Assessment of the needs in Communication Skills[2] Courses in Tanzanian Universities

Zelda Elisifa
Zelda.elisifa@ouit.ac.tz
The Open University of Tanzania

ABSTRACT

The study sought to analyse the needs of university students in Tanzania in Communication Skills Courses. The study involved a total of 315 students from two public and two private universities who were randomly chosen, whereas the respondents were selected via convenience sampling. The sole tool used for collecting data was a questionnaire that consisted of items inquiring whether the respondents would opt for communication skills if it were an optional course. The second part sought their perceived needs of different aspects of language skills areas. The participants were first asked for their consent before filling in the questionnaire. The responses were posted to SPSS software for computation of frequencies of occurrences per each thematic area, and the resulting data were organized into themes and summarized in tables and figures. The findings show that the respondents were divided in their opting for the course, were it optional. The analysis shows that 122 out of 315 (similar to 38.7%) would still opt for the course, while 104 (33%) would not opt for the course; and 89 (28.3%) were not sure. In the area of reading, eye-mapping was rated as highly needed by the majority of students in all universities, while in writing skills referencing and footnote and end-note writing were noted as highly needed mainly by students from public universities. On the whole, there were notable differences between public and private university students in their communication skills needs.

Keywords: *Academic writing, Academic Reading, Communication Skills, Needs Assessments, University Students*

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, literacy has been closely associated with the ability to read and write. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2006, as cited in Adelore and Itasanmi,

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[2] This term 'communication skills' means academic communication via the language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing that involves receiving and presenting ideas effectively and formally in a scholastic university environment.

2016), there are different dimensions to literacy as it often emphasizes the ability to understand and communicate through a written text. However, no universally accepted definition captures all its facets. UNESCO (2008) in Keefe and Copeland (2011) observed that a person is literate if she/he can both read and write a short, simple statement, with understanding, on their daily life. It went further to state that a person is functionally literate when she/he can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for the effective functioning of his/her group and community. Expanding the scope of literacy from the traditional notion of it, UNESCO (n.d.) defines literacy as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential to participate fully in their community and wider society.

According to Scribner (1984), three metaphors are used to describe literacy. These are: i) Literacy as a form of adaptation that emphasizes the survival or pragmatic value inherent in literacy skills acquisition. ii) Literacy is power, which portrays literacy as either the "potent tool" of the elites to keep the masses down or the means for the "poor and politically powerless" to claim their place in society. iii) Literacy is a state of grace, which describes the tendency in society to endow the literate person with special virtues, which serve as an interesting use of literacy to increase culture within a society.

In the field of second language acquisition, conducting a needs analysis is commonly accepted as an indispensable step in curriculum design (Zhu and Flaitz, 2005). Long (2005a: 1) observes that "just as no medical intervention would be prescribed before a thorough diagnosis of what ails the patient, so no language teaching program should be designed without a thorough needs analysis". Similarly, Jasso-Aguilar (2005: 150) has asserted that "language training that does not meet the needs of students is a recipe for failure from the stand point of motivational factors". However, there is not a single universal method that can be used in all situations.

Recent syntheses on methodological issues concerning needs analysis, such as the opening chapters by Long (2005a) on the second language needs analysis and Brown's (2009) thorough discussion, provide researchers with an overall framework. Brown (2009 p. 269) defines

needs analysis or needs assessment as a "systematic collection and analysis of all information necessary for defining a defensible curriculum". He states that a defensible curriculum "satisfies the language and teaching requirements of the students and teachers within the context of a particular institution(s) involved" (p. 269). Moreover, Brown (ibid) specifies that "the information necessary to achieve the defensible curriculum includes all subjective and objective information and any other types of information that turn out to be appropriate in the particular needs analysis" (p. 269 – 271). The question arises, then, on how such relevant information can be systematically collected. According to Long (2005a, 2005b), a crucial feature of a professionally conducted needs assessment is the use of multiple sources and methods, which will enhance the quality and reliability of the data.

