Evaluating Basic English Language Courses in the Foundation Programme at an Educational Institute in the United Arab Emirates: Instructor and Student Perspectives

بقيت مساقات اللغة الإنجليزية الأساسية في البرنامج التأسيسي في معهد تعليمي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة من وجهة نظر المدرسين والطلاب

by

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Abstract

The current research study was designed with the purpose of evaluating the Basic English Language Courses (BELC), in the Foundation Programme (FP) at an educational institute in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Motivated by the apparent shortfall of requisite English language skills of UAE engineering and business graduates, when it comes to securing employment, the current study investigated the suitability of the English courses, and teaching methodologies. This was accomplished by eliciting the opinions of the programme participants regarding the programme’s quality. These outcomes subsequently formed the basis upon which programme improvements were suggested. The BELC comprises three courses: 1) reading; 2) writing; and 3) conversation. Students in their first semester of institute enrolment must undertake these BELC courses, in order to enhance their English language ability.

Due to the investigatory nature of the current study, and its context-specificity, the naturalistic-interpretive approach, along with the social constructivist approach, were employed to generate the epistemological stance, which focuses mainly on human interactions and environments. Adopting such a paradigm will support comprehension and interpretation, of participant experiences in the BELC and FP. The current study’s research design employed a sequential mixed methods case study, analysing and integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. In addition, it utilized an Eclectic Approach as an evaluative model for the purpose of better understanding the research problem.
Participants were composed of three lecturers, who were teaching the BELC courses, and 55 students in their first year at the FP. The current study made use of both qualitative and quantitative instruments of data collection but greater focus was given to qualitative methods because of the social constructivist stance adopted. The data were collected in two principal phases by using a sequential process. The qualitative data were collected in the first phase through semi-structured interviews, students’ journal-diaries, document analysis and the open-ended items on the questionnaires. The quantitative data were collected in the second phase through closed-ended questionnaire items. Data were analysed quantitatively by employing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) descriptive statistics, and qualitatively by utilising exploratory content analysis.

The current study’s results demonstrate that the BELC suffers from significant shortcomings which require attention. Deficiencies pertain to the physical environment of the institute site. These encompass antiquated buildings, a restricted amount of classrooms, shortfalls in pedagogic and didactic materials, resources and facilities, and insufficient library accoutrements.

In accordance with the study’s conclusions, BELC goals and objectives also show salient concerns which call for reform.

The current study’s results also highlight student dissatisfaction with BELC course content and instructional materials and resources; citing uninteresting and unchallenging course topics, as well as obsolete textbooks.
The programme’s instructional methodologies were criticised as being too traditionally oriented; the teaching methods as overly lecturer-centred. The study’s outcomes also reveal intense student criticism of the arcane and antiquated assessment philosophy employed by their lecturers. Such evaluative philosophy relies too heavily on one final, course examination which tests only learnt content.

The current study contributes to the knowledge of language programme evaluation from various perspectives. It fills a vacuum in the scholarly literature of language programme evaluation, by specifically addressing the Emirati educational context. In addition, the current study contributes theoretically with regard to the social constructivism mode of inquiry in the Emirati context. Finally, the current study proposes an evaluation approach that can be applied, and modified, depending on the specifications of any given setting.
ملخص الرسالة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم برنامج مساقات اللغة الإنجليزية الأساسية (BELC) في البرنامج التأسيسي (FP) في معهد تعليمي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة بدفع النقص الملحوظ في المهارات المطلوبة للغة الإنجليزية لدى خريجي الهندسة والأعمال. وعندما يتعلق الأمر بتأمين فرص العمل فإن الدراسة الحالية تدرس مدى ملاءمة مساقات اللغة الإنجليزية ومناهج التدريس. وقد تحقق ذلك من خلال استناد أراء المشاركين في البرنامج فيما يتعلق بجودة البرنامج ثم شكلت هذه النتائج الأساس الذي تم الاعتماد عليه لاقتراح التعديلات على البرنامج. يصبح برنامج مساقات اللغة الإنجليزية الأساسية (BELC) يتكون من ثلاث مساقات: 1) القراءة، 2) الكتابة و 3) المحادثة. يجب على الطلاب التسجيل في مساقات اللغة الإنجليزية الأساسية (BELC) في الفصل الدراسي الأول من التحاقهم بالمعهد من أجل تعزيز قدرتهم على اللغة الإنجليزية.

بسبب الطبيعة الاستكشافية للدراسة الحالية، وخصوصية السياق الخاص بها، كان التوجه الواقعي للبنائية التفسيرية والاجتماعية الأساس الفلسفي والمعرفى لهذه الدراسة. والذي يركز بشكل رئيسي على التفاعلات البشرية والبيئات واعتماد مثل هذا النموذج عزز فهم وتفسير خبرات المشاركين في كل من مساقات اللغة الإنجليزية (BELC) وبرنامج التأسيسي (FP). يتم تصميم البحث الحالي للدراسة من نهج متسلسل وأساليب متنوعة ودراسة حالة التي تستخدم منهجًا انتقائيًا كنموذج تقييمي لغرض فهم مشكلة البحث بشكل أفضل.

يتتألف المشاركون الحايليون في الدراسة من ثلاثة محااضرين كانوا يدرسون مساقات اللغة الإنجليزية الأساسية (BELC) و 55 طالبًا في السنة الأولى في البرنامج التأسيسي (FP). تم جمع بيانات هذه الدراسة كماً ونوعًا. يتم التركيز بشكل أكبر على الأساليب النوعية في جمع البيانات بسبب الموقع البنائي الاجتماعي المعتمد في هذه الدراسة. تم جمع البيانات في مرحلتين رئيسيتين باستخدام عملية متسلسلة. تم جمع البيانات النوعية في من خلال استبيانات تقييم المساقات، والمقابلات، والمدونات، والمنشورات، والملاحظات ذات الصلة. تم تحليل البيانات في المرحلة الثانية من خلال الاستبيانات.
بشكل كمي من خلال استخدام الحزمة الإحصائية للإحصاءات الوصفية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS)، وبشكل نوعي عن طريق استخدام تحليل المحتوى الاستكشافي.

يُظهر نتائج الدراسة الحالية أن برنامج مساقات اللغة الإنجليزية الأساسية (BELC) يعاني من عيوب ومواطن ضعف كثيرة تتعلق بالمعالجة. تتلقى مواطن الضعف ببيئة المعهد، وتشمل هذه المبانى القديمة، والعدد المحدود من الفصول الدراسية، ونقص في المواد التعليمية والتدريبية، والموارد والمراقب، وعدم كفاية مصادر المكتبة.

تُظهر نتائج الدراسة الحالية أن برنامج مساقات اللغة الإنجليزية الأساسية (BELC) يعاني من عيوب ومواطن ضعف كثيرة تتعلق بالمعالجة. تتلقى مواطن الضعف ببيئة المعهد، وتشمل هذه المبانى القديمة، والعدد المحدود من الفصول الدراسية، ونقص في المواد التعليمية والتدريبية، والموارد والمراقب، وعدم كفاية مصادر المكتبة.

فيما يتعلق بغايات وأهداف برنامج مساقات اللغة الإنجليزية الأساسية (BELC)، أظهرت النتائج بعض القضايا المهمة والحاجة إلى درجة معينة من المراجعة.

كما توضح نتائج الدراسة الحالية عدم رضا الطلاب عن محتوى الدراسات والمادة التعليمية لمساقات اللغة الإنجليزية الأساسية والتي تشمل مواضيع دراسية مماثلة وغير مجدية، بالإضافة إلى كتب دراسية قديمة. نجدة سالب التدريس المتبعة في البرنامج على أنها ذات توجه تقليدي للغاية. حيث كانت أساليب التدريس تتبع نهجاً يركز على المعلم. كما كشفت نتائج الدراسة الحالية انتقاد الطلاب المكثف لفلسفة التقييم الغامضة والقديمة المتضمنة من قبل المعلمين والتي تعتمد بشكل كبير على تقييم نهائي واحد لا يختلف إلا المحتوى المكتسب فقط.

تساهم الدراسة الحالية في معرفة تقييم برامج اللغة من وجهات نظر مختلفة. كما تدعم هذه الدراسة المراجع بمعلومات عن تقييم برامج اللغة من خلال تحديد السياق التعليمي الإمارتي على وجه التحديد. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تساهم الدراسة الحالية نظريًا فيما يتعلق بأسلوب التقييم البنائي الاجتماعي في السياق الإمارتي. وأخيرًا، نقترح الدراسة الحالية منهجًا للتقييم يمكن تطبيقه وتعديله وفقًا لمواصفات أي سياق.
Dedication

To my parents whose encouragement inspired me with deep love, gratitude and respect.
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Chapter I

Introduction:

1.1 Background of the Study

Today English is spoken by over two billion people in the world in various dialects and proficiency levels. As English has gone beyond its natural borders, non-native speakers of English outnumber native speakers three to one as asserted by Crystal (1997). In course of time, English has established itself as the world language of research and publication and it is being used by a multitude of universities and institutes of learning all around the world as the language of instruction (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001).

I personally began to learn the English language at ten years of age, when I was in my fifth year of school. Later, I majored in English when I matriculated at the university. In both high school and university, I was keenly desirous of raising my English language competency. I realised that without being competent in the English language, it would prove very difficult for me to achieve my goal of becoming a successful English teacher. The sole opportunity of improving my English language ability at the university was through the English courses which were offered at the university preparation programme. These courses are usually taken in the first and second years of the university. I registered for these courses in the first semester of my undergraduate study. I remember this period of time as frustrating for a variety of reasons.
I was under the illusion that the English courses at the university preparation programme would help me improve my English before continuing my specialisation. This was not the case. Most the English courses at the university preparation programme were taught with little authentic English language practice. The teachers frequently employed the Arabic language to such an extent that I felt that I was in an Arabic language class, not in an English target language class.

Also, the teachers imparted instruction to the study body in an antiquated manner. I remember that students had no active role in learning the English language. On most occasions, the teachers dominated our classes, as we students passively awaited instructions.

By the conclusion of the first semester, it was evident to me that the English courses at university preparation programme were largely ineffectual. The desire of most students was merely to pass the examination, rather than to assimilate a profound base of knowledge. I thus sought out alternative avenues to sharpen my English language dexterity. To this end, I joined the British Council, and took English language summer courses.

Later, as an English language teacher in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), I became interested in examining the obstacles that students confront whilst learning English and other subjects taught in English. From the beginning of my didactic journey, I descried that it was a shallow level of English language development which constituted the principal hurdle for many students. I confirmed this hypothesis after undertaking a textbook evaluation study as part of my Master of Education degree at the British University in Dubai.
It was there that I found that despite the negative features of the textbook; it was the teaching staff’s scant English language proficiency which accounted for most teacher difficulties. With such shortfalls of English language competency, the faculty was unable to instruct the textbook in the manner in which it should have been taught. Many teachers bemoaned the poor English language preparation which they had received in their undergraduate study. It was at this juncture that I began to consider what contribution I could make towards enhancing the English courses at the preparation programmes in the UAE universities.

Confiding in my personal English language learning experience, and having become an English language teacher, I realised that the English language component of the preparation programme in the UAE universities was significantly lacking. I determined that the English courses should be much improved in order to promote greater English language competency in future students.

Upon acquiring the opportunity to pursue my Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree, I was enlivened at the possibility of evaluating the Basic English Language Courses (BELC) of the Foundation Programme (FP) at the educational institute from the point of view of students as well as lecturers. I believed that my professional interest in conducting advanced investigatory research would serve to discover proposals which might rectify the current university preparation programmes in most of the UAE universities. I further resolved that my research should also inaugurate a long-sought dialogue, whereby Emirati students and teachers could finally express their opinions to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education authorities. If university preparation programmes are to be reformed, then pedagogic research, of the type which I propose, must
introduce new models of evaluation for university preparation programmes, and proffer proposals for their improvement. It is those goals which I hope to achieve in my study.

1.2 Preamble

Proficiency in English language has become a central issue in research as the English language is increasingly used as a medium of instruction and a criterion for admission to higher education. In a review of a number of articles about language policies in Asian higher education, Ross (2008, p.8) states that “a commonly accepted assumption is that a foreign language learned in the context of formal schooling yields suitable subject matter for making high-stakes inferences about qualifications for admissions or employment”; he explains that there is a growing trend to use test scores in determining access to higher education, and that proficiency in the English language has also become a dominant criterion for success in the labour market.

Similarly, Altbach & Knight (2007) assert that the increasing trend of using English as a medium of instruction in many higher education institutes has been stimulated by commercial factors; they state that “the growing use of English as a medium of research and instruction, especially at the graduate level, may stimulate interest in international programmes offered by universities in English” (p.303).

Despite the continuous plans and policies to promote the English language proficiency of the labour force, recent studies of graduates’ English skills have found that these are inadequate for the needs of the private sector (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Al-Lamki, 2006). Al-Mahrooqi asserts that “research
and experience have found that the majority of school and college graduates possess neither adequate English language skills nor communication skills to function effectively in the workplace, which is dominated by expatriates from around the world” (2012, p.124).

On account of the current status of English, the need for English as a foreign language has placed a remarkable change in the requirements of many educational systems. Thus, some crucial aspects related to English teaching such as the ones about curriculum, methodology and evaluation has gained considerable importance throughout the world. Nunan (1992) states that though there are a wide range of diverse and sometimes contradictory views on the nature of language and language learning, curriculum developers need to take account of and respond to data coming from learners, teachers, evaluation specialists and so on.

The University preparation programme in the Foundation Programme (FP) at the The educational institute strive to educate and to train capable and competent students. The curriculum in such programmes is divided into three components: (1) language, (2) science, and (3), practicum (Rahimi, 2008). The language component performs an essential part in raising student target language proficiency, which is considered to be the most heralded characteristic of a good graduate (Brown, 2001; Cullen, 2001). It is the language component that “has indeed constituted the bedrock of the professional confidence of non-native students.” (Candido de Lima, 2001, p.145). A myriad of researchers, such as Thomas (1987), declare that the leading ambition of any language programme must be the student’s competence in the target language.
The educational institute is a state-sector institute that provides free higher education to a limited number of secondary school graduates based on the students' academic merits and the institute's capacity. Normally, there is an enormous demand for the places offered in the public sector higher technical educational colleges, and being admitted to one of them has a great social value for the students and their families.

In the institute, English language was chosen to be the language of instruction. In 2010, the Ministry of Higher Education, under which the institute operates, signed a contract with the institute to conduct a needs analysis of the labour market and recommend the future academic programmes of the institute.

When the programmes, the institute would offer, were developed, a private education provider was contracted to provide the curriculum as well as part of the assessment and other services. The first batch of the students had to go through an English language preparation programme in the Foundation Programme (FP) for almost an academic year before qualifying to take the core courses.

It is estimated that almost 80% of the students admitted to higher education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) require English language courses in the first level of college/university before starting their specialised courses (Al-Lamki, 1998). The FP at the institute offers a pre-sessional programme that can be considered an integral part of almost all of the colleges and universities in the UAE. Its general aim is to provide students with the English language proficiency, study skills, computer and numeracy skills required for university academic study (AEAAA, 2009). The aim of
teaching English language is stated to be “equip[ing] students with both the English Language and academic study skills they will need to succeed in their subject studies” (CAS, 2010, p.33). The FP consists of twenty hours per week of English language instruction, and ten hours of mathematics and/or computer skills courses each semester.

With the aim of developing students’ English language skills and knowledge, three English courses are offered in the FP in the first year of the programme. The English courses are designed and their materials are selected by the course instructors; that is, instructors are responsible for decision making as regards the design of the courses and the selection of materials. The same syllabus is used and the same exams are given in different sections of the same course. The English courses are: Writing, Reading and Conversation which must be taken by new students in the first year of enrolment in order to improve their language proficiency.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

English language has constituted a fundamental component of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) scholastic curricula for several decades. It currently plays a major role in assisting UAE tertiary graduates to attain employment in renowned organisations. The UAE and the English language have become conjoined due to the entrepot nature of the country. English is the second language to many educated people in the UAE. Moreover, it has become a connecting language (lingua franca) for people who reside in the UAE, but who come from diverse language backgrounds. Today, the English language plays a vital role in higher education, media and the administration of
private and governmental organisations. English is a dynamic catalyst of change in the UAE (Al-Hadi, 2014).

The number of engineering and business colleges in the UAE has risen with alacrity in the last decade. Hundreds of thousands of engineering and business students graduate every year (Al-Hadi, 2014). This increase in the number of engineering and business graduates has provoked pronounced turbulence in the job market, and the employability of graduates has become the core issue in educational and industrial sectors. Today’s UAE job market demands that engineering and business graduates possess highly employable traits when they appear for initial job interviews. Candidates are expected to elaborate their ideas in English without ambiguity or fear.

