically chosen based on the learners' area of professional expertise. Another teaching/learning process corresponding to ESP and advocating the use of authentic materials is content-based instruction. This approach, (ibid) is primarily based on four principles. The first principal is ensuring the systematic selection of the content of the course in a way to develop learners' professional knowledge. The second criterion is "ensuring professional authenticity of learning materials". The features of such materials include rendering professional content, information, having been prepared by native speakers who are professionals in the field and having been prepared for native speakers who are also professional in the area of the content. Accordingly, materials which are may be used are genuine texts. The third

feature of content-based teaching is the "focal principal", which is the authenticity of professionally-related learning activities in ESP classes.

As is noted by Palermo (2003), ESP is fundamentally based on two teaching paradigms, namely pragmatic and cognitive. Under pragmatic paradigm the focus is on language in use and emphasis is put on contextualized teaching, using authentic materials, and attention to sociolinguistic aspects of interaction. On the other hand,

(ibid) cognitive teaching paradigm puts emphasis on students' responsibility for their own progress and the insertion of creative tasks.

From Belcher's (2004) point of view, ESP is an attempt to help learners accomplish their academic and occupational needs and goals. Farhady (2005:10) [2], proposes a list of theoretical underpinnings which are inherent in ESP.

The following figure illustrates parameters for an ESP course:

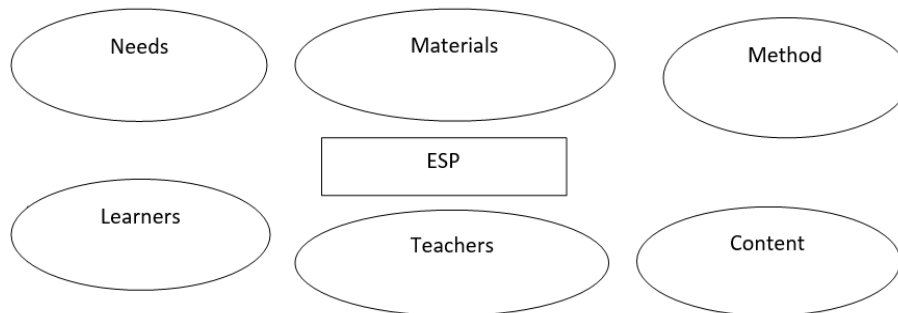


Fig 1: Parameters for ESP Course

In preparing and choosing materials for ESP learners, Palermo (2003), introduces different challenges that an ESP instructor may face. These include the authenticity, simulation of real situations, flexibility on the part of topics used, and relevance to the discipline they aim to destine, (ibid). She further provides a list of possible sources of materials for designing ESP courses. One of the sources that may be used is English for General Purposes course materials. For this purpose, she claims that updated manuals which include sections specified for business, science, technology, health and education may be used. This source is recommended by her particularly for the ESP learners whose proficiency level is low and who experience the course for the first time. The next source is the one which is specifically designed for ESP. This source is twofold; either publication issued by publishing houses or those designed by teachers and published by universities (ibid, 2). A third source is the use of references. By this she means the use of dictionaries and grammar reference books or glossaries which are designed for different areas of knowledge. A further source is, as she calls authentic materials, which have no limit. Authentic materials include "instruction leaflets, journals, manuals, advertisements, internet links, inscription forms, demonstration videos, statics, and job offers" (ibid: 193). The last source of materials is the ones "from the students" which includes giving more weight to the learners' interest and participation and changing the role of the instructor to collaborator which will both enhance learners' involvement and teaching relevance.

Horwitz (2008) [5], concerning EAP/ESP points out that in such specialized courses, learners have a range of needs and purposes and those play an important part in preparing materials. As the course name suggests there always needs to be a purpose. Farhady (1995) [2], compared with General English courses that no specific need or purpose is defined. One of the needs and purposes in such courses is to act properly in real-world situations.

Using authentic materials in ESP courses enable students to participate effectively in learning the English language Especially with cognitive teaching paradigm.

Harding (2007:10) [3], emphasizing the use of authentic materials provides some guidelines for ESP teachers for the approach they need to take and some dos and don'ts as follows:

- Think about what's needed.
- Understand the nature of your students' subject area or vocation.
- Spend time working out their language needs in relation to the subject.
- Use contexts, texts, and situations from the students' subject area.
- Exploit authentic materials that the students use in their specialist or vocation.
- Make the tasks authentic as well as the texts.
- Motivate the students with variety, relevance and fun.
- Try to take the classroom into the real world that the students inhabit, and bring their real world into the classroom.