In the domains of foreign and second language acquisition, needs analyses have commonly been accepted as a valid starting point for developing syllabuses, courses and curricula. Empirical research has deepened our understanding of the complexity of conducting a needs analysis and has led to new operationalization (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998; West, 1994). Various approaches have been adopted, including target-situation analysis, present-situation analysis, deficiency analysis, strategy analysis (or learning needs assessment), and discourse analysis. The concept of needs has been broken down into rights, necessities, wants and lacks. For some, needs analysis has become something of an "umbrella term" (e.g., Hyland 2006; West 1994), which increases the risk of getting lost in a "confusing plethora of terms" (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998 p. 123). Recent syntheses on methodological issues concerning needs analysis provide researchers with an overall framework. Brown defines needs analysis or needs assessment as a "systematic collection and analysis of all information necessary for defining a defensible curriculum" (Brown 2009: 269). He states that a defensible curriculum "states the language and teaching requirements of the students and teachers within the context of a particular institution(s) involved" (Brown 2009: 269). Moreover, Brown specifies that "the information necessary to achieve the defensible curriculum includes all subjective and objective information and any other types of information that turn out to be appropriate in the particular needs analysis" (p. 269–271).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) differentiate between two types of needs. The first one is target needs, which refer to what students are required to do in the target situation. Target needs can be further divided into three classes. The first class refers to necessities, which means what students have to experience to perform in the target situation. The second class is lacks, which refers to the gap between what students already know and what is needed in the target situation. Finally, wants, which is used to refer to what students feel they need. The second type of needs is the learning needs. This type involves taking into consideration how learners learn. Furthermore, it includes information about learners, reasons for learning the language, and the ESP course time and location.

According to Sikiti (1998 p.1), "communication is a purposeful process of expressing, receiving and understanding messages containing factual information, feelings, ideas and needs by two or more individuals through common symbols". Communication Skills is one of the general courses taught in most tertiary institutions. Asemanyi (2015) adds that the communication skills course is a course that enables students to have knowledge or the ability to use the requisite skills to communicate properly.

The nature of the Communication Skills course appears quite unique from other subjects. Tortor (2006, cited in Asemanyi, 2015) asserts that communication skills is the foundation of language learning from which effective speaking, writing and reading emerge and it is the bedrock of human language learning. One distinctive aspect of communication skills is that it is integrated into nature. This is so because communication skills as a course is one of the prime factors of human expression. It is a practical course and students are expected to practice the skills of communication. The concept of communication skills is technical and students need certain attitudes to grasp these concepts (Tortor, 2006 (cited in Asemanyi, 2015). Thus, communication skills as a course exposes student to conceptual skills like sentence pattern, concord, ambiguity and many others.

According to Asemanyi (2015), the communication skills course includes a range of skills. It includes both oral and written skills. The written skills are note-taking, outlining, subject-verb agreement (concord), spelling, effective paragraph and essay writing and so on. The oral skills include listening skills, reading skills – skimming, scanning and close reading

though these are not the only topics in the Communication Skills course. Therefore, the study of communication skills would be useful to students by enhancing their academic performance and would be of immense help in the job market.

This area of communication skills teaching and its curricular review has been widely studied in different geographical and educational contexts. Tavakol, et al. (2005), for instance, investigated the views and experiences of medical education course planners in Iran with respect to the current status of communication skills training within Iranian medical schools. The data were collected via in-depth interviews with Iranian medical course planners. The findings indicated a deep concern about the lack of communication skills training within the Iranian medical curriculum. Medical students' acquisition and use of communication skills was found to be consistently poor. Bhagat et al. (2019) assessed the need for teaching communication skills to ophthalmology PG students and developed and introduced a module for the same. The study was done at the ophthalmology department of a tertiary hospital, and a validated 8-day CS workshop was conducted for 60 PG students through interactive lectures, observations, video sessions, and role play. Feedback were obtained through narratives, validated Google survey, reflections and verbal method and analysed. Findings indicated that all faculties agreed that CS should be taught to medical students. Statistically significant improvement in CS awareness was noted among students after the workshop. Lack of CS training, work burden, and language were identified as the main barriers to effective communication. All the students were satisfied with the workshop and wanted it to be conducted regularly.