In most employer surveys, English communication skills are singled out as one of the primary hurdles of UAE engineering and business graduates as regards acquiring employment. Al-Hadi (2014) reveals that accomplished English communication skills augment male hourly wages by 34%.

Due to the shortfall of requisite English skills of UAE engineering and business graduates in order to secure employment, the current study peruses the suitability of the English courses, and teaching methodologies, adopted by English lecturers during the first year of engineering courses in UAE colleges and private universities. The principal goal of these courses is to improve students’ English communication skills for the purposes of employment interviews, and group discussions, which are part of the UAE employment recruitment process.
The significance of English in the business world is well established, and to undertake international business transactions, English language skills perform a vital part (Pandey & Pandey, 2014). Poor English language skills create confusion, misunderstanding and ill-feeling in business negotiations. Hence, UAE companies select candidates with higher levels of English proficiency. Besides this, a majority of the world’s scientific research and industry journals are published in English (Al-Maskari, 2015). To become competent engineering and business graduates, UAE students must master English language skills which pertain to employment interviews, public presentations, group exchanges, and telephone and teleconference interactions. According to Riemer (2002), a global engineer must cross national and cultural borders. Only with well-polished English language skills can the engineer break those boundaries.

What remains in doubt is whether UAE engineering and business students are sufficiently well-trained in the English language skills which are relevant to workplace success. Also unanswered is whether proper didactic methodologies are being followed in English language instructional sessions.

During my past teaching at the institute, it has been observed by the researcher that many students studying in the FP at the institute complain about their proficiency level in English language. During their study, they report experiencing language problems due to their lack of necessary skills and knowledge in English. Almost all the engineering students state that they have difficulties in describing technical drawings, discussing dimensions and tolerances, talking about different materials and their properties, describing the shapes of components and how they fit together, describing causes and effects, explaining technical problems, etc. Moreover, they lack necessary
skills in technical writing namely technical description and process analysis which makes it difficult for them to pursue excellent engineering career in the future.

1.4 Purpose and Questions of the Study

As a result of these observations and informal feedback from the FP students at the institute, the evaluation and optimization of the English courses in the FP has been chosen as the focus of this research study. Evaluating these courses through a comprehensive research study and discovering areas that need improvement may indirectly help towards a solution of the FP students’ language problems through putting the suggested improvements into practice. Helping engineering students to improve their English is crucial. To be a successful engineer not only depends on the ability to perform calculations and experiments, as in most other jobs, but also it is based on the ability to present innovative, creative ideas convincingly. Hence proficiency in communicative English is essential for an efficient engineer who has sound technical background to interpret the technical facts in the universal language which can be understood throughout the world.

The Basic English Language Courses (BELC) at the Foundation Programme (FP) will consume most of the current study’s attention. Findings will serve as a basis for proposing concrete, practical amendments. This will be effectuated by soliciting the opinions of students and lecturers as regards the three language courses: Writing, Reading and Conversation. The current study specifically attempts to achieve the following goals:
• To comprehend the current contours of the BELC within the FP in terms of: (1) the course goals and objectives; (2) course content and resources; (3) teaching and learning practices; and (4), student assessment and feedback mechanisms.
• To identify student and lecturer points of view regarding the BELC in terms of the four categories mentioned above.
• To recommend improvements to the BELC within the FP.

Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the Basic English Language Courses (BELC) in the curriculum of the Foundation Programme (FP) at the educational institute in terms of their four fundamental aspects, namely aims and objectives, course content and materials, course conduct and student assessment and at the end identify the aspects of these courses that need to be improved.

1.5 Research Questions

To achieve these aims, the study attempts to answer the following research questions

1) What are the current practices of Basic English Language Courses (BELC) in the Foundation Programme (FP), at the educational institute?

2) What are students and lecturers’ evaluative views about Basic English Language Courses (BELC) in the Foundation Programme (FP), at the educational institute?

3) What suggestions are made by students and lecturers for the improvement of Basic English Language Courses (BELC) in the Foundation Programme (FP), at the educational institute?
1.6 Significance of the Study

The current study is significant for a number of reasons. The need for such research at the FP in an educational institute in the UAE became increasingly evident due to this researcher-writer’s observations, as well as feedback received from the students and lecturers regarding deficiencies in the English language courses. Because the current study is the first comprehensive evaluation of the English courses, and its accompanying FP since the establishment of the institute 2010, its findings will be anxiously awaited.

Evaluation studies carried out in the UAE, and in the Arab world, although rare, generally pursue a positivist paradigm as a theoretical framework and methodology (Al-Naimi, 1996). The current study is methodologically unique for Emirati educational programme evaluations. Most of the previous evaluative studies in the UAE and the Middle-East have utilised a questionnaire instrument with closed-ended items as the principal data-gathering method. They have also depended solely on statistical analysis in presenting their findings (e.g., Safi, 1986; Safi, 1995; Al-Mutawa & Al-Dabbous, 1997; Al-Mutawa, 1997). The current study employs a variety of data-gathering methods which explore participant opinions in more extensive detail by utilising interview and journal-diary approaches, and by analysing those qualitatively. Although difficult to apply in the UAE, due to historic cultural reasons in which a lecturer is seen as the sole authority who retains complete classroom power, whilst students are largely considered passive receivers; the current evaluation does make use of the interpretive and social constructivist mode of enquiry.
It is hoped that the findings of the current study might provide valuable information to decision-makers in order to assist them in making design changes for more effective English language courses. It is equally hoped that beneficial changes will also affect the FP, its educational programme, and especially the English language courses. It is also desired that students acquire a better command of the English language, and, in turn, pass this benefit along to the engineering and business industry for the overall betterment of Emirati society. Finally, one wishes that the current study might contribute to the overall educational programme evaluation field, through its flexible evaluative approach and research design, which could come to be successfully implemented in other, different, but needy, settings.

1.7 Definitions of key terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Curriculum refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program. In dictionaries, curriculum is often defined as the courses offered by a school, but it is rarely used in such a general sense in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus</td>
<td>The syllabus is described as the summary of the topics covered or units to be taught in the particular subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>A course is a set of classes or a plan of study on a particular subject, usually leading to an exam or qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program evaluation</td>
<td>Program evaluation is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about projects, policies and programs,[1] particularly about their</td>
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</table>
effectiveness and efficiency. In both the public and private sectors, stakeholders often want to know whether the programs they are funding, implementing, voting for, receiving or objecting to are producing the intended effect.

Course design
Course design is the process an instructor must go through at the start of any course to plan for successful student outcome.

Model
Model is a representation of a system that allows for investigation of the properties of the system and, in some cases, prediction of future outcomes. Models are often used in quantitative analysis and technical analysis, and sometimes also used in fundamental analysis.

Eclectic approach
Eclectic approach is a method of language education that combines various approaches and methodologies to teach language depending on the aims of the lesson and the abilities of the learners.[

1.8 Organisation of the Thesis
This chapter has presented an introduction and background of the current study. It has facilitated the identification of the problem, purpose, research questions and significance of the study.

Chapter II is intended to familiarise the reader with the UAE educational setting and background within which the current study transpired. This includes the goals and objectives of the UAE
educational system; succeeded by an outline of some of the historical events and economic, cultural and political pressures, which have shaped the formation of those goals and objectives. It will depict the manner in which the language courses are implemented within the UAE educational system. Its conclusion will shed light on the UAE language programmes, and their evaluative systems.

Chapter III will review literature related to the evaluation of educational programmes in general, with special emphasis on language programme evaluation. This chapter is divided into two subsections: the first subsection discusses curriculum and course design, including various models and frameworks as well as different types of syllabuses. The second subsection treats of a brief history of programme evaluation, succeeded by an exploration of programme evaluation purposes, types, approaches and models.

Chapter IV will be dedicated to the methodology of the current study. It starts by examining the ontological assumptions which underpin the current study. It then explores the epistemological stance which was adopted for the current study, as well as the current study’s theoretical framework. The chapter will then explain the current study’s design and data collection instruments. It will also describe the data collection and analysis procedures, as well as the strategies applied to ensure the quality of the data. Afterwards, it will introduce the current study’s participants. Finally, the ethical considerations, as well as the limitations of the current study, will be presented.
Chapter V will render a detailed analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data from the four research instruments used in the current study: the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, journal-diaries, and document analysis. This will embrace a statistical data analysis, as well as an interpretation of the qualitative findings.

Chapter VI will discuss the principal findings derived from the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data of the current study. It will concentrate on linking the current study’s findings to the context of the study and related literature.

Finally, Chapter VII will summarise the findings of the current study’s research and offer some final remarks and conclusions. It will also present implications arising from the current study, and the current study’s theoretical and pedagogical contributions to knowledge. The chapter will conclude with proposals for further research.
Chapter II

Context of the Study

This chapter will overview the UAE educational system and its history. It will describe historical events, and economic, cultural and political pressures, which have impacted on the education in the UAE in general and English language instruction in particular. The purpose of this chapter is to assist the reader in comprehending the manner in which students have developed their learning processes at different stages of the Emirati educational system. An effort will be made to demonstrate the manner in which the Emirati pre-tertiary education system forms its students prior to their enrolment in their current tertiary studies.

2.1 Background of Education in the UAE

This section will commence by presenting the general goals of education in the UAE. Thence it will describe the history of the Emirati educational system, and the economic and political events that have shaped the current Emirati educational system. The section will conclude with an exploration of the structure of Emirati education at its different stages.

2.1.1 The General Goals of the Education in the UAE

Clear educational goals form the basis for the successful implementation of educational objectives, plans and strategies. With this in mind, in 1972, the UAE government formulated the general goals of the UAE supported public education. This was done with the assistance of a specialised committee. The committee consisted of educational specialists from the UAE Ministry of
Education. The blueprint for the general goals was set out in accordance with the UAE constitution and findings from field research. The goals were issued in a document which specified the framework of the UAE educational philosophy, together with the subject areas and contents to be studied. The founding philosophic framework document also highlighted the maintenance of balance between cultural, spiritual, mental, social, psychological and physical growth in order to enable learners to proceed creatively in the newly founded Emirati educative setting (UAE Ministry of Education, 1996). Later, in light of historical and political events, the goals were revised by the UAE Ministry of Education.

The general Emirati educational goals were derived from four main sources:

1. The religious, social and cultural nature of Emirati society;
2. The spirit of the age in which we live;
3. The needs of pupils;

The overall goals of the UAE education, according to the UAE Ministry of Education, are as follows:

• To assist individuals to develop mentally, physically, spiritually, socially and psychologically in accordance with their potential, and the traditions of the Emirati society. Above all, the goals of education of the UAE are undertaken with regard to the principles of Islam, Arab traditions and contemporary culture so as to enable learners to fulfil their aims and aspirations in a way that strikes a balance between individual ambition and societal need.
• To train and develop Emirati human resources, at all levels of education, to absorb the necessary scientific methods, and their applications, in all areas required by Emirati society.

• To develop educative concepts and curricula in order to maintain pace with the rapid revolutions in science and technical training, while stressing the importance of Arab and Islamic heritage in developing spiritual values, strengthening basic principles, and forging a sense of belonging to the Emirati homeland.

• To develop and to support religious schools, colleges and adult literacy centres, in tandem with scientific and technical progress.

• To attain a balanced sharing of educational services and activities amongst the different areas of the UAE; and to endeavour to make science and knowledge accessible to every Emirati citizen.

• To dedicate more efforts to the training of national educational human resources; to develop their capabilities and their competencies whilst reducing reliance on foreign elements in the educational field, without harmfully affecting the UAE educational process (UAE Ministry of Education, 1996: 21).

It merits mention that practical reality remains distant from this ideal. Emirati educative goals wandered far afield over the last two decades of the twentieth century (Esmaeel, 2010). Practical considerations render the achievement of those goals exceedingly difficult. The educational process in individual schools neglects diverse student learning styles, as well as their individual learning strengths and preferences. The routine educative process over-focuses on merely providing students with voluminous amounts of disjointed data (Al-Ahmad, 2011), largely due to a shortage of teachers and resources. Esmaeel (2010) testifies that in the UAE theory wholly overwhelms and dominates praxis. Thus, despite ideals, for too much of the instructional day, students perform as
mere passive receivers of disjointed data whilst acquiring little understanding. Too little time is
given over to forging coherent knowledge from inundations of data.

This researcher-writer’s experience as a classroom teacher in the UAE reveals that most students
rely on learning strategies of recitation and repetition, purely for the sake of succeeding on an
examination. ‘Success’ is solely defined as ‘passing’ an examination. Education is drastically
eroded. As learners give themselves over to the learning strategies of recitation and repetition, their
other learning skills diminish, and they become less creative thinkers. Daily, and ultimately, this
cycle defeats the general goals of The UAE education as elaborated above (Al-Darwish, 2006).
The succeeding sections will describe some of the historical, economic, cultural and political
reasons that have played critical roles in shaping the UAE educational system.

2.1.2 The History of the Educational System in the UAE

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was officially founded as a country in 1971 with the integration
of six of seven Emirates. The seventh Emirate, Ras Al Khaimah, officially united with the alliance
in 1972 (Smith, 2004). Educational services were available in the Emirati region (the area of the
current UAE), prior to the country’s formal founding, though the pedagogic system often relied on
alternate methods of education.

Self-education was considered legitimate within the UAE’s historic, cultural context. The
traditional educational system often placed a strong emphasis on religious instruction, and the
acquisition of knowledge through interaction with others. Apprenticeships were a common mode
of transferring skills and knowledge. Much information was handed down from generation to
generation via oral and written contexts. Traditional educational forms such as teacher-student
relationships were also evident. Eventually didactic styles began to transition from these traditional
methodologies to more formal, modernist pedagogical styles which coalesced around lessons,
courses and regulations. The UAE Ministry of Education describes the country as having passed
through four stages of educational development. These are: 1) the Mutawa and the Katateeb; 2)
Educational Cycles; 3) Semi-Organised Education; as well as 4) the Modern Educational System
(Alnabah, 1996).

The movement to inaugurate more schools in the Emirati (pre-UAE) region rose after the United
Kingdom (UK) occupation, based on the desire of influential local leaders and merchants, as a
method of spreading Islam and enhancing literacy. The quality of schools oscillated according to
the knowledge of scholars in those schools. These scholars were often markedly influenced by
teachings which originated from Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

These nascent, developing schools served as stepping-stones to the current educational system. The
first modern, organised school was Alqasimiah School, founded in Sharjah Emirate in 1930, by
Sheikh Mohammed Almahmoud, the son of the Sheikh Ali Almahmoud. In 1953, this school
adopted the Emirati curriculum and supplied students with Emirati books, instructional materials
and teachers. The first academic year under the modern model was 1953 to 1954. The following
year, the first school for females was opened under the same name. The female school was later
renamed Fatima A’zahra’a. Both schools functioned under the Emirati curriculum. Another branch
of the school was founded in Ras Al Khaimah Emirate in 1955. The Dubai Emirate followed in
1956. These schools were administered under the supervision of the Emirati government(s). As some of the initial instructional materials were still specific to the State of Kuwait, the Emirati authorities augmented the development of locally oriented instructional materials which were specific to the Emirati region (Alrawi, 1996; Alnabah, 1996).

After the UAE was founded in 1971, education continued to be developed locally and became free-of-charge for all UAE (Emirati) citizens. Primary education was decreed obligatory for all Emirati boys and girls.

2.1.3 The Government’s Role in Developing the UAE Education

Since the establishment of the UAE in 1971, and the establishment of its first Ministry of Education, the government of the UAE has devoted substantial human and economic resources in order to enhance and to support the educational process. This can be translucently recognised in legislation and particular Emirati constitutional articles. Law Number (No.) 11, which was enacted in 1975, states that:

*Education is free from kindergarten to university and there are equal opportunities for boys and girls, for all Emirati people. Education is compulsory from kindergarten to the middle school level (UAE Ministry of Education, 1996: 18).*

After the enactment of this law, the Emirati people began to view education differently. They found it more convenient to send their children to school. In the past, they had paid the Mutawa food or gifts in order to attend classes, but now learning was free and organised. Day by day, the Emirati citizenry also become sentient of the value of education in their lives. Accordingly, there were
successive increases in student enrolments, which conduced to the establishment of more schools and the provision of more teachers.

As a result of compulsory education and gender equality, the number of female students noticeably increased. For instance, in the academic year 1971 to 1972, when the correspondent legislation came into force, there were only 32,862 students registered in Emirati public schools. By 1995 to 1996, there were 295,333 students. These figures demonstrate that the government’s efforts to encourage equality between males and females have succeeded (UAE Ministry of Education, 2005).