1.8 Teaching Materials Evaluation

In a teaching/learning situation, both teaching and learning materials are used, learning materials include the materials a student wishes to learn. These might be completely different materials than those provided by a teacher. A student can attend additional English classes or study individually, using his own learning materials the teacher is unaware of. Teaching materials are all materials used in the teaching process, respectively. These might include textbooks, supplementary materials a teacher offers his/her students, online materials, tailor-made materials, etc.

Cunnings worth (1995) and Ellis (1997), propose three types of materials evaluation:

1. Predictive or peruse evaluation, in which the future or potential performance of a textbook is examined.

2. In-use evaluation, designed to examine the currently used textbook.
3. Retrospective or post-use evaluation, enabling the improvement of the given

Text book for subsequent use.

Statement (1): The students are expected to use the instructions of the medical equipment in English language successfully.

Table 2: Using the instructions of the medical equipment

Options	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	2	2.5
Neutral	7	8.8
Agree	37	46.2
Strongly agree	34	42.5
Total	80	100.0

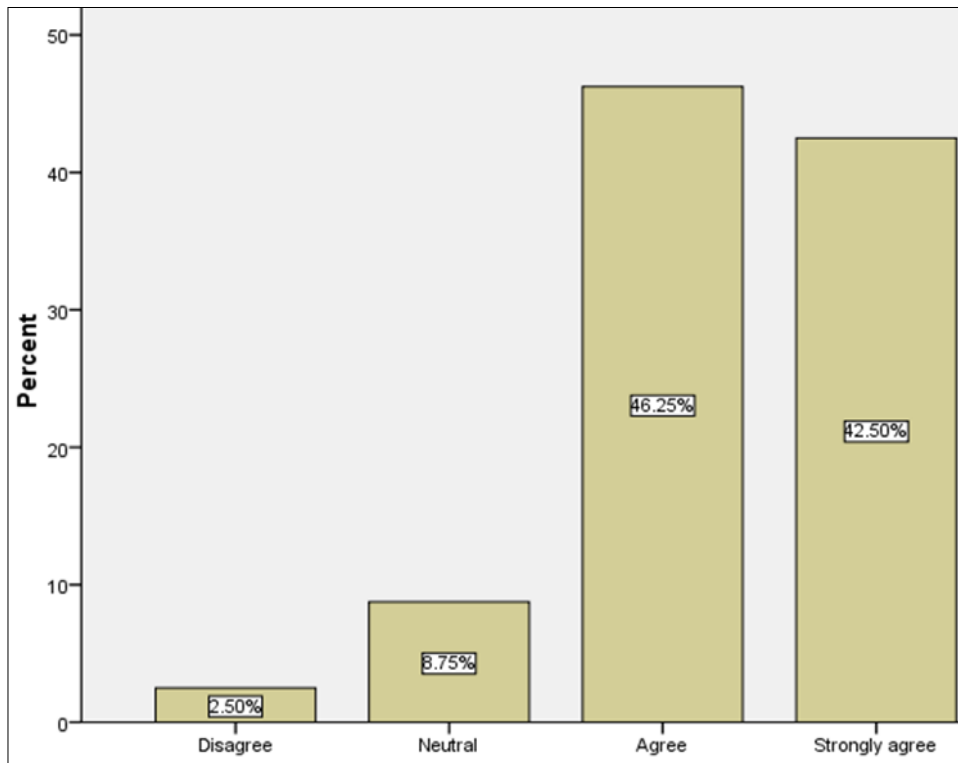


Fig 2: Using the instructions of the medical equipment

The statistical results in the above table and figure (4.12) indicate that there were (71) students in the study’s sample with percentage of (88.7%) agree and strongly agree with the statement “The students are expected to use the instructions of the medical equipment in English language successfully”. There were (7) students with percentage of (8.8%) neutral with the statement, and (2) of students with

percentage (2.5%) disagree with statement. This result indicated that the students are expected to use the instructions of the medical equipment in English language successfully.

Statement (2): Medical students will be expected to participate actively in seminars or any activities in English language.

Table 3: Using English language in seminars or any activities

Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	1.2
Disagree	2	2.5
Neutral	9	11.2
Agree	26	32.5
Strongly agree	42	52.5
Total	80	100.0