There have also been relevant studies on communication skills in Africa. Mohamed and Nur's (2018) study focused on identifying the teaching assistants' purposes for learning English and discovering the most important skills, language areas, and academic sub-skills they needed. The study also attempted to determine the teaching assistants' proficiency in the English language. Data were collected through a questionnaire and a test. The results revealed that the teaching assistants needed English for their social life and academic purposes so as to communicate with the outside world and to teach their students. The skills that were regarded as most important were writing and speaking. In addition, the findings

showed that the level of proficiency of the participants in the English language was below average in all the language skills.

In South Africa, Boakye and Mai (2016) explored students' reading challenges as an initial step in designing an appropriate reading intervention programme for first-year Sociology students. The aim was to suggest conditions for the production of an effective reading intervention programme by determining the needs of the students in the first-year Sociology class. The researchers used an open-ended questionnaire to explore students' reading challenges. The analysis showed a variety of learner needs and revealed that most of the students had difficulties with reading their first-year Sociology texts. Comprehension was the main challenge, but other specific areas such as vocabulary, length of texts, language, and affective issues such as motivation and interest were also mentioned. The findings show that this cohort of first-year Sociology students had reading challenges that involved cognitive, language and affective issues.

In Nigeria, Ayoola, Olutayo and Banji (2017) surveyed the language and communication skills required for first-year students in a Nigerian university. The survey was done to use the information gathered to revise the use of the English curriculum to conform to the specific needs of first-year students at the university. Data were gathered through observations of the authors, who were experienced English usage instructors, a questionnaire administered to 320 first-year students and unstructured interview sessions with 30 lecturers across academic faculties on the linguistic and communicative skills required by first-year students at the university. The questions asked during data gathering centred on the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The data were analysed, using simple percentage statistics. The findings revealed that colloquial and non-standard forms greatly influenced English usage by Nigerian first-year university students. The results further showed that the linguistic and communicative needs of the present generation of first-year Nigerian university students differed markedly from those of their predecessors.

In Zimbabwe, Garira (2020) conducted a needs assessment as a preliminary study for developing a specific educational intervention, a School Self-Evaluation (SSE) framework for Zimbabwean primary schools. A qualitative research methodology involved eighteen schools,

thirty-six teachers, eighteen school administrators and three Education. Interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data which were analysed through thematic content analysis. Findings indicate that there is no SSE framework for Zimbabwean primary schools and no meaningful SSE takes place. The study concluded that there is a need for an SSE framework for Zimbabwean primary schools if an effective evaluation of education quality is to be realized. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education develop an SSE framework to evaluate education quality in schools for its realisation and improvement.

In Tanzania, Komba (2015) appraised the perceived importance of communication skills courses among Tanzanian university students. A total of 134 undergraduate students, randomly selected from two Tanzanian universities, were involved in this study. The study adopted a case study design to have an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The data were collected through interview schedules and they were analysed using thematic content analysis in which they were coded and classified according to themes generated from the responses. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents perceived communication skills courses as important courses for the acquisition of communication skills needed in academic settings. It is recommended that universities strive to improve the delivery of the courses by ensuring that both human and material resources are adequately available to enable students to benefit more from the courses.

Shishiwa (2016) examined challenges in the teaching of Communication Skills (CS) course in higher education institutions in Tanzania. The study was informed by relativist-interpretivist research paradigm, which is consistent with the qualitative approach and case study method. It involved 55 participants, including students, lecturers, Heads of Departments and Academic Deans from one public and one private university in Tanzania as well as officials from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. The respondents were sampled purposively. The interviews, observations, focus group discussions and document reviews were used to generate data that were analysed mathematically. The key challenges revealed include poor background of the students and lecturers, interference of other languages and lack of appropriate resources. In view of the findings, it is recommended that teaching the CS course should start from the lower levels of education, among others.

Mwakapima (2020) evaluated the efficacy of the methods and strategies used in Communication Skills (CS) course teaching and learning in Tanzania. Specifically, the study identified the methods and strategies used and examined the appropriateness of the same in upgrading students' CS. The study involved 596 respondents, and data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and group discussions. It is indicated that instructors use varied methods, but questions and answers, web browsing, and library research are perceived as the most appropriate. Besides, students also use multiple strategies but group discussions, web browsing, and listening to English conversations are considered the most appropriate. Therefore, instructors are urged to spend some time during students' entry to university to study the incoming students, particularly on how they learn/ behave during the learning process, to accommodate students' learning differences, difficulties, and preferences when selecting teaching methods.