The Ministry of Education has taken complete control of the setting of educational goals, decision-making and expenditure on education. Article 13, Chapter 2, of the UAE Constitution states that ‘Education is a basic element to be provided and supervised by the country’ (UAE Ministry of Information, 1996: 34), and this responsibility extends to matters such as school establishments, furniture, equipment, teaching aids, school libraries, and the provision of textbooks and teacher’s guides. Moreover, in public sector schools, the government holds responsibility for employee salaries, in-service training, school supervision and curriculum development.

2.1.4 The Structure of Education in the UAE

Before describing the UAE educational structure, it is worthy to mention recent changes to that structure which have been instigated by the UAE government. The UAE Ministry of Education set out to staff all primary school stages exclusively with female administrators and teachers. This
decision was taken due the shortage of male teachers, and to make jobs available for the increasing number of primary stage, female, graduate teachers. A more critical change occurred in 2005 when Abu Dhabi government reformed the educational structure by establishing Abu Dhabi educational Council (ADEC), the educational authority for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Today, UAE education at primary and secondary levels is universal and compulsory up to the ninth grade. This transpires in a four-tiered process over 14 years:

- **Nursery Education** – Nursery education commences at the youthful age of eighteen months to two years. Basic English language speaking skills are initiated with pupils of this age group.

- **Kindergarten Education** – Children of four to five years are accepted in kindergarten where they are instructed in subjects such as English, Arabic, mathematics, music, and art. Religion also forms part of the syllabus and pupils are taught their respective religion.

- **Primary Education** – Pupils accepted at primary school are generally around six years old. English is the principal language of instruction in most primary schools. However, many schools teach in Arabic and some in foreign languages such as Hindi, French, as well as Russian.

- **Secondary Education** – There exist two kinds of secondary schools: 1) ordinary schools which focus on academic subjects; and 2) technical schools which focus on imparting specific skills for the purposes of more immediate employability.

(Bradshaw, Tennant & Lydiatt, 2004)
Each of the four stages of the educational structure in the UAE has specific aims set by the Ministry of Education and Abu Dhabi Education Council. Nursery and kindergarten Stages were to provide the appropriate conditions for the overall development of the child physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and socially. According to the UAE Ministry of Education (1996), kindergartens aim to develop children’s capacities for interaction and communication, together with helping children to understand the Islamic values, and their feeling toward their family, their nation and the whole world.

At the age of six, children begin the primary stage, which lasts till age 14. At this stage, pupils start one of the most critical stages of their lives. As one might expect, primary education receives special attention. Though every educational stage is important, the primary stage affects those stages that follow. It continues with the development of the aspects of growth addressed in the previous stages, remembering the spirit of the age, and the mentality of the pupils. The later stages of education and adulthood depend heavily on what is achieved during this stage; therefore, students’ interests and abilities with regard to secondary and vocational education, as well as adulthood, may be identified. As a result, continuity throughout the all of the educational stages is hopefully achieved.

The secondary stage is a three-year cycle catering to students between the ages of 16 and 18 years, at the end of which the students are awarded the General Secondary Education Certificate. This is considered a culminating moment in Emirati student life, since it has a considerable effect on deciding a student’s future opportunities for study and employment. The secondary stage is
designed to extend the benefits and cultural knowledge that have been achieved in the previous stages by the continued, but enhanced, study of subjects including Religion, Arabic and foreign languages.

Many aspects of the educational system in the UAE have undergone change and development. The UAE government and the educational entities have performed a salient part in accelerating educational progress by implementing up-to-date international educational trends, and also by providing modern educational resources and instructional methodologies for schools.

### 2.2 Introduction of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in the UAE Educational System

This section will illumine the history of TEFL in the UAE and its implementation in the different stages of the educational system, including public schools and higher education institutions. It will additionally render technical and vocational education in the UAE. A brief account of the UAE educational programme evaluation will conclude this section.

#### 2.2.1 History of TEFL in the UAE

Teaching of English as a Foreign Language has a prominent position in the UAE educational system. Historically, basic English was usually offered as a school subject, along with other subjects, such as Arabic, mathematics, Islamic religion and history. However, English did not have the same status as Arabic, which was not just a subject, but also the medium of instruction. This situation changed when the UAE government introduced English as a formal school subject
through the Compulsory Act in 1976 to 1977. Since then, English has been taught as a mandatory subject from the intermediate stage; that is, from the age of ten. Therefore, Emirati students enrol at university, and other tertiary institutions, after 12 years of schooling, but with eight years of English language instruction.

Initially the grammar-translation approach was adopted for the purposes of English language instruction. This approach focused on English grammar and vocabulary. Students had to memorise grammatical rules and long lists of English lexicon with their Arabic translations. However, there was no opportunity to practice them in authentic communication. Because of this, students began losing interest in the English language. The Emirati government noticed that at the end of the secondary stage, the standard of English attained was unsatisfactory, and the goals and objectives of the syllabus remained unfulfilled. The government then initiated an overall re-examination of the English language curriculum, including its textbooks, instructional methodologies and teacher training processes.

Consequently, the grammar-translation method was replaced by the auditory-lingual approach, where the focus was on developing student listening and speaking skills. Students were drilled in the recitation of English speech, and listened to taped conversations between English native speakers. However, it was noted that there was little interaction between students and teachers. Moreover, as the emphasis was on listening and speaking, the other two skills, reading and writing, were neglected. As a result, many students were neither able to speak English fluently, nor to write grammatically correct English sentences. For this reason, in the mid-1980s, the auditory-lingual
approach was replaced by the communicative language teaching approach (Al-Darwish, 2006).

In the communicative language teaching approach, the focus was on the English language for communication. The English teaching concentrated on functional language and language situations in order to obtain fluency, albeit at the expense of correct pronunciation or grammar. Therefore, language accuracy suffered (Mabrouk and Khalil, 1989). Yet the proficiency of most students remained low, and a majority of secondary school graduates were not able to read or to converse in English (Ahmed, 2010).

There was a need for major reform. The poor standard of English amongst Emirati school students, along with an increased understanding of the importance of English, and its proliferation, not only worldwide, but also in all aspects of the UAE life, convinced the Ministry of Education to introduce changes to the educational system (Aldhafiri, 1998).

Thus, in 1990, English was introduced into the primary school curriculum in order to expose the youngest learners to the English language from the first grade. The aim of the UAE Ministry of Education was to expose pupils to English for 12, instead of eight, school years. The hope was that the additional years of English study would enhance student proficiency.

This step provoked controversy amongst the UAE public for several reasons. A well-articulated plan had not been designed for teaching the new English language curriculum (Troudi, 2007). In addition, the number of teachers was limited; therefore over 200 teachers from Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Tunisia—mostly newly qualified teachers and intermediate or secondary teachers—were
offered English teaching posts. Even today, over a decade later, many teachers are not well trained; for example, some graduated from Emirati Universities, specialising in English linguistics or literature, with no teaching experience or qualification at the primary level (AL-Mekhlafi, 2007). To compensate for this, teachers receive English teacher training course before taking up their teaching assignments. Yet such a brief course is deemed insufficient in order to impart the art of teaching. As a result, many teachers find it difficult to adjust over the first few years of their teaching careers (AL-Mekhlafi, 2007).

Some researchers have examined the negative effects of the 1990 curriculum which has exposed Emirati students to a full 12 years of English language instruction. Aldhafiri (1998) investigated the effects of teaching English at the Emirati primary stage, and concluded that the student Arabic language (L1) performance decreased after the introduction of the English language at the primary stage. Student attitudes toward Arabic became more negative. They began to consider Arabic as a boring and difficult subject. After almost 20 years of teaching English at the primary stage, there is a need for further studies to investigate its impact.

English teachers and students generally have access to various instructional resources and materials, including textbooks and workbooks, a white board, tape recorder, flash cards and overhead projectors. Class sizes vary from school to school, depending on the size of the area in which the school is located; however, most classes consist of 25 to 30 pupils.

Early English textbook was written and designed specifically for the UAE primary school system. It follows the syllabus laid down by the UAE Ministry of Education, and encourages students to
communicate in English from the very first day. It adopts an integrated approach to language teaching, combining both structural and communicative methodologies. The purpose of this integration is to ensure that students learn to use the English language both fluently and accurately (UAE Ministry of Education, 2003). English language in the textbook is taught through games, songs, stories and varied activities.

Personal experience as an English language teacher has shown this researcher-writer that it was, and is, difficult to persuade other teachers, especially experienced ones, to take ownership of the new teaching methodologies and to integrate them into their didactic practice. It should be noted that the UAE Ministry of Education has complete authority in selecting school textbooks. Teachers, learners and other stakeholders have no input into that decision-making process. As a result of such top-down policy, the UAE Ministry of Education has made little attempt to link teacher and learner needs to modern English language learning methodologies.

The aforementioned brief history of TEFL in the UAE, and its implementation in the UAE educational system, attempted to describe the manner in which the current study’s participants experienced their English learning during their pre-tertiary education. Various observations suggest that the current study’s participants were subjected to poor English teaching and learning practices in the UAE. Poor practices eventually lead to poor student English language proficiency. The current study sets out to identify the manner in which the Foundation Programme (FP) at the educational institute might improve the language proficiency of Emirati students.
2.2.2 TEFL in the Higher Education Institutes

As part of the policy of admissions, most universities and colleges in the UAE accept secondary school students in all of their faculties on condition that they have passed tests and interviews in English, together with a minimum 80% grade point average (GPA). Most of the science faculties, such as Business, Engineering, Medicine, Science, and Dentistry, now use English as a medium of instruction, whereas the rest use the medium of Arabic.

English proficiency is a prerequisite for students entering the faculties that use English as a medium of instruction. These faculties presuppose that students have sufficient command of the English language to progress in their educational programmes without difficulty. Yet in spite of this requirement, most placement and standard tests reveal that many students have obtained low English language scores, and must enrol in intensive remedial English language courses before being allowed to proceed with their major fields of study (UAE University, Registration Office, 1995).

2.3 Challenges to Curriculum Development in the UAE

While the development of the new standards based curriculum in Abu Dhabi is an important step forward in improving the curriculum in the UAE, there are still many issues that have not been addressed. The main challenges that lie ahead include transforming the attitudes and approaches of teachers, expanding the scope of the curriculum content, and designing appropriate assessment strategies. Finally, local capacity must be expanded in order to ensure sustainability and suitability in curriculum reform.
To ensure the successful implementation of the new curriculum, a radically different mindset and approach is required. Moving away from a textbook-driven curriculum to one in which teachers need to plan what and how they will teach, drawing from a variety of sources, will entail retraining teachers on the fundamentals of teaching. The type of training required will need to extend beyond pedagogical expertise – the transmission of knowledge – to incorporate reflective dimensions, enabling teachers to independently develop instructional materials. This will require more intensive training and better follow-up than currently exists.

The Ministry of Education structure incorporates supervisors for every subject whose role is to visit teachers and observe lessons to assess the quality of teaching. Currently, the role of the supervisor is marginal as principals can choose their supervisors; that is, they can select those who will be most amenable to giving a good report. If the role of the supervisor was strengthened and improved, this would likely have a positive impact on student learning. In their study of Cuba’s education system, Carnoy et al. (2007) found that supervision and mentoring played a critical role in ensuring quality of teaching, if used effectively. The UAE should be no different.

Unfortunately, many teachers are unlikely to substantially change their behavior unless they are provided with incentives to do so. The current system does not reward student-centered teaching, and this is unlikely to change unless there is an insistence upon a change in teacher styles.

The Ministry of Education’s recent announcement of an overhaul of the physical education curriculum to provide more instruction hours, as well as better facilities, is a great step in the direction of expanding the scope of school content. However, more positive steps need to be taken.
with regard to other subjects such as art and music, both of which have not been given enough importance in the national curriculum so far. According to the Knowledge and Human Development Authority’s (KHDA) Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau, music is not offered after Grade 6, and art is not offered after Grade 9, except to a few students who choose to pursue them as extracurricular activities. Theories of cognition suggest that experiences in the arts (visual arts, music, theater and dance) create capabilities or motivations that show up in non-arts capabilities.

In a cross-country comparison of the subjects and respective instruction time offered in grades 7-9, it is noticeable that the UAE places a greater emphasis on math and language education than the OECD countries, including the top two scoring countries on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – Finland and Korea. Benavot (2006) argues that this trend is prevalent in most countries across the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, whereas the OECD countries allocate relatively more time to aesthetic and physical education. Despite the heavy time allocation to these subjects in the UAE, students remain weak in math (see Dubai’s results in the 2007 TIMSS) and poor in English, indicating that simply having more hours in a subject is not enough to see test score gains.

Another neglected content area in the UAE is Information and Computer Technology (ICT). Currently this comprises a single subject in which students learn outdated computing skills, often on obsolete machines. In Finland, however, technology is no longer offered as in

To encourage independent thinking and improve problem solving skills, students need to be assessed on how they apply learned skills to new situations. This is lacking in the existing
examination and assessment structures, also known as the attained curriculum. Exams currently require students to provide only limited responses and do not present students’ weaknesses clearly, leaving them with incomplete feedback on their progress.

Reforms need to be carried out at the national level to ensure more systematic and rigorous assessment. The current decentralized approach to examinations, in which the MOE office in each emirate develops its own examinations, with the exception of grade 12, is problematic due to the small size of the public school system. Rather, the creation of a single examination system for all end-of-year exams would assist the MOE in comparing academic achievement in schools across emirates to determine which schools are performing well and which are not. This, in turn, would enable schools to implement tracking processes for the progress of students, whereby teachers could identify where students are falling behind and how they can work together to help the students to improve their work.

The final challenge that lies ahead for the UAE is one that holds larger political and economic consequences for the country. It is the challenge of creating a national body that is able to develop and revise the national curriculum. This body needs to be comprised of local experts who are able to produce and review proposed curriculum changes.

The Ministry of Education and the Abu Dhabi Education Council have both relied heavily on foreign expertise to spearhead their curriculum development initiatives. Though it is easy in the short term to import consultants who tend to be more experienced in the field, such a situation is unsustainable in the long term, as it leaves Emirati nationals and experts excluded from the process and, consequently, without the necessary skills to develop curricula. Through decreasing its
reliance on external expertise and providing better education and training for nationals and home
grown experts, the UAE has an opportunity to build local capacity for developing curriculum.

Concerns about loss of national identity are also an important reason why the UAE requires its own
curriculum authority. Nowhere is national identity more clearly defined than through the public
school curriculum. External consultants cannot fully understand the needs of the nation, its vision,
its goals, and its moral foundations. This is illustrated in recent concerns that have been raised
about the shift to using English as a medium of instruction in the Madares Al Ghad Schools,
whereby parents and Federal National Council (FNC) members have expressed fears over a decline
in children’s command of Arabic. Many also felt resentful of a foreign language and a foreign
curriculum being imposed upon Emirati children. If there was more local involvement in
curriculum development, many of these problems could be diminished or mitigated.

2.4 Vocational Education in the UAE

UAE vocational education has been developing since the recognition, by the middle 1980s, that
there were insufficient numbers of the most coveted graduates from UAE institutes of higher
education (Wilkins, 2002). The types of skills and knowledge in demand, such as technical skills
for the industrial and engineering sectors, were underrepresented amongst UAE graduates.

In 1988, the UAE government created the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) to rectify this
dearth (Wilkins, 2002). The HCT seeks to promote vocational education in order to equip students
for job opportunities in a wide array of scientific and technical fields. For this purpose, the HCT
offers courses in “business, information technology, engineering, communication technology, and health science” (p. 4).

In 2007, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi founded the Abu Dhabi Vocational Education and Training Institute (ADVETI) for the purpose of furthering vocational education (Secondary Technical School [STS], n.d.). A flagship initiative which ADVETI unfurled was the establishment of technical high schools in order to prepare students for highly skilled fields in which there exists much demand. ADVETI students are recruited from amongst those who have obtained their Grade 9 Certificate. They are then put through grades 10, 11, and 12 at an ADVETI high school. Students must also pass an entrance test in English and mathematics (STS, n.d.).

2.4.1 Abu Dhabi Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ACTVET)

In 2010, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi established the Abu Dhabi Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ACTVET), due to the urgency for well-trained, skilled manpower; as well as to superintend the emirate’s technical and vocational education. ACTVET was assigned the responsibility of assuaging the national shortage of technical and vocational labour.

ACTVET is dedicated to establishing policies and standards that regulate technical and vocational educational institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. ACTVET is also responsible for the licensing of trainers and tutors who meet the demands of the UAE’s local market. ACTVET strives to boost training and educational opportunities for young, UAE nationals, within the qualification
framework of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. ACTVET's ultimate objective is to augment the number of skilled Emirati youth in rewarding careers, and to nurture lifelong learning and personal development. ACTVET supervises several entities which provide accredited educational and vocational training programmes, in accord with the best international standards, to ready students for the labour market.