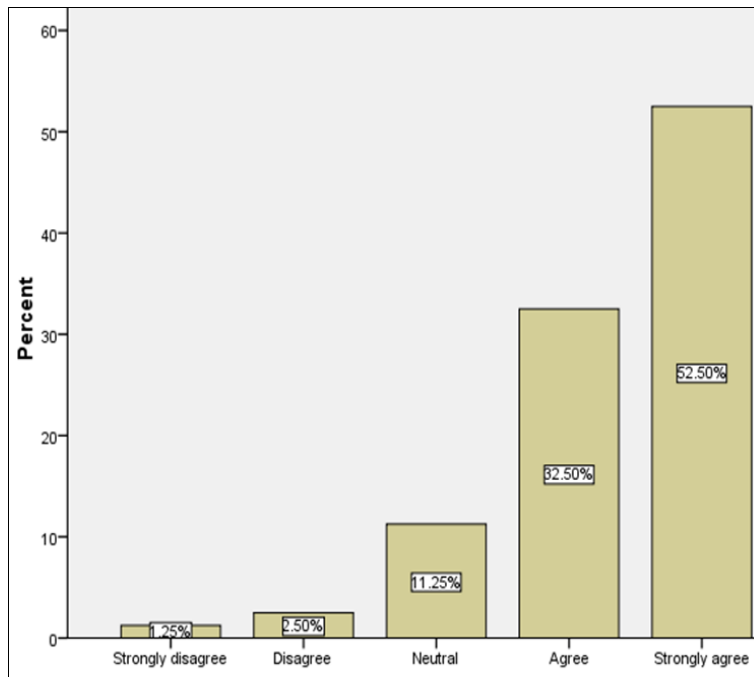


Fig 3: Using English language in seminars or any activities

According to statistical results in the above table and figure (4.13), there were (68) of the students in the study’s sample with percentage of (85%) agree and strongly agree with the statement “Medical students will be expected to participate actively in seminars or any activities in English language”. There as, (9) students with percentage of (11.2%) neutral with the statement, and (3) of students with percentage (3.7%)

Disagree and strongly disagree with statement. This result has been proved that medical students will be expected to participate actively in seminars or any activities in English language.

Statement (3): It is important to have a high level of English language proficiency to perform your medical job effectively.

Table 4: English language proficiency to perform medical job effectively

Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	2	2.5
Disagree	4	5.0
Neutral	7	8.8
Agree	27	33.8
Strongly agree	40	50.0
Total	80	100.0

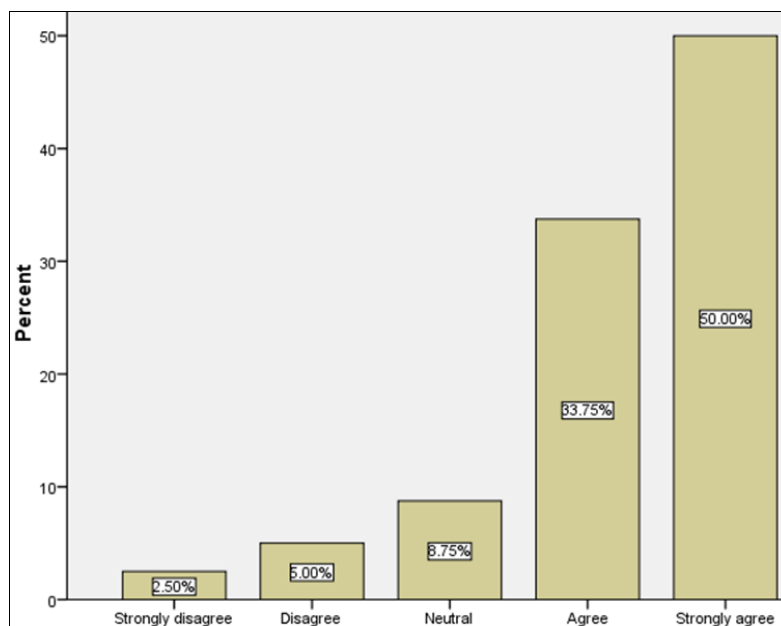


Fig 4: English language proficiency to perform medical job effectively

With reference to the above table and figure (4.14) that, there were (67) students in the study's sample with percentage of (83.8%) agree and strongly agree with the statement "It is important to have a high level of English language proficiency to perform your medical job effectively". There were (7) students with percentage of (8.8%) neutral with the statement, and (6) of students with percentage (7.5%) disagree and strongly disagree with statement. This indicated that it is important to have a high level of English language proficiency to perform your medical job effectively.

Discussion

The findings showed that Medical students expect to participate actively in seminars or any activities related to medicine, if they have a high level of English language proficiency and writing medical research papers needs a good command of English language. Therefore, most of the learners agree that ESP is important to keep them updated with modern innovations in their field and most of the students do not think that GE can meet their medical English language needs. So, the current English syllabus does not cope sufficiently with the medical Students needs. Also the findings show that ESP courses are useful for medical students to cope with the current changes in the field of medicine.

The current research recommends the need of ESP courses for all Faculties of Medicine in the Sudanese Universities after conducting needs analysis and needs analysis should be done at all medical colleges in the Sudan before designing any English language course to know the student's language needs.

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