The review of the literature done above has been insightful about the multidimensionality of needs analysis. However, most of these studies are single case studies and focus on single homogenous categories of respondents. The current study is more diverse in involving a number of institutions seeking to compare the needs of university students between public and privately-owned universities. This will not only give a comprehensive picture of the degree of commonalities or lack thereof of communication skills needs but also do justice to the country as a case study rather than individual institutions.

METHODOLOGY
The study is comparative in design, seeking to compare private and public universities. This was aimed to establish whether the kind of university in terms of ownership is a factor variability in needs analysis for communication skills course. In addition, the study adopted a quantitative approach in data handling whereby quantification involved the computation of frequencies and percentages.

The study involved a total of 315 students in four clusters chosen via convenience sampling. The distribution of the respondents is summarized in figure 1 below.
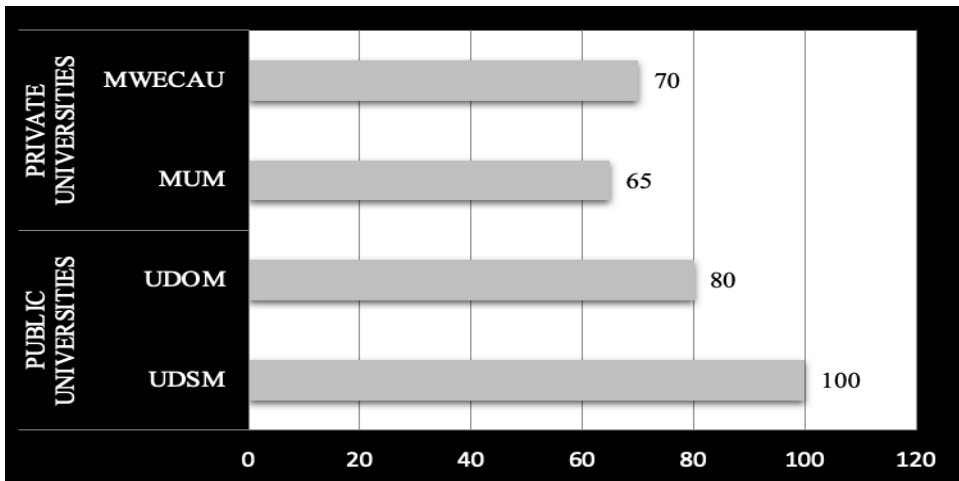
Figure 1: Distribution of respondents
Legend: UDSM = University of Dar Es Salaam
UDOM = University of Dodoma
MWECAU = Mwenge Catholic University
MUM = Muslim University of Morogoro

As detailed in figure 1, the study involved two private and two public universities selected through convenience sampling. The public universities had 180 (57%) of all respondents, whereby the University of Dar es Salaam had the majority 100 (31.7%), while UDOM had 80 (25.4%) of all respondents. Private universities were represented by the Muslim University of Morogoro (MUM), with 65 respondents (20.6%) and Mwenge Catholic University (MWECAU), with 70 (22.2%) respondents. Generally, there were more respondents from public universities than from private ones, reflecting the current enrolment trends where the majority of university students enrolled in public universities.

Questionnaire was the sole tool used for collecting data. It consisted of two parts. The first part had items inquiring whether the respondents could opt for communication skills if it were an optional course. The second part sought the students' perceived needs of different aspects of language reading skills and of writing skills.

The participants were first asked for their consent before filling in the questionnaire. The responses were posted to SPSS software for

computation of frequencies of occurrences per each thematic area and resulting data were organized into themes and summarized in tables and figures.

FINDINGS

The findings are organized into two major themes: the students' choice of the course if it were an optional one and their indication of different needs for the course in the areas of academic reading and writing.