Students who matriculate in post-secondary institutes and colleges, after graduation from secondary school, are obliged to sit an English [Language] Placement Test, which assists in determining their English language proficiency. English language ability is a prerequisite in all colleges. Students who obtain less than 55% sit a remedial, non-credit, English language course; others take general-purpose English courses, depending on their specific subject area.

Higher institutions presuppose that students who join will already possess an accomplished command of the English language. The presumption is that incoming students will not be English language beginners, especially considering their already 12 years of English language schooling at pre-tertiary school. The reality, however, is that a great number of students suffer from a low level of English language ability. This is evidenced by the elevated number of students who annually attend the remedial, non-credit, English language course (Al-Bazzaz, 1994; Osman, 1996).

2.5 UAE Programme Evaluation

The history of UAE programme evaluation is relatively short. Since the academic year 1979 to 1980, when the first cohort of students graduated and joined the labour force, many studies have
assessed the quality of the UAE University graduates. As the number of graduates increased, so did the public’s concern about the quality of teaching offered by the UAE University’s programmes and graduates. Consequently, the UAE University came under pressure to address these concerns.

One year after it was established, in 1976, the Centre for Evaluation and Quality administered a comprehensive faculty evaluation programme. It was perhaps the first in any institution of higher education in the Arabian Gulf area. The principal purpose of the study was to assess student attitudes and reactions toward instructional methods and course materials used by the lecturers (Safi, 1986). In 1982 a larger-scale evaluation was undertaken to assess the quality of the academic programmes and their graduates. A survey solicited student opinions on various aspects of the programmes, as well as the conditions and opportunities for the UAE University students after graduation.

Today, many evaluation studies are effectuating a leading role in the provision of valuable information, and the identification of critical issues as regards the purpose, objectives and philosophy of the UAE tertiary academic programmes. Their recommendations could help the refinement of these the UAE tertiary programmes and services. A more in-depth review of Emirati evaluation studies is presented in the succeeding chapter.
2.6 Conclusion

The educational process in the UAE has gone through remarkably rapid development. Within the last fifty years, the numbers of students and schools have expanded enormously. The UAE government’s role and efforts have been fundamental in enhancing both the quality and the quantity of education which increased both the literacy rate, and female enrolment in education compared with other countries in the region.

Since the inception of twentieth century the UAE education, the English language has steadily gained a special position in that educational system. This is made evident by recent reforms which expose Emirati students to the English language from the very outset of their primary education. Similar exposure to the English language continues throughout the UAE secondary education. The importance also conferred on the English language by the UAE Universities and colleges will continue to provide the UAE with an able, bilingual, pedagogic labour force for years to come.
Chapter III

Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of literature on curriculum or course design and programme evaluation, each of which is related to the topic of the study. The first subsection provides a review of literature on curriculum and course design, including various models and frameworks as well as different types of syllabuses. The second subsection overviews the definition of ‘evaluation’. This will be succeeded by a historic summary of educational programme evaluation, and an examination of educational programme evaluation types. Again, attention will be given to the relationship between language programmes and programme evaluation. The third subsection will conclude with a defence of the theoretical structure upon which the current study rests. The Fourth subsection presents a review of some language evaluation studies. Finally, the fifth subsection summarizes the points that are significant in guiding the present study.

3.1 Curriculum and Course Design

The pedagogic profession adduces a variety of curriculum and course design models. Some curriculum and course models purvey value systems, or possess particular ideologies, which underpin them. Often curriculum and course models portend the specific expression of one of three different value systems. These value systems are: 1) classical humanism, 2) progressivism, and 3) re-constructivism.
Classical humanism emphasises generalisable cognitive abilities and underscores the transmission of knowledge, culture, and standards from one generation to another. Progressivism attempts to develop the individual as a well-rounded person, and stresses one’s individual and collective responsibilities. Progressivism is also known for advocating natural learning processes throughout the various phases of human development, and for fostering a capacity of learning how to learn. Re-constructivism strives to foment societal change through an educational system, by agreeing on a social consensus of shared goals, and by planning rigorously to realise them (Clark, 1987; White, 1988).

Classical humanism is known for inspiring a content-driven curriculum in which the course content is segmentised in units of knowledge which are then ordered from simple to complex. Progressivism animates a process-driven curriculum, which is governed by principles of procedure that permit student-friendly goals, objectives, content and modes of learning. Re-constructivism gives rise to a goal-driven curriculum in which the curriculum and course contents are established based upon an analysis of a student’s objective needs in terms of the student’s behavior (Clark, 1987).

Curriculum designers have introduced several curriculum and course models by offering schemata which dissect the process of curriculum and course design into manageable steps (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986; Graves, 1996; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Johnson, 1989; Nunan, 1988a; Nunan, 1988b; Richards, 1990; White, 1988). Graves (1996) sets forth precisely such an example by incorporating seven constituents in the following curriculum or course design (p.13):
**Needs assessment:** What do students need? In what manner can the teacher ascertain those needs in order to address them via instruction?

**Determining goals and objectives:** What are the desired results? What must students do, or master, in order to accomplish the desired results?

**Conceptualising content:** Which topic(s) will constitute the principal theme? Which content will comprise the syllabus?

**Selecting and developing instructional materials and activities:** How, and with what, will the teacher instruct the course? What will constitute the teacher’s role? Of what should student responsibilities consist?

**Organisation of content and activities:** How will content and activities be arranged? What systemic approaches will be developed?

**Evaluation:** How will student mastery be assessed? How will teacher effectiveness be evaluated? How will course success be determined?

**Consideration of resources and constraints:** What are the fixed and inherited characteristics of the educative setting which cannot be altered or remediated?

As Graves expounds, ‘It is not a framework of equal parts: Each individual’s context determines which processes need the most time and attention’ (p.12). Within Graves’s conception, all design steps are not obligatorily sequential. In fact, instructional design may be re-adapted throughout the planning, teaching and re-planning phases of curriculum and course formulation. Each constituent of a design model is dependent on every other constituent. For example, assessment is contingent on the manner in which one appreciates student needs, or visualises curriculum and course content.
In the design model propounded by Dubin and Olshtain (1986), the fact finding stage constitutes the first phase. It is this phase in which societal attributes are evaluated. Thus, it is in this phase of the design model that important questions, and answers, of academic programme policies are determined. After analysing the outcomes of the fact finding stage, curriculum and course designers should then institute policies, and fashion goals and objectives, based on those outcomes. The fact finding stage, and the vital questions which it poses, can be seen graphically as in Figure 3.1 below:

![Diagram of the 'fact finding stage' (Dubin and Olshtain, 1994)](image)

Figure 3.1: The dimension and key questions of the ‘fact finding stage’ (Dubin and Olshtain, 1994)

The succeeding phase consists of the realisation of general goals through concretised, teaching plans. In this phase, general goals are transformed into specific objectives. Precise objectives are stipulated by basing those objectives on the general goals of the curriculum or course, along with
the three dimensions of curriculum and course content which are: 1) language content, 2) processes and 3) results or outcomes.

If a specific theory of language serves as the foundation upon which a curriculum and course are designed, the curriculum and course designers must then inquire about the language content dimension by asking the succeeding questions:

1. Which elements of language content should be embraced in the syllabus?
2. In what sequence should those elements of language content be put forward in the syllabus?

In continuation, if ideas about language mastery, or a specific educative philosophy, are influential in the curriculum and course goals and objectives, the succeeding key questions should also be investigated about the process dimension:

1. How can language be pedagogically set forth in order to facilitate its acquisition?
2. What should the roles of students and teachers in the pedagogic process be?

To conclude, curriculum and course designers should also investigate the following result or outcome dimension questions:

1. What knowledge will the student be expected to acquire? What level of mastery, based on analyses of structures and lexis, will students possess?
2. What particular language skills do students require in their near future, or in their immediate professional lives? In which manner will these skills be organised in the syllabus?
3. Which techniques of testing or assessment, in the target language, will be utilised to evaluate outcomes? (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986, p. 42).

After responding to the preceding questions, the following phrase is devoted to fashioning a syllabus. This phase delves into whether the syllabus will be of a linear, modular, cyclical, matrix or story line format.

Johnson (1989), too, has elaborated a structure of decision making whose outcome is a language curriculum and course. He has signaled two principal constraints which impinge on decision makers of curricula and courses. These are constituted by: 1) policy, and 2) pragmatics. Policy constraints impact on each of the four stages of curriculum and course design: 1) planning; 2) ends and means specification; 3) implementation of a language programme through teacher training and
preparation of instructional materials and resources; and 4) implementation in the classroom via the actions of teaching and learning. The pragmatic constraints comprising time, money, human, and other resources, must also be taken into account at each of the four steps above.

In addition to the curriculum and course design models reviewed above, Brown (1995) recommends a system of language curriculum and course design which embodies six stages:

1. Needs analysis,
2. Specification of goals and objectives,
3. Development of tests on the basis of a programme’s goals and objectives,
4. Development of instructional materials and resources,
5. Language instruction,
6. Programme assessment.

Brown (1995) illustrates this systematic approach to language curriculum and course design schematically as in Figure 3.2.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) accentuate three principal approaches which are germane to course design: 1) language-centred course design, 2) skills-centred course design and, 3) learning-centred course design. The language-centred course design is thought of as the least complex course design. It endeavours to forge a direct liaison between the analysis of a target setting and the content of a particular course.
A skills-centred course design visualises a language course as assisting students to master competencies and techniques which they will continue to enhance even after the course’s conclusion. This course design model: 1) considers language in terms of the manner in which a student’s mind processes language. It decidedly does not focus on the traditional, academic intricacies of the language itself; 2) strives to avail itself of the positive attributes which students bring to a course; and 3) establishes its goals and objectives opened-endedly.

The learning-centred course design takes the student emotively into account across the course design process, in a liberal and democratic fashion. In accord with this model, course design is a negotiated process. There is no sole exigency which determines, or regiments, course design. Course design is a dynamic process. It does not move in a linear order. Necessities and resources vary with time, locale and students. Therefore, course design must be possessed of built-in, flexible feedback channels which permit the course to respond to novel, idiosyncratic occurrences.
In sum, the language-centred course design declares that the character of the target situational performance should determine the course design, whereas the skills-centred course design avers that this is insufficient; and that it is necessary to look behind the target performance data in order to discover what processes enable a person to perform linguistically. It is those processes which should determine the course design. On the other hand, the learning-centred course design asserts that even this is inadequate, and that we must look even beyond the competence which enables someone to perform linguistically, because what we really desire to know is the manner in which one acquires that linguistic competence.
Lastly, Aydelott (1995) introduces a new dimension in foreign language curriculum and course design. He holds that the organisational aspect in foreign language curriculum and course design is neglected. In many language curricula and courses, although linguistic content and sequencing, and instructional materials, resources and activities, are granted considerable attention, those attributes pertaining to organisation, such as physical space, classroom temperature, number of students, and time of day, are overlooked.

Bellon and Handler (1982) signal the three traits of curriculum and course organisation as: 1) resources (time, people, instructional materials and resources, as well as facilities and equipment); 2) organisational processes (the interactional web of resources which serve a curriculum and course); and 3) program units within the organisation (the totality of extra-curricular programmes within the educational institution which support the goals and objectives of a curriculum and course). Aydelott (1995) believes that the fit of these organisational elements, within the goals and objectives of a curriculum and course, is primordial for the auspicious effectuation of that curriculum and course.

With regard to syllabus design, Breen (1987a) suggests that there are two major paradigms in language syllabus design: 1) propositional plans, and 2) process plans. These two paradigms are distinct as regards the manner in which they epitomise language learner knowledge and abilities. There exist diverse types of syllabuses under each paradigm.
Within the conventional paradigm of propositional plans, Breen (1987a) proffers two syllabus types: 1) the formal and 2) the functional syllabuses. Both outline the knowledge of the language, and the customs of language utilisation.

The formal syllabus, also known as the structural or grammatical syllabus, focuses on the systematic, rule-based character of language itself. Its primary focus is on the language student’s knowledge of the code of a new language. A formal syllabus endeavours to instruct students in the techniques of being correct in their production of their new language. Being linguistically accurate in the use of the four principal language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) is essential in the formal syllabus. This syllabus is organised in schemata that mirror the inherent organisation of the language itself. Linguistic complexity serves as the basis for sequencing, or grading, the content which is to be learnt. Thus, formal syllabuses exemplify a traditional, linguistic assimilative pattern from simple knowledge onwards to the complex.

The functional syllabus has represented the alternative to the formal syllabus since the middle 1970s. With the advent of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, opinions of linguistic knowledge evolved. Breen (1987a) contends that the notion of communicative competence, offered by Hymes (1971, 1972), has encouraged an alternative appreciation of linguistic knowledge. This has been reflected in language syllabus design. With the rise of such new linguistic developments, the functional syllabus has come to focus on the myriad purposes, or functions, which a language may serve, and the manner in which these functions are coded throughout the language.
The functional syllabus examines that language students will not only become accurate in using a language, but that they will master the ability to be socially appropriate in their target language performance. Proficiency in the target language encompasses both accuracy, and appropriate use, of the four principal language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Thus, the functional syllabus is arranged around language functions, or life-situations, which enhance the acquisition of the four principal language skills. It progresses from general sets of authentic, real-life, language functions towards more specific life-like situations. Unlike the formal syllabus, which gives priority to academic, linguistic knowledge, the functional syllabus views language as a means of getting things done in that language. The main concern of the functional syllabus is communicative competence -- the ability of students to meet their life and social needs in their target language.

In addition to propositional plans, Breen (1987b) also advances an alternative paradigm of process plans characterised by: 1) task-based and 2) process syllabuses. He elucidates the dichotomy between the two paradigms as:

Propositional plans map out knowledge of language and the conventions of language performance. Process plans, on the other hand, represent how something is done. They will seek to represent knowledge of how correctness, appropriacy, and meaningfulness can be simultaneously achieved during communication within events and situations (p. 160).

The alternative paradigm of process plans shifts the emphasis from the language system to the students’ cognitive processes.

Task-based syllabuses concentrate both language forms and functions, and hence, embody two major task-types: 1) communicative tasks which spotlight the use of the target language, and the sharing
of meaning through spoken or written communication; and 2) learning tasks which pinpoint the exploration and assimilation of the target language’s systems and codes. Communicative tasks derive from the real-life tasks which students may undertake when communicating through the target language. The task-based syllabus takes real-life, situational tasks as the principal building-blocks of the syllabus. The assumption is that participation in communicative tasks induces students to pair their traditional, formulaic, linguistic knowledge with real-life situational abilities. Such language endeavours serve as a catalyst for language mastery.

The process syllabus is markedly different from other syllabus genres because it does not principally dwell on systematising the content of a language for study; it is a scheme for classroom work. This syllabus realises two contributions: 1) a plan appertaining to the major decisions which students and teacher must effectuate during classroom learning; and 2) a reservoir of classroom activities. The process syllabus incorporates students and teacher in a process of decision making which centres on their modes of working, the contents of their syllabus, and their selections of activities and tasks.

Whilst Breen discusses four styles of syllabuses under two leading paradigms, Kranhke (1987) lists and explicates six distinct types of language teaching syllabus, which seldom transpire independently of each other. He asserts that all language teaching syllabuses are amalgamations of two or more of these six syllabuses. The six language syllabuses mentioned by Kranhke are summarised in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1 Kranhke’s (1987) six types of language teaching syllabus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllabus Type</th>
<th>Content of Language Teaching</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural/formal</td>
<td>Grammatical forms and structures</td>
<td>Nouns, verbs, past tense, subordinate clauses, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notional – functional</td>
<td>Functions that are performed when language is used or the notions that language is used to express</td>
<td>Functions: informing, greeting, requesting, etc. Notions: Age, color, time, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational</td>
<td>A collection of real or imaginary situations in which language occurs or is used</td>
<td>Buying a book at the bookstore, seeing the doctor, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills-based</td>
<td>A collection of specific abilities that may play a part in using language</td>
<td>Giving effective oral presentation, writing a letter to a friend, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task-based</td>
<td>Series of complex and purposeful tasks that students need to perform with the language they are learning Integration of a variety of skills is necessary for completing the tasks</td>
<td>Applying for a job, getting housing information over the telephone, reading a textbook for another course, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-based</td>
<td>Teaching some content or information using the language which the students are also learning</td>
<td>Science course in English, or mathematics course in English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section of the literature review has dedicated itself to a deliberation of the foremost methods of curriculum and course design. Some models and structures of curriculum and course design, as well as a variety of syllabuses, have also been broached. The content of this portion of the literature review contributes to the current study in terms of curriculum and course design theory. By examining the components of various curriculum and course design models and structures, as well as the systems which undergird them, this section of the literature review accentuates the four focus areas in the adapted course evaluation approach effectuated in the current study.
3.2. Context and Curriculum Change Implementation in TESOL Industry

Although the opinions of teaching professionals regarding curriculum change wield significant influence in educational reform (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2014; Fullan, 2007), scholarly literature reveals a markedly reduced teacher role in actual curriculum change (Handler, 2010). Concurrent research attests that when the input of teaching professionals is excluded, and that when instructional staff must acquiesce to top-down mandates, the morale of teachers declines. In turn, favourable realisation of educational reform is hindered (Helsby & McCulloch, 2002). Within Teaching of English as a Second language (TESOL), increasing documentation connotes that a deficit of teacher awareness of, and input in, curriculum change and educational reform may contribute to the possible shortcomings of both (Elyas & Picard, 2013; Alwan & Troudi, 2010; Wedell, 2003; Assalahi, 2013; Al-Mohanna, 2010). Academic critics (Giroux, 1988; Pennycook, 1989), underscore that teaching professionals are social constructionists whose opinions on curriculum change and application must be availed of. They further lament the top-down-command, and so-called ‘rational’ tendencies, wherein instructional staff are objectified as mere ‘results of change’, as opposed to harbingers of it. It is due to the viewpoints above that there is a heightened recognition of curriculum change, design, and general educational reform, as diverse philosophic undertakings which come to be realised in different contexts. The succeeding essay will review the definition(s) of the curriculum change, their impact on general educational reform, and how they may influence teachers’ morale and instructional independence.
3.2.1 Curriculum Change

Curriculum change is thought of interrelatedly (Fullan, 2007). It is essential to define ‘curriculum’, whose concept is frequently fused with the term ‘syllabus’. Within education, a syllabus comprises only one aspect of a curriculum. A syllabus is ‘the specification of aims and the selection and grading of content to be used for planning...any...educational courses’ (Newby, 2000, p.590). Curriculum, on the other hand, constitutes ‘the goals, objectives, content, processes, resources, and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils...in...the school and community[,] through classroom instruction and related programs’ (Robertson, 1971, p.566).