Choice for the course

The respondents were first asked about their choice of course, supposing it was being offered as optional. Their responses were varied, as illustrated in In Figure 2.
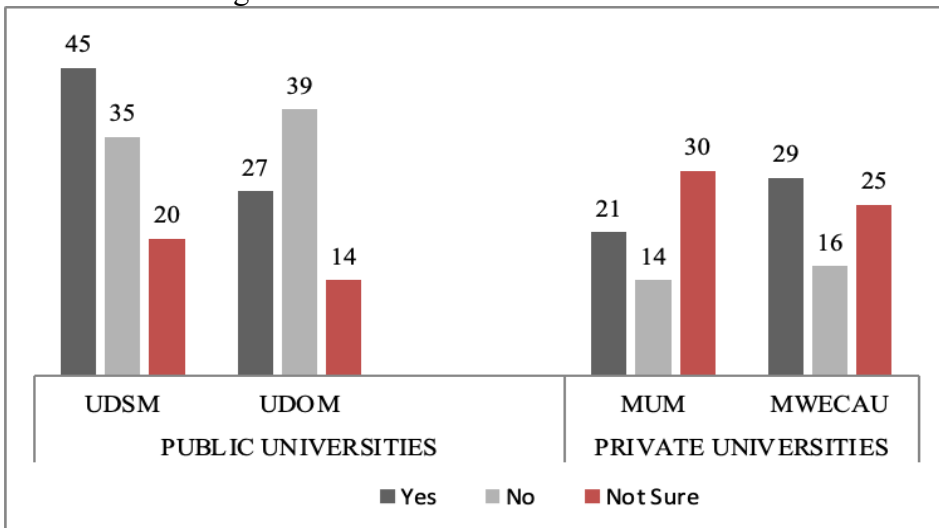

Figure 2: Students' option for the communication skills courses

The data show that UDSM had the highest number of students (45, similar to 45% for its population but 25% of all participants from public universities) that indicated their choice of the course if it were optional. However, UDOM had 39 (48.8% from among its respondents, but 21.7% of respondents from the public universities category) indicating their not opting for the course. This means the majority of the respondents from UDOM were not interested in studying communication skills. A significant number of both public universities also indicated they were not certain about opting for the course.

In the category of private universities, MWECAU had 29 (41.4% of its participants but 21.5% of total participants from private institutions) indicating their choice of the course. Conversely, at MUM, 21 (32.3%) of its all participants but 15.6% of participants from private universities) indicated they would opt for the course. Generally, a significant percentage of students in both private universities indicated their need of the course. However, there was also a significant number (30, equal to 46.2% of its participants but 22.2% of all participants in private universities) who were not sure of whether or not they would opt for the course.

Generally, taken as a whole, a fairly big number of all participants (122 out of 315, similar to 38.7%) as contrasted to 104 (33%) and 89 (28.3%) who said 'no' and 'not sure', respectively, one could thus conclude that the respondents were divided in their opting for the course if it were optional.

Respondents' perceived needs in language skills
The respondents were asked to indicate the perceived extent of their needs in the two language skills: reading and writing. The findings are presented, analysed and discussed in the subheadings below.

Reading skills
According to Martiarini (2018), academic reading requires so much more from readers than other types of reading. He adds that reading for academic purposes is inevitable given the knowledge it provides, whether as a primary source of knowledge or a supporting source for writing academic papers. Undoubtedly, the more effectively one reads, the more thoroughly he or she understands the topic and, of course, the more successful he or she can present his or her ideas through writing. It is from this importance attached to reading in academic contexts that the readers were asked to show the extent to which they engage in reading using three strategies. Their responses are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' perceived needs in reading skills

Reading Skill Strategies		Very Much needed		Needed		Not so much needed		Not Needed at all		Total
		PUB	PRI	PUB	PRI	PUB	PRI	PUB	PRI	
a)	Passage reading and understanding	35	44	46	32	39	41	38	40	315

	(comprehension)								
b)	Reading speed	51	32	33	51	29	32	67	20	315
c)	Eye-mapping and eye-focusing ('reading between the lines')	70	61	21	24	42	36	47	14	315

Legend: PUB=Public Universities
　　　　PRI=Private Universities

Table one above shows that eye mapping and eye focusing was the one in which a significant number (70, which equals 22.2%; and 61, which equals 19.4%) respondents from public and private universities, respectively, indicated that 'it was very much needed. Similarly, 21(6.7%) and 24(7.6%) from public and private universities showed that the skill was needed, as opposed to 47(14.9%) and 14(4.4%) from private and public universities, respectively, who indicated that the skill was not needed at all.