For the current study, this researcher comprehends curriculum as the sum-total of experiences in which students participate, assisted by teachers, both within and without their school, which, in turn, consists of an analysis of student needs, as well as the utilisation of didactic materials and accurate, punctual assessment. This researcher also regards curriculum as a process. To this end, this researcher endorses the concept of curriculum change to mean the ‘changes and factors that shape or influence the learners’ experiences’ (Mackenzie & Lawler, 1948, p.274). Mackenzie and Lawler further acknowledge that curriculum change does not only transform pupils’ skills, yet additionally, their ideals, ethics, and conceptions of life.

Curriculum change tends to follow one of three patterns, or a mixture of the three (Nation & Macalister, 2010). The first possible tendency is ‘power-coercion’. It is characterised by a typical top-down dissemination of ‘what-will-be’. It recognizes teachers as mere followers- of-orders. Most often, this approach is monolithic in that it tends not to take the distinctive needs or vagaries
of each educational setting into account. It almost routinely does not take the feelings and expertise of teachers into account. This method has proven itself to culminate in failure. Instructors consistently opposed this curriculum change method (Fullan 2007).

The second variety of curriculum change is entitled ‘rational-empirical’. In this method, the top-down relationship is somewhat softened via management attempts to explain the curriculum change. That is, management undertakes some effort to acquaint the faculty with the reasons for the curriculum change. The desired outcome is that the instructional staff accept the changes. Regrettably, faculty still remain renitent to this method of curriculum change. Faculty members continue to feel excluded from the curriculum change process; that faculty are only incorporated at the last moment, as an ‘afterthought’, when ‘approval’ or acquiescence is forcibly sought by policy-makers (Fullan, 2007).

The third method of curriculum change is known as ‘normative-re-educative’. In it, teaching staff is integrated at the very initial curriculum change phase. This method exemplifies a bottom-up technique in which the opinions and expertise of teachers are earnestly sought out, and embodied in, the curriculum change (Fullan, 2007).

Though desirable, the normative-re-educative method remains an intricate procedure of ‘loss, anxiety and struggle’. As its founding maxim is the belief that curriculum change ‘cannot be assimilated unless its meaning is shared’ (Marris, 1975; cited in Fullan, 2007, p.21-22). The sharing of meaning, or the participants’ overall, general agreement regarding curriculum change, is a reflective and pensive undertaking of all participants, not only management. Additionally, the
interdisciplinary essence of education presupposes that all effort to exclude any participant group will most likely prejudice the outcome and actualisation of the curriculum change (Fullan, 2007).

The actualisation of curriculum change requires two ingredients. These are the ‘fidelity’ and ‘mutual-adaptation’ (Fullan, 2007). Fidelity signifies that curriculum change be put into practice ‘faithful’ to the manner in which it was designed and agreed upon by stakeholders. Mutual-adaptation entails, however, that some ‘space’ be allowed for reasonable adaptation during the implementation process of the newly changed curriculum (Fullan, 2007). It should be remembered that curriculum change is inclined to invigorate further novelty in instructional methodologies and materials, learning approaches, as well as opinions about the new curriculum (Fullan & Park, 1981; cited in Wang, 2006).

3.2.2 Teacher Participation and Viewpoints

Curriculum change is frequently conceived of as ‘practice change’ or as variant from ‘existing practice to a new...revised practice, in order to achieve desired learning outcomes’ (Fullan & Park, 1981; cited in Wang, 2006, p.10). Teachers are recognised as essential contributors to successful curriculum change. In fact, educational experts usually observe that teacher inclusion in curriculum change enhances success; while their exclusion often presages failure (Fullan, 2007; Barrow, 1984). Similar conclusions have been drawn in additional scholarly research on curriculum change (Elmore & Sykes, 1992; Markee, 1997; Widdowson, 1993).
The necessity for teacher involvement in successful curriculum change owes itself to the simple realisation that teachers are capable professionals whose expertise within their schools and classroom settings is well acknowledged (Assalahi, 2013). Devoid of teacher participation, the sought-after curriculum change often terminates as a fruitless, perfunctory practice of no profit (Fullan, 2007). Research avers that curriculum change can best be facilitated and consummated only if sincere efforts take into account the teaching faculty’s needs, opinions, and experience (Morris & Scott, 2003). Rejection of teacher involvement in curriculum change damages faculty morale and incites recalcitrance to the curriculum change. It also squanders a readily accessible pool of necessary knowledge for any favourable and lasting curriculum change (McLaughlin, 1987; Carless, 1998; Smith, 2005).

When appreciated as essential and avid promoters of curriculum change, the traditional personification of the teacher, as but passive purveyor of top-down directives, or the tired, classroom conduit of staid knowledge, is altered for the betterment of all. As well-versed professionals, teachers are naturally insightful advocates of curriculum change who can advise other stakeholders about the needs of learners, the best-suited instructional approaches, most apt materials, and the overall context of an educational setting (Holly, 1973; Elliot, 1994; Brown, 1995; Webb, 2002). The teaching staff contributes to curriculum change through an authentically integral situational familiarity which includes analyses of teacher, as well as learner, needs, the strengths and weaknesses of syllabi, and urgencies in instructional material renovation. Curriculum change should be dependent on a faculty’s disciplinary knowledge (Hope & Pigford, 2001). In like manner, a faculty’s professional development and guidance should remain salient within the overall scope of curriculum change (Desimone, 2002).
3.2.3 Prior Studies on English Language Curriculum Change

In the course of this researcher’s current study, a series of curriculum surveys were conducted. These surveys were focused on instructor opinions of curriculum change. Of special interest to this researcher was a qualitative investigation based on the impressions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) faculty as regards curriculum change (Troudi & Alwan, 2010).

This study took place in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Data was gathered via document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The study outcome disclosed a gamut of opinions. These oscillated from positive doubts and misgivings to a significant number of faculty members who divulged considerable dispiritedness owing to feelings of exclusion from the curriculum change process. The investigation concluded by advocating enhanced teacher participation in the curriculum change process.

Another qualitative inquiry (McGrail, 2015) spotlighted English language arts teachers’ attitudes about the curriculum change involved in the integration of technology in middle and high school English classrooms in Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America (USA). Results of semi-structured interviews unveiled the intricate makeup of curriculum change: The surveyed instructors articulated diverse opinions as regards the positive attributes of technology for their students. Overall, the rational-empirical curriculum change technique, utilised on this occasion, benignly shaped favourable teacher impressions, and found conducive to the successful realisation of this curriculum change. Still, there emerged some teacher disquietude over the curriculum change.
A third study (Wang, 2006) was carried out in a mixed-methodology manner in order to examine the application of the obligatory national college English curriculum within a Chinese tertiary educational setting. Methods of gathering data included interviews with policy-makers and administrators, in addition to questionnaires and classroom observations of EFL faculty. Although the method of curriculum change was normative-re-educative, faculty members were aggravated because middle level university managers had confined the definition of curriculum change to its traditional interpretation, and emphasised traditional examinations over holistic learning.

This lack-of-clarity perplexed instructors about the curriculum change. Workplace-power-relationships performed a significant part in teacher acquiesce to the curriculum change. Faculty followed their principals’ dictates. Those principals who could distribute work-related incentives found particularly powerful in acquiring instructor acquiescence to the curriculum change. This investigation revealed that although the method of curriculum change was the normative-re-educative, political factors within a workplace setting can also thwart inclusivity and successful curriculum change.

A fourth qualitative investigation was administered in order to ascertain the opinions of grammar teaching by three Saudi Arabian EFL intermediate school teachers. The findings discovered adverse teacher perceptions about a coming curriculum change. It was reported, “Despite the mandated communicative language approach and accompanying training
programs, teachers reported dominant forms-focused (traditional) grammar instruction, which was, for the most part, informed by consistent beliefs and influenced by prevailing contextual factors” (Assalahi, 2013, p.589).

A fifth qualitative survey was undertaken by Al-Mohanna (2010) in order to apperceive Saudi Arabian teacher opinions as regards the communicative teaching methodology in English language syllabi on the secondary level. The compilation of data included content analysis, observations and interviews. The investigative outcome laid bare a discrepancy between communicative teaching theory and in-classroom instruction. The dissonance between theory and practice owed itself to teacher dubiousness toward curriculum change, school administration, a dearth of time and materials, as well as pupil-centred personal issues. Although faculty opinions on curriculum change were partially addressed by this study, those opinions were not completely explored in the study.

In a sixth, mixed-methodology research project, Al-Yousef (2017) assessed a third-year-level Saudi Arabian course book. Data was accumulated through formats of casual interview, the questionnaire, and an analysis of content. The research project confirmed that the efficaciousness of the course book rested on a faculty’s attitudes about the teaching and learning dynamic in a given school. Teacher attitudes were centred on the traditional grammar and translation teaching method. This teaching approach was juxtaposed with the communicative paradigm of the course book so that two educational approaches were simultaneously extant in the educational settings of this study. Al-Yousef concluded that that the two teaching methods present produced a disparity.
The disparity owed itself to a variety of contributors, one of which was a shortcoming in teacher training.

Further inquiries were also effectuated (Al-Hijailan, 2015; Al-Amri, 2017) in which a ‘positivist model’ was relied upon. Though data was amassed via questionnaires, the input and opinions of faculty members was not focused upon by the studies, and remained mute. It is deemed noteworthy to point up that the findings of every research project highlighted a considerable gap between theoretical, proposed curriculum change and the practical, situational realities of that change in school and classroom.

In sum, the research described above has been carried out in an endeavour to determine teaching faculty opinions about curriculum change. It has been disclosed that teacher protestation over curriculum change owes itself to teacher estrangement and disaffection prompted by curriculum change policy-makers. Yet the entire extent to which teacher affectivity hampers curriculum change remains unknown. It should additionally be noted that a large portion of the Saudi Arabian investigations concentrated on assessments of new textbooks. Thus, teacher opinions as regards curriculum change were incompletely explored. More study is required in order to fill these knowledge deficits.
3.3 Programme Evaluation

3.3.1 Definition of Evaluation

Recently the noun ‘evaluation’ has become the focus of energetic scholarly discussion. As a consequence, its definition has changed considerably. Initially, the Latin verb ‘to evaluate’ meant ‘to strengthen’ or ‘to empower’, as remarked by Gitlin and Smyth (1989). Various interpretations of evaluation are extant in scholarly literature. All of these contrast in their breadth, abstraction and limitation. Tyler’s initial intellection of evaluation is thought to be too confined. He explains evaluation as ‘the process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are actually being realised’ (1950: 69).

Contrastingly, Richards et al. (1985: 98) describe evaluation as ‘the systematic gathering of information for purposes of making decisions.’ This definition has been criticised as too expansive because it is equally suited to other aspects of curriculum, such as needs analysis or testing (Brown, 1995).

Another definition of evaluation is offered by Fitzpatrick et al. (2004: 5): ‘the identification, clarification, and application of defensible criteria to determine an evaluation object’s value (worth or merit) in relation to those criteria’. Clearly identifying and applying ‘defensible criteria’ remains a contentious issue because the judgment of any evaluative tool will naturally vary amongst different people. Agreement on the criteria of a single evaluative tool often proves elusive. Nevo contends that selecting standards to judge an evaluative tool constitutes ‘one of the most difficult tasks in educational evaluation’ (1983: 121).
As an initial goal, it behooves professional evaluators to define evaluation. Yet, amongst professional evaluators, there exists no concurrence on evaluation. Scriven, a leader in the evaluative field, asserts that there exist approximately 60 different terminologies and contexts for evaluation. These encompass nouns and verbs exemplified by *rate, rank, adjudge, appraise, analyse, assess, review,* and *examine* (cited in Patton, 2000: 7). Defining evaluation is arduous and vexing.

Table (3.2): Selected, popular meanings of evaluation (Calidoni-Lundberg, 2006: 19).
Varied interpretations of evaluation are observable throughout scholarly literature (see Table 3.2 above). The variety of the preceding definitions lays bare the complexity of establishing agreement on evaluation. There are multiple explanations for such a wide breadth of definitions. These include (1) a significant number of educators engaged in evaluation; (2) the varied goals and intentions of diverse actors; (3) multiple methodologies; and (4), different ambitions for the future. Nevertheless, it remains possible to detect a series of consistent beliefs regarding evaluation throughout scholarly literature. Efforts to ascribe observable outputs to recognised inputs form a central belief throughout multiple definitions. Efficaciousness, responsibility and the apportionment of resources are the recurrent themes of diverse definitions. Programme delivery and implementation also compose some of the commonplace ideas regarding evaluation (Lundberg, 2006).

Yet, so much discussion and controversy regarding the nature of evaluation is injurious to the field of programme evaluation. Sawin (2000) admits the existence of grievous challenges in the evaluative field. Simply rendering a definition of evaluation is foremost. He declares that:

_There seems to be an urgent need to solve the definition problem as we clarify the boundaries of the field. In the context of certification, how can we attempt to test prospective practitioners without some consensus about how evaluation should be practiced? More fundamentally, how can we claim that evaluation is a profession if we cannot agree on such matters?_ (Sawin, 2000: 233)

Given so many multiple meanings, it is justifiable to proffer that the definition of evaluation rests wholly on the definer’s personal point of view. When educative evaluation commenced as a field of concerted study, scholars often defined it by whether course learning objectives were fulfilled. More recently, scholars have begun to descry it from a novel vantage point: Evaluation might also
signify an investigative process to locate areas in need of improvement. It is this researcher-writer’s opinion that the definition of evaluation contains both of the preceding interpretations because Brown’s definition is the most broadly encompassing and advisable. Brown explains evaluation as ‘the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum and assess its effectiveness within the context of the particular institutions involved’ (Brown, 1995: 218). It is broadly encompassing because it incorporates all the essential components that any evaluation must include.

First, evaluation is comprehended as a systemic procedure, not as an arbitrary afterthought. Further, it is an intentionally designed and deliberate event. Second, it embraces the collection data pertaining to questions or doubts in a programme. Third, evaluation is visualised as a technique of augmenting knowledge, and better informing the basis of sound programme decisions.

It is discernible from the preceding synopsis that programme evaluation may perform a variety of diverse roles. It can assist us in comprehending, verifying and augmenting the effect of academic resources on students. It might aid in pinpointing the vitalities and debilities of a programme. It may benefit programme stakeholders in confirming whether the programme is functioning as it was initially conceived. The recent heightened interest in programme evaluation spotlights its necessity in the pedagogic setting. Meaningfully defining evaluation, the intention of an evaluation, and the type of evaluation are the crucial first steps in preparing a successful evaluation programme. Prior to entertaining these issues, it will prove helpful to peruse the history of programme evaluation development.
3.3.2 Brief History of Programme Evaluation

As public complaints of government programmes began to mount in the 1950s, educational evaluation commenced to be a field of scholarly study (Guerra-Lopez, 2008). Until the late 1950s educational evaluation principally confined itself to educational assessment. This was carried out by social science researchers in a limited number of universities and organisations. It was not until the 1960s that educational evaluation began to develop as an acknowledged, well pursued arena of scholarly study. It was then that many governments began to recognise the necessity of monitoring their educational programmes for achievement and efficaciousness, as well as for difficulties and areas in need of improvement. Early educational evaluation emphasised scientific methodologies. At that time, scientific proof, resting on data collection, were the outcomes demanded above all other results. Thus, it was insisted that early educational evaluators be exclusively objective and attend solely to programme outcomes as represented by provable, numeric facts. (Fine et al., 2000; Torres & Preskill, 2001; Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005). Educational evaluations in the early decades from the 1950s to the 1970s were largely summative. The goal was to ascertain the success of educational programmes, most often by utilising external evaluators. Language programme educational evaluations were principally comparisons of didactic techniques and resources to language-learning theories. These evaluations adopted a positivistic framework which utilised large, experimental, quantitative research mechanisms (Lynch, 1996).

These nascent educational evaluation approaches came to be broadly criticised owing to several factors: (1) though there was a strong effort to be scientific, these evaluations resulted of questionable reliability, because of invalid test measurements; (2) it found it difficult to generalise
based upon the findings, because of the varied educational programme settings; (3) there had been insufficient focus on teaching and learning procedures; these, it was discovered, were sometimes neglected in their entirety; and (4), an inadequate ability to render beneficial data for later use in programme improvement (Beretta, 1992; Greenwood, 1985; Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Lynch, 1996).

The 1980s saw educational evaluation findings increasingly criticised, along with the reliance on experimental and partial-experimental techniques (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2001). In response, language education evaluations altered their focus to classroom and educational programme procedures. This refocusing permitted the collection of data which is found useful for improved educational programme development (Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Lynch, 1996). Formative educational evaluations came to be principally utilised. These evaluation types examine the actions which transpire within a programme in order to collect and to disseminate data for programme enhancement (Yang, 2009). Natural, holistic and qualitative evaluations, which were accompanied by observing classroom practices, programme content and materials, as well as student and teacher opinions, all grew to be utilised as investigatory methods, in addition to the positivistic, quantitative techniques (Lynch, 1996).

Educational programme evaluations have grown significantly over the past thirty years: Leeuw (2002: 5) correctly depicts it as a ‘growth industry’. Lundberg (2006) asserts that educational evaluation has recently grown to become its own sovereign field of interdisciplinary study. As such, it has lately showed itself as a valuable realm of study for the comprehension and application of improved approaches in educational programmes. Today there exists an increasing appreciation
for participatory, cooperative, learning-outcome, and formative evaluations which employ several different methods of measurement. These are now preferred over traditional, summative evaluations conducted by an individual evaluator.

It is equally recognised that any evaluation is likely to be biased and represent a particular political outlook (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2001). Nonetheless, evaluations of solely the summative outcomes of particular educational programmes have given way to multifaceted evaluations of a holistic curricular experience. Such change is illustrative of the degree to which the concept of evaluation has developed.

3.3.3 Purposes, Types, Approaches and Models of Evaluation

Research on English language programmes is related to English language teaching. It is essential that language teaching programmes possess a sound evaluation instrument. In this manner, changes can be effectuated to language teaching programmes as difficulties and improvements are identified (Coskun & Daloglu, 2010). As proposed by Peacock (2009), evaluation of teaching programmes is a point of departure towards the general professionalisation of all English Language Training (ELT). The necessity of evaluations for language teaching programmes is well documented by scholarly literature. Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1998: 8) assert ‘the importance of having systematic evaluation at the heart of a programme’. Numerous scholars concur with this finding, including Reid (1996), Lynch (2003) and Peacock (2009).
The objectives and purposes of any educational programme evaluation form a wide-ranging topic. Usually any programme’s objectives provide direction in order to realise that programme’s purposes. Lundberg (2006) categorises three principal sets of educational programme objectives:

- Evaluation for accountability: targeted at providing information to decision makers.
- Evaluation for knowledge: directed at generating comprehension and explanation.

Posavac and Carey (2003), on the other hand, suggest six purposes of educational programme evaluation. These are designed to plan and to improve programmes; to assess the value of programmes; and to make corrective adjustments to programmes:

- To determine unmet necessities;
- To corroborate implementation;
- To assess outcomes;
- To compare alternatives;
- To furnish knowledge to preserve and to enhance quality;
- To identify negative results (cited in Erozan, 2015: 24).

Although the preceding categories are essential, one should remember that there is no distinct demarcation between them. They interact and overlap at multiple points. The purpose of the current study is to evaluate weaknesses in Basic Language Skills Courses (BELC), and to expose the challenges that students and teachers confront. The result of the current study will afford academic
administrators with a corpus of coherent information. It is hoped that those educational authorities will utilise the findings of the current study in order to improve the quality of the BELC, and consequently, the quality of the entire educational programme.

In an article entitled Does Evaluation Build or Destroy Trust?, Schwarz and Struhkamp (2007) question whether the recent, increased use of evaluation has provoked negative consequences. They recounted two instances of a plausible loss of trust during evaluative procedures. They asserted that ‘if uncontrolled, unplanned or unreflected evaluation is used … it involves a certain danger of destroying trust while being (or claiming to be) a possible trust-building tool’ (Schwarz & Struhkamp, 2007: 334). Oddly, the correlation between evaluation and trust has garnered only scant mention in scholarly literature. Further examining the topic of evaluation and trust might expose additional issues and ideas. Evaluation surely remains a vital and beneficial device for educational programmes. Still, it behooves educators to utilise evaluation cautiously so that it will not impede learning or harm socially essential learning environment attributes such as trust.

3.3.4 Evaluation Types

It merits mention beforehand that the words ‘types’, ‘approaches’ and ‘models’ of evaluation are frequently utilised interchangeably. Such lack of lexical agreement in educational programmes provokes confusion. Researchers Worthen and Sanders, amongst others, have appealed for standardising these terms. They contend: ‘The semantic undergrowth in the field of evaluation could hardly be termed univocal; some clearing of redundant verbiage is clearly called for’ (1987: 145). Altschuld and Kumar declare that one of the reasons for which evaluation does not receive
the attention which it deserves in scholarly literature is because of ‘the way labels and key terms
are used in articles, papers, presentations, and other entries in the database’ (2002: 178). In the
current study, this researcher-writer encountered confusion because diverse terminology was
employed to describe the same method, model or technique. The plea for consistent employment
of educational programme evaluation terminology is a necessity.

3.3.4.1 Formative versus Summative

Formative and summative methods form the two principal educational programme evaluations.
These categorisations were first propounded by Scriven in the latter 1960s (Chen, 2005). Scriven
(1998) expounds that the purpose of evaluation is located in the manner in which evaluative
outcomes are utilised.

One use of an evaluative outcome might be to draw a conclusion regarding the value of a particular
educational programme. This is an example of ‘summative evaluation’.

Another use of evaluative results may be to suggest improvements to an educational programme,
or components for the development of an educational programme. This is an instance of ‘formative
evaluation’.

Summative evaluation is preferred when an evaluation is utilised to monitor performance and to
ascertain responsibility (Rossi et al., 2004). Summative evaluation is utilised at the conclusion of
an educational programme. It collects data in order to decide whether an educational programme
was favourable and effectual. This results in the determination of whether an educational programme should be continued or cancelled (Erozan, 2015).

Formative evaluation is preferred when an evaluation is to stimulate learning and to ameliorate an educational programme. Formative evaluation transpires during the opening stages in the development of an educational programme. Its purpose is gathering data to inform about improvements to an educational programme. A comparison of summative and formative evaluations is exhibited in Table 3.2. Richards (2001: 288) proposed that the succeeding questions be answered for the implementation formative evaluations:

- Was sufficient time allotted to the objectives?
- Did the placement test position students at the correct level?
- Was the textbook well received?
- Was the teaching methodology appropriate?
- Was there sufficient practice work?
- Must the amount of work be heightened or lessened?
- Was the pacing of the content presentation appropriate?

The evaluator performs different roles in the summative and formative evaluation types. During and after a summative evaluation, the evaluator strives to summarise whether the educational programme realised its objectives. In a formative evaluation, an evaluator assists, and provides suggestions to, educational administrators and programme developers in order that the latter may
The current study is a formative evaluation. It was carried out while the educational programme was in progress. It aims at enhancing the FP generally, and the BELC specifically.

**Table (3.3): Comparison of formative and summative evaluation (adapted from Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007: 25).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>Formative Evaluation</th>
<th>Summative Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Quality assurance; Provide an overall judgment of the evaluated programme improvement</td>
<td>Determining accountability for successes and failures; promoting understanding of assessed phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Guidance for decision making</td>
<td>Determining accountability for successes and failures; promoting understanding of assessed phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functions</td>
<td>Provides feedback for improvement</td>
<td>Informs consumers about an evaluated variable, for example, its quality, cost, utility and safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Prospective and proactive</td>
<td>Retrospective and proactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When conducted</td>
<td>During development or ongoing operations</td>
<td>After completion of development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular types of service</td>
<td>Assists goal setting, planning, and management</td>
<td>Assists consumers in making wise decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foci</td>
<td>Goals, alternative courses of action, plans, implementation of plans, interim results</td>
<td>Completed projects, established programmes, or finished products, ultimate outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>All aspects of an evolving, developing program</td>
<td>Comprehensive range of dimensions concerned with merit, worth, probity, safety, equity, and significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Managers, staff, connected closely to insiders</td>
<td>Sponsors, consumers and other interested stakeholders; projected especially to outsiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation plans</td>
<td>Flexible, emergent, responsive, interactive</td>
<td>Relatively fixed, not emergent or evolving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical methods</td>
<td>Case studies, observation, interviews, not controlled experiments</td>
<td>Wide range of methods, including case studies, controlled experiments, and checklists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>Periodic, often relatively informal, responsive to client and staff requests</td>
<td>Cumulative record and assessment of what was done and accomplished; contrast of evaluated with critical competitors; cost-effectiveness analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between</td>
<td>Often forms the basis for summative evaluations</td>
<td>Compiles and supplements previously collected formative evaluation information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>formative and summative evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.4.2 Product versus Process

Within evaluative scholarly literature a distinction is made between ‘product’ and ‘process’ evaluation. Product evaluation ascertains the extent to which an educational programme’s objectives are realised. Its purpose is to appraise, calculate and determine the value of the educational ‘product’. Additionally, it measures the extent to which the educational programme realised the desires of the participant-stakeholders (Chen, 2005). Evaluators undertake product evaluations in order to determine whether a programme is worthy of continuation, or utilisation in other settings (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). Product evaluation is criticised in much scholarly literature because its focus is narrowly confined to inputs and outputs. It has also fallen under criticism because it neglects other educational programme characteristics, and tends to treat those characteristics as a ‘black box’ (Bennett, 2003: 26).

Throughout its initial implementation period, product evaluation was frequently recurred to, yet recently process evaluation has gained significant attention as an investigatory tool of educational programme procedures (Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Lynch, 1996; Minamoto & Nagao, 2006; Hashimoto et al., 2010).

A process evaluation, for example, is a monitoring tool whose design continuously assesses the process and progress of an educational programme. It specifically evaluates the manner in which objectives are put in practice (Davidson, 2005). One of its principal purposes is to purvey faculty and academic administrators with assessments and suggestions in case alterations in educational programming become necessary. Its concerns often encompass the following concerns: (1)
implementation of programme activities on schedule and in accord with the objectives; (2) efficiently utilised resources; and (3), duties carried out by programme participants; (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). An additional request is that (4) programme students and lecturers assess programme quality. According to Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, ‘a process evaluator has much work to do in monitoring and documenting an intervention’s activities and expenditures (2007: 341), alongside duties such as interviewing principal participants, as well as spotlighting challenges which stakeholders point out (Preskill et al., 2003).

Chen (2005) recommends that process evaluation occur at routine intervals with the mission of enhancing the educational programme. Scriven (1976) attests that in process evaluation, all of the components of an educational programme, such as objectives, materials, instructional approaches and testing techniques, must be investigated and evaluated. Building on this viewpoint, Stake contended that a process evaluator consider the succeeding topics when administering an educational programme evaluation: (1) commence with an evaluative rationale; (2) decide on a descriptive operation; and (3), terminate with a judgment operation (1967: 41). This fashion of process evaluation underscores an intriguing trait in that it verifies the interplay of the descriptive and the judgmental operations within an evaluation process (Barnawi, 2011). Stake, however, may not realise that it might sometimes be difficult to employ this evaluative method with exactitude. Such evaluative process may prove cumbersome because it tracks an entire educational programme from its initiation until its terminus, commencing with the educational programme rationale, and continuing through the programme until it concludes with its findings. The evaluation of an educational programme from its inception constitutes an exacting endeavour (Maclean et al., 2000).
A process evaluation shares similarity with a formative evaluation because it is carried out at routine periods of time throughout the life of an educational programme with the goal of bettering that programme. As with formative evaluation, a process evaluation is a continuous process which attempts to investigate diverse components of a specific educational programme, such as programme objectives, teaching content, resource materials, pedagogic techniques, and testing practices. Such evaluations examine the strengths of an educational programme and seek out possibilities for supporting those strengths. It additionally endeavour to point up any programme deficiencies and proposes improvements (Richards, 2001).

The current study follows a process evaluation format. The process evaluation model was selected because the current study attempts to evaluate the general GR department and English Language Department procedures from the perspective of students and lecturers. The process evaluation aids in pinpointing challenges which appear within an educational programme, as delineated by the stakeholders. Proposals to improve learning are put forth for academic administrators to act upon.

3.3.5 Approaches to Programme Evaluation

Diverse evaluative techniques have developed from the inception of evaluative research in the 1930s. Researchers have offered a myriad of evaluative methods, with likenesses and dissimilarities, since the 1930s. Accordingly, a sole categorisation scheme for all practices does not exist. Researchers decide upon which practices to pursue in accordance with their educational programme evaluation aims, restrictions and preferred results. To reiterate, educational programme evaluation has been variously labelled and categorised by diverse researchers.
One categorisation of educational programme evaluation was established by Fitzpatrick et al., (2004), who arranged educational programme evaluations in five categories: (1) Objectives-oriented; (2) Management-oriented; (3) Consumer-oriented; (4) Expertise-oriented; and (5), Participant-oriented.

The objectives-oriented method is the most widely utilised for educational programme evaluations. It concentrates on course and programme objectives, and determines the degree to which the objectives are fulfilled. The management-oriented method centres around the needs of management. In a like manner, the consumer-oriented method dwells on educational consumers. It provides evaluations to satisfy needs of educational consumers. The expertise-oriented method is one of the oldest and most often employed methods. It relies on experts to evaluate educational programmes. To conclude, the participant-oriented method makes use of naturalistic surveying, and the personal participation, of an educational programme’s participants.

Another taxonomy of educational programme evaluations was propounded by Wilkes (1999), who advised that diverse evaluation practices be utilised to cull the largest possible pool of data. Four evaluative educational programme practices were developed. These consist of the succeeding: (1) Student-oriented practice; (2) Programme-oriented practice; (3) Institution-oriented practice; and (4), Stakeholder-oriented practice. Those methods of evaluative practice were arranged in accordance with their evaluative emphasis.
Recent evaluative groupings were posed by Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007). They systematised 26 techniques in five classifications: (1) Pseudo-evaluative techniques which advance incorrect or unfinished data outcomes. These embody five different so-called practices, such as Politically Controlled Studies, and Pandering evaluations; (2) Questions-and-Methods-Oriented techniques take in 14 subsidiary evaluative methods, such as Objectives-Based Studies and Case Study Evaluations; (3) Improvement- and Accountability-Oriented techniques incorporate three evaluative subsets, such as Decision- and Accountability-Oriented approaches, and Consumer-Oriented Studies; (4) Social Agenda and Advocacy Approaches techniques consist of three evaluative practices, such as Responsive Evaluation and Constructivist Evaluation; and (5), Eclectic Evaluation Approaches techniques which houses one evaluative type known as the Utilization-Focused evaluation.

### 3.3.5.1 Case Study Evaluation Approach

The case study evaluation approach exercises a great influence on the current study. There thus follows a summary of related scholarly literature on it. In educational programme evaluation, the case study approach examines an educational programme in its geographic, cultural, organisational and historical contexts. It aims to examine an educational programme’s internal practices and operations (Stufflebeam, 2001). Fitzpatrick et al., claim that ‘the case study is one of the most frequently used designs in evaluation’ (2004: 307). It has been declared that all evaluation studies are case studies (Stake, 1995, cited in McDonough & McDonough, 1997). Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) state that educational programme evaluation research, which is modelled after a
case study, is a well targeted, lucidly described, analysis and synthesis of the educational programme in question.