Second in popularity is reading speed which was perceived as highly needed by 83 (26 %) respondents (51 from public universities and 32 from private universities). It was also rated as 'needed' by 33 (10.5%) and 51(16.2%) respondents from public and private universities, respectively. However, 67 (21.3%) from public universities and 20 (6.3%) from private ones) felt that reading speed was not needed at all. Thus, a slight majority of respondents, largely from public universities, indicated that reading speed was not needed.

The third and last skill under academic reading was passage and reading and understanding to which 35 (12.9%) and 46 (17%) respondents and 44 (16.2%) and 30 (9.5%) respondents from public and private universities, respectively, rated as very much needed and needed. However, 38 (14%) and 40 (14.8%) respondents from public and private universities, respectively, felt the skill was not needed at all.

Even though at varying magnitudes, most respondents showed their need for academic reading skills in the three strategies that were given. Elsewhere, Martiarini (2018) investigated reading for academic purposes problems of undergraduate students of Visual Communication Design at the University of Indraprasta PGRI academic year 2016-2017. The findings revealed that the problems faced by most students were taking

brief and relevant notes, understanding the organization of the text, paraphrasing by using own words, and understanding register word. What are referred to as problems are actually needs in the sense of deficits, which are the foci of the current study. Similarly, the study by Wahyono and Puspitasari (2015) explored students' needs for English reading skills among students of English Language Studies and students' difficulties in reading skills for academic purposes (English for research). The participants of the study were 13 graduate students of the English Language Studies of Post-Graduate Program in the third semester. Questionnaire (just as was in the current study) was the sole instrument for data collection. The study showed that most students often had difficulties in reading English texts for academic purposes. They thus showed their want to improve their comprehension level through EAP course and enable to improve their writing performance.

Writing skills

Writing for academic purposes, assert Aydin and Baysan (2018), is a type of writing that begins with determining the problem. This indicates that academic writing needs technical planning and rules. In EFL contexts, according to Al Fadda (2012), there are three problem statements in this study, namely: (1) lack of student confidence in writing, (2) lack of student knowledge about theoretical knowledge and skills in writing, such as creating a writing framework, paraphrasing, and summarizing, and (3) academic writing sometimes expect students to write from expert positions, even when they are not experts in particular topics.

Thus, to empirically establish the extent of the needs of Tanzanian university students in academic writing, a list of 13 writing skills was presented to the respondents for them to present their perceived need for each. Their responses are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents' rating of needs of writing skills

	Kind of Skill	Very Much needed		Needed		Not so much needed		Not Needed at all		Total
		PUB	PRI	PUB	PRI	PUB	PRI	PUB	PRI	
a)	Sentence construction	27	40	19	24	80	14	54	57	315
b)	Styles of writing evidence	60	21	39	47	21	40	60	27	315
c)	Referencing and reference citation	54	51	62	11	26	70	38	3	315
d)	Researching and	12	4	75	66	81	25	12	40	

	planning for a topic									315
e)	Analysing and approaching essay questions	18	27	41	33	38	44	83	31	315
f)	Paragraphing	62	61	40	9	60	11	18	54	315
g)	Coherence and cohesion	90	76	32	12	8	1	30	66	315
h)	Acknowledging sources	42	41	55	16	30	62	53	16	315
i)	Citation and quotation (direct and indirect, brief and extended)	71	63	82	37	11	20	7	24	315
j)	Paraphrasing and avoiding plagiarism	47	49	48	21	21	17	84	28	315
k)	Footnotes and referencing systems	97	39	52	19	19	33	12	44	315
l)	Creating and utilising a bibliography	45	35	63	25	24	25	48	50	315
m)	Proof-reading and editing	21	88	46	18	81	21	32	8	315
n)	Hedging (generalisation, qualification, probability, certainty) and accuracy	12	29	35	13	102	61	31	32	315
o)	Writing style; formal/informal language	70	10	32	75	22	26	56	24	315