A case study, however, is not merely a data-collection instrument. Instead, it composes an approach that embraces and employs an array of evaluative techniques. (Berg, 2001). In order to carry out case studies well, evaluators must make use of a broad range of qualitative and quantitative approaches. These encompass diaries, archival records, interviews, observations, surveys, questionnaires and rating scales (Yin, 2003). Evaluators do not control treatments and subjects. They investigate educational programmes as they naturally transpire and progress (Stufflebeam, 2001). An evaluator must observe an educational programme within a particular setting, and then portray the manner in which the setting affects that educational programme. In a case study evaluation approach, the evaluator does not select the questions to be asked; rather, the questions must be designed so that they are of the most relevance to the evaluation’s principal participants. It is for this reason that the evaluator must remain in regular contact with the programme’s participants, and routinely dialogue with them, in order to interpret the evaluation’s outcomes.

The disadvantages of the case study approach in educational programme evaluation are several. The foremost pitfall is that some evaluators tend to take the openness and scant controls inherent in the case study approach as a licence to administer it haphazardly, without systematic procedures. This conduces to the circumvention of standard, investigatory steps which guarantee that the results are trustworthy. Stufflebeam and Shinkfield point up another drawback: ‘... because of a preoccupation with descriptive information, the case study evaluator may not collect sufficient judgmental information to permit a broad-based assessment of a program’s merit and worth’ (2007: 80).
It is essential for case study evaluators to determine an evaluative model which they will pursue. Such decision making will aid the evaluator in setting scientific, laboratory-like controls before the evaluation commences. In this manner the results and interpretations rendered will prove reliable. It is further critical to amass sufficient information regarding an educational programme in order to render an accurate conclusion of it. Additional facts about, and reasoning in favour of, the case study approach which was selected for the current study, are offered in section 4.5 of the succeeding chapter.

3.3.6 Models of Programme Evaluation

In the field of evaluation, ‘model’ is employed to ‘describe an approach which has been developed by a particular person’ (Bennett, 2003: 17), and constitutes a particular evaluative design technique (ibid.). A systematised evaluative model is vital in evaluative studies because it assists the evaluator in determining the means of gathering data; what research methods to utilise; and which stakeholders to focus on. Alkin and Ellett (1990) attest that a firm comprehension of the varied evaluative models affords one the knowledge to administer educational programme evaluations in a reliable manner. Evaluative models grant evaluators a broad array of possibilities for realising evaluations. In order to determine which evaluative model to employ, it is essential that an evaluator review the myriad of evaluative models beforehand.

Scholarly literature delineates several evaluative models. In recent times, the amount and variety of evaluative models has risen. New evaluative models have appeared in scholarly literature, contingent upon the reason for evaluation, the evaluator administering it, the evaluative techniques
employed, and the evaluative queries posed and responded to (Erozan, 2005). Evaluative models present different evaluative concerns such as accountability (summative evaluation), programme improvement (formative evaluation), goal-based, free-goal, or value-added evaluations (Ewell & Boyer, 1988; Thomas, 1991), quantitative evaluation (Taba, 1966), qualitative evaluation (Willis, 1978; Patton, 1987), and process versus product evaluations (Taba, 1966; Eisner, 1977). Evaluators select the evaluative model which they believe to correspond most suitably to the evaluation of a particular educational programme. The scholarly literature on educational programme evaluation is rife with evaluative models and multiple evaluative techniques. These embrace Tyler’s (1942) behavioural objectives evaluative model; Scriven’s (1967) consumer-oriented evaluative model; Stake’s (1967) responsive evaluative model; Hammond’s (1973) evaluative model; Provus’s (1971) discrepancy evaluative model; Stufflebeam’s (1971) Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) evaluative model; Bellon and Handler’s (1982) formative evaluative model for educational programme improvement; Brown’s (1995) evaluative model; Lynch’s (1996) Context Adaptive [evaluative] Model (CAM); and others. These varied evaluative models are necessitated by the multitudinous circumstances surrounding the numerous educational programmes extant today.

3.3.6.1 Developing an Eclectic Approach for Evaluation

Of the several styles of programme evaluation, not one exists by itself in a vacuum. Instead, each method, with its fortes and debilities, should be paired with others in order to confect an effective programme evaluation. Utilising what Worthen and colleagues (1997) term an ‘eclectic approach’, innovative evaluators select, and combine, concepts from each evaluative style in order to fit their
particular setting. As Worthen et al. (1997) describe, ‘In very few instances have we adhered to any particular “model” of evaluation. Rather, we find we can ensure a better fit by snipping and sewing together bits and pieces off the more traditional ready-made approaches and even weaving a bit of homespun, if necessary, rather than by pulling any existing approach off the shelf’ (p. 183).

The innovative practices, to which many educators aspire, can accommodate and build on more traditional mandates (Ferrero, 2006). Although the models above seem sharply distinct from one another, some evidence of compatibility exists in current theories of evaluation. While the models proposed by the experts (Tyler, Stufflebeam, Stake and Scriven) differed in many of their details, several common emphases emerged in the approaches: 1) study the context; 2) determine client concerns; 3) use qualitative methods; 4) assess opportunity cost (What other opportunities is the student missing by taking this course?); 5) be sensitive to unintended effects; and 6) develop different reports for different audiences.

By using these common emphases, along with insights generated from analysing other models, it is possible to develop a list of criteria which can be used in both developing and assessing evaluation models.

An effective curriculum evaluation model does the following:

1. It can be implemented without making inordinate demands upon the institute’s resources.
2. It can be applied to all levels of curriculum—programs of study, fields of study and courses of study.
3. It makes provisions for assessing all significant aspects of curriculum—the written, the taught, the supported, the tested, and the learned curricula.

4. It makes useful distinctions between merit (intrinsic value) and worth (value for a given context).

5. It is responsive to the special concerns of the institute stakeholders and is able to provide them with the data which they need for decision making.

6. It is goal oriented, emphasising objectives and outcomes.

7. It is sensitive to, and makes appropriate provisions for, assessing unintended effects.

8. It pays due attention to, and makes provisions for, assessing formative aspects of evaluation.

9. It is sensitive to, and makes provisions for, assessing the special context for the curriculum.

10. It is sensitive to, and makes provisions for, assessing the aesthetic or qualitative aspects of the curriculum.

11. It makes provisions for assessing the opportunity cost—those opportunities which are lost by students who study this curriculum.

12. It uses both quantitative and qualitative methods for gathering and analysing data.

13. It presents findings in reports which are responsive to the special needs of several audiences.

The criteria above will obviously result in an eclectic approach to evaluation, one that draws from the strengths of several different models. Such an eclectic process has been used successfully in evaluating a field of study; this same process also can be used to evaluate a course of study with the scope of the evaluation reduced.

When the aims and questions of the current study were analysed in the light of extant evaluation models for improvement, an Eclectic Approach has been designed for the current study. This
Eclectic Approach will focus on four areas: (1) goals, (2) organization, (3) operations and (4) outcomes which are considered the main dimensions or elements of any programme.

The first focus area, ‘goals’, treats of the expectations of the educational programme. It is primordial to comprehend the expectations and philosophy which underlie an educational programme in order to enhance its goals. If educational programme goals, expectations and philosophy are not synchronised, efforts must be made to make them compatible as part of the educational programme improvement process. Michael Scriven (1972) in his Goal-Free Model was the first to question the assumption that goals or objectives are crucial in the evaluation process. It is crucial that the selection of educational programme goals to be based on student shortcomings as well as interests. Educational programme goals are compendiums of expected results, which naturally correspond to the shortfalls and desires of the education programme’s participants.

The second focus area, ‘organisation’, scrutinises those variables which affect curriculum performance. These variables may embrace the types of educational programmes offered; the resource materials procurable; the manner in which those resource materials are utilised; the manner in which communication is undertaken and decisions are made; and the organisation of the educational programme (Bellon & Handler, 1982). It has been observed that evaluative models have largely neglected the organisational impact on educational programme development. When allotted sufficient attention, it is feasible for a programme’s organisational structure to perform a positive, central role in educational programme improvement ([ibidem] ibid.).
The third focus area, ‘operations’, concentrates on the daily administration of educational programmes, as well as those decisions which influence learning. The implementation of curriculum is also investigated to ascertain the degree to which the educational programme goals are realised in the daily, class learning objectives. Academic administrators who are responsible for curriculum must seek out methods to reform course content and skills. Stufflebeam’s Context, Input, Process, Product Model seemed to appeal to educational leaders because it emphasized the importance of the processes of producing evaluative data for decision making. An evaluation of educational programme ‘operations’ might aid lecturers in honing and augmenting their repositories of best teaching practices. This, in turn, may advance learning.

The final focus area, ‘outcomes’, points out the influence of an educational programme on its participants, as well as on the pedagogic environs in which the programme takes place. Robert Stake in his Responsive Model (1975) made a major contribution to curriculum evaluation in his development of the responsive model, because the responsive model is based explicitly on the assumption that the concerns of the stakeholders—those for whom the evaluation is done—should be important in determining the evaluation issues

Therefore, the Eclectic Approach to evaluation is deemed appropriate for the current study because “it is designed to help the researcher examine the evaluation methods cornucopia and the local situation, then choose the model, methods, values, criteria indicators, and intended users that best fit the local situation.” Patton (1990) and this will accordingly help evaluate and improve the Basic English Language Course (BELC), which is the main aim of this research. Moreover, the Eclectic Approach indicates that the participants of the evaluation must be clearly identified and personally
engaged at the beginning of the evaluation process which is compatible with the interpretive–social constructivist theoretical framework underpinning the current study and the case study methodological approach followed.

Scholarly evaluative literature acknowledges that there exist plentiful evaluative models with diverse terminologies. Admittedly, such evaluative variety provokes much difficulty for novice evaluators. It is vexing to determine which evaluative model one should employ. Wilkes (1999) substantiates that the existence of such numerous evaluative models foments confusion. It is thus incumbent that the evaluator determines the most expedient evaluative model for the educational programme under evaluation. It is equally essential that an evaluator coherently justify the selection of a particular evaluative model.

Of the diverse educational programme evaluative models, there does not exist one universally better model to employ. Patton (2008) asserts that when deciding upon educational programme evaluation research, topics such as the unique, individual nature and characteristics of a programme, and programme purpose, background and setting must all be considered when determining evaluative model.

3.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The current study attempts to evaluate the Basic English Language Course (BELC) at the Foundation Programme (FP) at the educational institute, as a prelude to suggesting improvements for the English language programme and its courses. With this objective in mind, scholarly
literature was perused for evaluative models that have similar improvements as their goal. Formative evaluations more greatly share the social constructivist philosophy favoured by the current study. Thus, the selected evaluative approach for the current study should be in keeping with this philosophic theory. A detailed deliberation of the aforementioned is located in Chapter IV. This chapter treats of the methodology selected for the current study.

After weighing the objectives and purposes of the current study, and in consideration of the evaluative models for educational programme improvement, it was concluded that the Eclectic Approach for evaluation aforementioned was the most suitable for the current study. The four focus areas under evaluation (goals, organisation, operations and outcomes) were chosen by the author. They constitute the principal characteristics of an educational programme. As a consequence, they also form the target area of any evaluative process. Yet in the current study, only the Basic English Language Courses (BELC) were evaluated, not the whole FP educational programme. Stated in another manner, this evaluation was conducted at the component and course level, not at the entire educational programme level. In order to realise the transition from an entire educational programme evaluation to solely a component and course evaluation, the four focus areas were substituted by four different focus areas to be evaluated. These are (1) course goals and objectives; (2) course content and instructional materials; (3) teaching and learning practices; and (4), student assessment and feedback mechanisms.

The selection of these four focus areas was based on the stated needs of the participants. Following initial, informal interviews and the completion of brief questionnaires with the students and lecturers of the FP, these four focus areas were spotlighted as the most contentious areas of the
English language courses. As a result, they were proposed as the basis and focus of the current study. Such targeting is well founded in scholarly literature.

Stufflebeam & Shinkfield (2007: 217) declare that ‘stakeholders must play a key role in determining the evaluation questions, variables, and interpretive criteria’. They reinforce that ‘the questions addressed in constructivist studies cannot be determined independently of participants’ interactions … Questions emerge in the process of formulating and discussing the evaluation’s purpose, program’s rationale, planning the schedule of discussions, and obtaining various initial [persons’] views of the programme to be evaluated’ (ibid.: 219).

It is believed that this evaluative Eclectic Approach will most enhance the Basic English language Courses (BELC) and the Foundation Programme (FP). That enhancement is the principal thrust of the current study. The evaluative Eclectic Approach design and processes are believed to be the most suitable to the interpretive, social constructivist structural theory which undergirds the current study.

The evaluative Eclectic Approach necessitates a depiction of the educational programme’s social setting. It also directs much emphasis to the educational programme’s participants’ opinions and necessities. It is nonetheless deemed noteworthy to remind that although this evaluative Eclectic Approach was judged to be the most compatible with the current study, its success was not assured, as this evaluative enterprise constitutes this researcher-writer’s first such endeavour. For this reason, prior to undertaking the current study, additional readings and perusals were vigorously pursued to ensure that the evaluative Eclectic Approach was the most opportune.
Again, this researcher-writer reminds that there is no single, panacean evaluative model for administering all educational programme evaluations. Much revolves around an educational programme evaluation’s purpose, the type of programme under evaluation, the traits of the stakeholders, the amount of time, and the kinds of available resources. Still, this should not be taken to signify that evaluators have licence to engage in whichever processes they fancy without recurrence to systemic methodologies. To reiterate, it is crucial to configure one’s evaluations in a transparent, scientific manner. This theme will be renewed, and its validity confirmed, in the methodological deliberation of Chapter IV.

3.5 Previous Studies on English Programmes evaluation

There are many evaluation studies conducted abroad and in the Middle East. While some of these studies make a thorough curriculum evaluation, some others choose to evaluate only one particular part of a curriculum.

In Kuwait, Al-Mutawa (1986) directed an investigation of the opinions of students. This investigation concerned itself with learning English in the College of Education at Kuwait University. The study discovered that although respondents were not proficient in their English listening, reading, and writing, their speaking skills were still less proficient. Two principal causations were pointed up. They were the inadequate English instruction received by students in their pre-tertiary schools. The findings verified that the overall course evaluation was favourable.
Yet, only one observation technique was utilised. For this reason the study may be reproved for applying only one evaluative method.

In the UAE, Al-Mansoori (2001) administered an evaluation of the EFL education programme at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU). A responsive-constructivist evaluative method was selected. Conceptual and procedural guidelines, rooted in basic tenets of Fourth Generation Evaluation, were designed. Eighty-one students in their final year in the UAEU responded to a questionnaire about their UAEU language learning experience. Afterwards, ten percent were interviewed. Fourteen decision makers from the UAEU, and the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Education, were also interviewed, utilising an in-depth, opened-ended conversational interview approach. Descriptive and inferential statistics were incorporated in order to analyse the quantitative data. The qualitative data were classified via comparative analysis. On the basis of the problems and necessities discovered, proposals for programme planning improvements were developed.

In a recent international study Ustunluoglu et al. (2012) directed an evaluation which was designed to describe the process of developing a new teaching programme in the Preparatory Programme, at the School of Foreign Languages, Izmir University, in the Republic of Turkey. It also evaluated the programme’s effectiveness. Two hundred thirty-six first year students, and 48 faculty members from five different faculties, took part in the study. The findings revealed a compelling correlation between student proficiency scores, and the students’ perceptions of their own abilities. The findings also demonstrated a considerable difference in student perceptions of competence as regards levels at the Preparatory Programme. Although faculty members claimed that the
Preparatory Programme, in general, realised the necessities of the students, students showed some difficulty with tasks of higher order thinking skills. The study proposed several remedial plans: (1) a series of training sessions to heighten general student awareness; (2) lengthening the time of the learning modules; (3) rethinking the order of course objectives at the Intermediate and Upper-Intermediate levels; and (4), achieving greater cooperation between faculties in order to augment the awareness of the faculties’ mutual assumptions and expectations.

Tarnopolsky (2000) formatively evaluated a language programme in Ukraine. In the evaluation, Tarnopolsky examined the writing course, and observed the past and present situations in teaching writing. The needs analysis findings evinced a necessity of incorporating writing in EFL courses by utilising the process-genre method. The first version of the writing course used the process-genre method. It was then evaluated. Some weaknesses were identified. The writing course was communicative, but more entertaining activities were needed. Upon including these, the second version of the course was concluded to be more rewarding.