Legend: PUB=Public Universities
         PRI=Private Universities

Data in Table 2 show that 5 out of 13 skills were perceived as 'very much needed' by over 50% of all respondents from both categories of public and private universities. The most notable is the footnotes and referencing systems which was rated 'very much needed' by 136 from public universities and 39 from private universities), which is equal to 43% of all respondents, plus another 52(16.5%) and 19 (6%) from two categories who rated it as 'needed', thus making overall total of 207 (65.7%) respondents needing the skill. Elsewhere, a study by Jomaa and Bidin (2017) explored the difficulties in citing and integrating information from academic sources into the literature review chapter of Arab Ph.D. proposals in a Malaysian public university. The findings showed that EFL Arab students lacked both awareness of using citations and advanced skills in academic writing. This underscored the need to enhance EFL

Arab students' skills in citing, evaluating, and writing academically. This could probably be achieved by developing discipline-specific teaching materials that consider the different practices of citation in various academic disciplines.

Similarly, 90 (28.6%) and 76 (24.1%) respondents from public and private universities rated coherence and cohesion as 'very much needed', plus another 32 (10.2%) and 12 (3.8%) from the two categories who rated the skill as 'needed.' Citation and quotation and writing styles skills were each rated as 'very much needed' by 70 (22.2%) of public universities respondents while the former was also felt as a big need by 63 (20%) of respondents from the same category. This is concurrent to a study by Ahmed (2010) that appraised students' cohesion and coherence problems in EFL essay writing. Analysis of findings revealed that students encounter some problems (thus showed need for) in the cohesion and coherence of EFL essay writing. Another similar study by Rahmatallah (2020) examined coherence in English essays written by 46 female Saudi EFL third years at Unaizah College of Sciences and Arts, Qassim University. The results demonstrated that learners are not competent in achieving coherence in their writing tasks.

However, 4 out of 13 skills were rated 'not so much needed' by respondents from public universities. These were: Hedging 102 (32.5%) respondents, proofreading and editing (81, similar to 25.7%), researching and planning for topic (81, similar to 25.7%), and sentence construction 80, equal to 25.4%). As for the private universities category, over 60 (19%) rated three skills as not so much needed. These are referencing and citation (70, equal to 22.2%), acknowledging sources (62, equal to 19.7%) and hedging (61, which equals 19.4%).

There was another category of writing skill that was perceived as not 'needed at all' by the majority of respondents. The most notable was analysis and approaching essay questions which were rated as not needed by 83 (26.3%) and 31 (9.8%) respondents from public and private universities, respectively. Another was paraphrasing and avoiding plagiarism which was felt as not needed by 84 (26.7%) and 28 (8.9%) from public and private institutions, respectively. The third one is styles of writing evidence, to which 60 (8.9%) and 27(9.2%) from the two categories, respectively, rated as not needed at all.

The rating of these academic literacy skills as 'not needed' and 'not needed at all'-irrespective of which university category-is, most likely attributed to either ignorance of what these skill areas mean or misguided self-pride resulting in wrong self-rated proficiency levels. A study by Macias and Zuniga (2006) of action research aimed at helping advanced English students of the Foreign Language Teaching Program (English) at Universidad Surcolombiana refine their academic writing skills. It was established that the skills of process writing — outlining, revising, and editing with peers' and instructor's feedback – as well as the use of sources, content, grammar, coherence, cohesion and feedback, were of paramount importance and thus highly needed. Similarly, a study by Khazaal (2019) sought to work on strategies to improve postgraduates' academic writing skills with summarizing strategy for students in the College of political sciences at A-Nahrain University, Iraq. The findings indicated that the summarizing strategy has a significant effect on postgraduates' learners in academic writing skills, so it was recommended to be applied in the curriculum of the schools and universities.

CONCLUSION

The findings have revealed a high level of heterogeneity in the perceived needs of the students in Tanzanian universities, such that differences between public and private universities are marginal. The findings have also shown that communication skills is generally perceived positively and that the students are in great need of the courses irrespective of the ownership of their respective universities. While universities are autonomous in their curricular designs, saliences of the needs as concurrently agreed with, students call for periodic checks and balances in content harmonization across universities is a necessity.

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