Moreover, a study known as Polytechnic Development Project-Employer Study (1999) as cited in Norzilah, et. al. (2007) was conducted to evaluate the outcome of the new ESP courses in the polytechnics involving prospective employers, subject lecturers, polytechnic graduates and students. The findings showed that the overall performance of the polytechnics graduates were still below the employers’ expectations especially in or communication skills in English language. In order to curb the problems of deteriorating English language proficiency amongst the polytechnic students, more intensive programmes and co-curricular activities pertaining to improving the students English language proficiency were conducted in all polytechnics nationwide.
Another large scale study was carried out in Malaysia in 2003, known as Research Studies on Polytechnics was conducted on the final semester (both certificate and diploma level) polytechnic students’ English language proficiency (Ministry of Education, 2003). The findings of this study revealed that majority of the students enrolled in polytechnics were with low grade (P7, P8, F9) of English language in their Malaysian Education Certificate (SPM) examination and only less than 10% of the total sample received higher grade (A1 or A2). The most current research on the issue of English Language proficiency among polytechnic students was a longitudinal

Likewise, a study conducted by Polytechnic’s Graduate Tracer Study from 2004 until 2008 as cited in Ahmad Yasruddin et. al (2010). Once again, the industry expressed their concerns over the lack of English language proficiency amongst the polytechnic graduates not only in speaking skills but writing skills as well. Hence, it was concluded in the study that the teaching and learning of the English language still could not produce graduates with an acceptable English proficiency required by the industry.

In addition, a recent study evaluated English for Specific Purposes (ESP) syllabuses. Habtoor (2012) carried out a study to evaluate First Class: English for Engineering, as an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbook taught to the sophomore students of Engineering at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The study tried to draw out the opinions of the teachers on the textbook regarding its components, its practicality, its activities, the language type, the subject, the content, and the four basic language skills incorporated in the book, the sub-skills of grammar and vocabulary, and how they are offered. It also investigated the appropriateness of the book regarding
the learners’ level and their needs. The results revealed that there was a consensus among the teachers on the suitability of the textbook. The results also revealed that the textbook corresponds to the teachers’ expectations and meet the needs of the students in the Saudi Arabian context.

Huang (2017) applied the CIPP evaluation approach to investigate the effectiveness of the chemical engineering curriculum at a five-year college in Taiwan from the perspective of employers, teachers, and graduates. A survey instrument was used to measure the respondents' perceptions of the curriculum's general, required, and elective courses. It was found that the quality of education in the five-year college courses did provide chemical engineering graduates with the skills, abilities, professional attitudes, self-confidence, and humanistic qualities they needed. The following findings emerged from the study: (1) the art, geography, and history parts were considered the least effective courses and in need of some changes or improvement; (2) employers more than the teachers thought that the college was most effective at providing students with interpersonal skills, self-confidence and good humanistic qualities; and (3) the respondents considered that for the future the focus of the chemical engineering curriculum should be on environmental and energy engineering, bioengineering, plasma processing (microelectronics manufacturing), special chemicals manufacturing and pharmaceutical engineering.

Finally, Henry and Roseberry (1999) also evaluated the writing course at the University of Brunei, in Negara Brunei Darussalam. They endeavoured to evaluate the instructional methods and materials, which were prepared according to the process-genre method, by examining whether learners could augment their skill in texturing their writing after process-genre based language instruction. Also observed was whether the learners were able to compose texts that conformed
more approximately to the permissible ‘move-structure’ after process-genre based language instruction. The learners in this evaluation consisted of 13 first-year students. The findings pointed up that the process-genre, both in the focus language and the mother tongue, can be advantageous for learner output as regards combining and arranging information.

The preceding illustrates that second language programme evaluations have focused on particular topics. Some topics have included the comparison of diverse instructional methods, or the comparison of the instructional styles of distinct teachers (Johnston & Peterson, 1994). Beginning in the 1990s, circumstances in general educational programmes began to influence language programme evaluations (Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005). The focus and structure of language programme evaluations required rethinking. Classroom activities are now more precisely centred, and novel technologies have been confected in order to depict classroom occurrences better (Wallace, 1991). Practices began to transition to more naturalistic techniques (Patton, 1990). These developments exhibit a scholarly interest in obtaining more comprehensive and context-based views of language programmes. Yet, so many varied educational programmes confirm that language programme evaluations will be complicated, and include a large number of structural elements. In consideration of the novel research and recent developments, there thus remains much to be accomplished in order to reform and to upgrade language programmes by utilising language programme evaluations.
3.6 Summary

This chapter outlined and interpreted the fundamental premises and frameworks of the current study. It commenced with the contentious topic of curriculum and course design then it defined evaluation. Afterwards, it sketched a brief history of evaluation. It also elaborated upon the various goals, models and techniques of evaluation. Thereafter, it turned to a deliberation of some language evaluation studies.

At this chapter’s conclusion, a discussion of some prior evaluative studies was offered. The scholarly literature indicated that the current study is unique in its investigation and evaluation of the language portion of the FP at the educational institute. This chapter found beneficial in establishing the various research tools which were employed in the current study. These tools consisted of the questionnaire, the semi-structured interview and student journal-diaries.
Chapter IV
Methodology and Research Design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the methodology and design of the current study. The chapter will describe the current study’s different phases of planning, development and implementation.

First, the reader will become acquainted with the strategy which was utilised in order to respond to the current study’s research questions. This will be accomplished by familiarising the reader with the overall philosophy which underpins the current study. The reader will be introduced to the research framework, the epistemological assumptions, and the rationale which have been adopted whilst administering the current study.

Second, the reader will be presented with the research design and research questions. This will be succeeded by a description of the data collection procedures. This description will embrace the manner in which the data collection instruments were designed. The reader will then be oriented as regards the current study’s methods of sampling and administration. This orientation will be followed by a description of the data analysis procedures.

Third, the strategies for ensuring the quality of the data will be disclosed. These strategies include piloting, reliability and validity, trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and triangulation. The chapter concludes with a deliberation over ethical
considerations. Included will also be a description of the manner in which ethical considerations are managed.

### 4.2 Preamble

Research methodology should be buttressed by systems and assumptions. The first research methodology decision comprises those theoretical assumptions which undergird the current study. The purpose of the current study is to evaluate the Basic English Language Courses (BELC) in the Foundation Programme (FP), at the educational institute in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This was accomplished by soliciting the points of view of the current study’s participants regarding the quality of the BELC, the FP, and the educational institute. This was undertaken with a desire to improve all of the above. To achieve this aim, this researcher-writer assumes that the essence of reality is subjective, and that there thus exist multiple realities. This researcher-writer holds that only by interacting with the current study’s participants is possible to solicit their views of the phenomena under study. Whilst engaging in the study, this researcher-writer was aware that understanding would be value-laden, and biased by one’s own previous experience.

Nonetheless, this researcher-writer would like to inform that every attempt was made to analyse the data critically, and to permit patterns to emerge without influencing the analysis. It is the participants’ subjective states which were of interest (Gergen & Gergen, 2003), and assiduous effort was made to permit participant voices to be honestly heard throughout the data. It is believed that only this manner of methodology can explicitly render authentic participant opinions. Hence, this researcher-writer sought a research approach which permitted this.
4.3 Philosophical Assumptions: Research Paradigms

A theoretical perspective depicts our view of the world around us, as well as the social life within that world. Crotty (1998) believes that every research endeavour possesses a theoretical perspective which comprises the philosophic attitude which, in turn, underlies the research methodology. It is thus crucial for researchers to demonstrate the paradigmatic position from which their labours depart. It is additionally essential that they hold an awareness of other possible positions which might underpin their research. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) declare that a paradigm framework is a set of basic beliefs which guide our actions. Lynch identifies a paradigm as ‘a lens through which we view the world’ (2003, p.2). To become acquainted with such assumptions, one must comprehend the process of research itself. Crotty (1998) states that these assumptions concern reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology) and the approaches which one pursues in order to achieve this reality (methodology).

The definition of ‘ontology’ attracts great controversy in educational research, and is frequently confused with ‘epistemology’. Ontology is the study of being. Crotty (1998) believes that ontology ‘is concerned with “what is”, with the nature of existence, with the nature of reality as such’. ‘Epistemology’ refers to the procedure by which one comprehends and explains knowledge (Crotty, 1998). Within educational research, there exist a host of diverse methods of enquiry. Therefore, there exist a range of epistemologies. A review of educational research scholarly literature, and specifically of the programme evaluation field, reveals that the two paradigms most widely used are the scientific (positivist) and the naturalistic (interpretive) paradigms (Guba &
Lincoln, 1989; Lynch, 2003; Lodico et al., 2006). These two paradigms hold two different stances towards ontology and epistemology.

The scientific-positivistic paradigm was extensively utilised in evaluative studies at a time when technical excellence was the most important criterion for successful evaluative research (Cronbach, 1982). Such studies were heavily reliant on experimental designs, and employed methods such as closed-ended questionnaires, tests and observational checklists in order to collect quantitative data for statistical analysis (e.g., Campbell & Erlebacher, 1970; Bryk & Weisberg, 1976; Cook et al., 1977). Various factors eventually led to criticism of scientific-positivistic assumptions in educational programme evaluative research. These criticisms claimed that the scientific-positivistic approach found inadequate for capturing the complexities and details of the real world within which educational programmes are implemented and evaluated. It also came to be believed that this method was unable to take into account social and political influences (Al-Mansoori, 2001). Owing to this, researchers began to seek out alternative paradigms which might compensate for those shortcomings (exempli gratia [e.g.], Eisner, 1975; Stake, 1975; Guba, 1978; Patton, 1980; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Hence, the naturalistic-interpretive paradigm rose to be the most influential.

The naturalistic-interpretive paradigm opposes traditional, scientific-positivism. It views reality as dependent upon the interpretations of given people, in a given society, at a given time (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). It believes that reality is constructed by different members of a society. Pring (2000) suggests that in an interpretive paradigm, ‘reality or (multiple realities) is (or are) totally created or constructed through the negotiation of meanings’. Multiple realities are socially constructed. Lodico et al. reiterate that ‘different persons may bring different conceptual frameworks to a
situation based on their experiences, and this will influence what they perceive in a particular situation’ (2006, p.8). In an evaluative study, in an educational setting, a researcher attempts to know reality by seeking information from the perspectives of different participants, such as students, teachers, lecturers, parents and academic administrators. Afterwards, the meanings of reality are negotiated with the same people. Reality, in this paradigm, does not exist separately from the mind, but is wholly constructed by the research study participants and the researcher.

Naturalistic-interpretivist researchers hold that meaning ‘comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world’ (Crotty, 1998). They challenge the positivistic premise that reality can be known by reducing its component parts to constructs and variables. Instead, naturalistic-interpretivist researchers argue that phenomena have to be understood as complex ‘wholes’, which are affected by the historical, sociological, economic, and cultural contexts in which they are embedded (Lodico et al., 2006). Naturalistic-interpretivist researchers accept that human experiences are culturally and historically mediated through social practices which are uncertifiable, constantly problematic, and regularly changing. They find it impossible to separate reality from values, and acknowledge the inherent subjectivity in any research which is related to people and their social world (Lynch, 2003).

### 4.3.1 Constructivist Approach to Educational Programme Evaluation

Researchers have extensively applied the constructivist approach to educational programme evaluation (Bhola, 1998; Schwandt, 1984; Fetterman, 1994). Yet it is Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1989) who are considered pioneers in this approach. The principal purpose of the constructivist
approach is to make sense of the many constructions of reality which exist amongst research study participants. It should be borne in mind that one construction cannot be more ‘true’ than others. However, one construction of reality may be more informed and clearer than others.

The constructivist approach places the evaluator and educational programme participants at the heart of the enquiry process. The enquiry process has to be effective as a way of changing and improving the context of an evaluation. Thus, participants, together with the evaluator, must perform an essential part in deciding the evaluation’s questions, as well as the areas upon which the evaluation should concentrate (Stufflebeam, 2001). In guiding the educational programme evaluation process, the evaluator balances the application of quantitative and qualitative methods. Stufflebeam believes that evaluators who apply the constructivist approach must employ a relativist perspective in order to obtain and to analyse their findings. They must also emphasise the locality and specificity of data results over generalisability (2001).

Constructivist educational programme evaluation approaches customarily adopt non-experimental designs. In such designs, the context of the educational programme is not controlled. Generally speaking, data and analysis tend to be largely qualitative, with the purpose of describing and interpreting educational programme occurrences as they transpire (Lynch, 2003). Denzin and Lincoln underscore that ‘qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’ (2000).

By reviewing the scholarly literature, various forms of constructivism are discovered. These include trivial, cognitive, social, critical and radical constructivism. One of the dominant forms is
social constructivism (Glaserfeld, 1995; Dougiamas, 1998), which is the form implemented in the current study. Although different forms of constructivism share common features, each has its specific emphases. Social constructivism emphasises the influence of the social interactions on the processes by which knowledge is constructed. According to many theorists (Solomon, 1987; Duffy et al., 1993; Ernest, 1995), social constructivists emphasise the influence of social and cultural contexts in learning. They contend that meaning is constructed socially through language. They argue that meaning and understanding can be known through our interaction with our environment, and that knowledge is not only within the individual, but part of the entire learning environment (Scardamalia & Bereiter in Duffy, et al., 1993). Since knowledge is reached through social negotiation, social constructivists believe that interactions and discussions with individuals, such as interviews, are necessary methods to achieve a better understanding of a phenomenon.

4.4 Research Framework and Theoretical Justification of the Current Study

In view of the exploratory nature of the current study, and its context-specificity, the naturalistic-interpretive approach, along with the social constructivist approach, constitute epistemological stance of the current study. The current study was designed to allow a researcher to evaluate the Basic English Language Courses (BELC), in the Foundation Programme (FP) by examining student and lecturer viewpoints on the three courses which compose that education programme. In the current study, the naturalistic-interpretive and social constructivist approaches promote an understanding of the context within which the study’s participants act, and of the processes by which events take place (Maxwell, 1996). The goal of the current study is to present a reflection of everyday actions, through natural language, in order to convey participant feelings, concerns, and
beliefs as regards the subject which is being evaluated. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) aver that such an approach will assist the researcher in explaining the reason for which events occur.

Understanding the manner in which knowledge is constructed and organised is crucial in order to comprehend the manner in which students and teachers organise their knowledge of learning and teaching. From the perspective of social constructivism, knowledge can be perceived by observing individuals as they construct meaning through their interactions with each other and their environment (Williams & Burden, 1997). It was suggested that current study participants organise and reorganise their knowledge through the new experiences provided by the daily processes of college learning, and by the surrounding environment. The participants then integrate this new knowledge with the knowledge gained from their previous experiences. This, in turn, leads them to construct new meanings about learning and teaching. Thus in the current study, knowledge is not acquired through instruction which does not correspond to a participant’s objective reality or environment.

This researcher-writer would like to underscore that the premise set forth in the paragraph immediately above will apply to the current study. This researcher-writer also wishes to reiterate that the current study endeavours to identify student and lecturer viewpoints toward the BELC. It also strives to ascertain the social reality of those students and lecturers. It is for those reasons that the current study will also be committed to the naturalistic-interpretive and social constructivist modes of enquiry. The current study will further seek to explore the participants’ subjective opinions as regards the nature and quality of learning and teaching in the BELC. Participants of the current study are understood from the social constructivist perspective to be ‘meaning-making
organisms, theory builders who develop hypotheses, notice patterns, and construct theories of actions from their life experience (White & Gunstone, 1992). In this regard, Radnor (2002) attests that:

The [naturalistic-] interpretive approach rests on the premise that in social life there is only interpretation. Everyday life revolves around persons interpreting and making decisions about how to act based on their own experiences and their interpretation of the experience and behaviour of others.

The naturalistic-interpretive approach provides educational researchers with a deeper understanding of individual actions, such as in learning and teaching, and with a rational justification of these actions. Individuals are affected by the context of the situation, which informs them, and enables them, to take certain courses of action. Knowledge is experientially constructed and reformulated in relation to the experiences of the individual. In this manner, the individual, the situation, and the action performed are all interrelated.

The naturalistic-interpretive approach offers participants, such as students and lecturers, the opportunity to reflect and to comment upon their own experiences and actions. The naturalistic-interpretive approach will assist in analysing, from the social constructivist perspective, student and lecturer viewpoints regarding the quality of the BELC, from four different vantage points, as mentioned in Chapter I. Although study participants have their own unique experiences, the purpose of the current study is to understand and to interpret all of the study participant experiences in order to formulate a generalised understanding. Kiely and Rea-Dickins observe that ‘each
individual’s experience, and the way each interprets and makes sense of that experience, are different, and the task of evaluation is to understand these experiences and interpretations without seeking a single, universal, objective truth’ (2005).

At this juncture, this researcher-writer wishes to inform that the naturalistic-interpretive approach usually has no intention of implementing interventions or treatments, but to describe naturally occurring processes. By implementing the naturalistic-interpretive design, it is usually the desire that an educational programme be interacted with, but not by prescribed interventions or treatments (Lynch, 2003). With respect to educational programme evaluation specifically, Patton argues that the naturalistic-interpretive inquiry evaluator does not attempt to influence the educational programme or its participants. He contends that:

Naturalistic [-interpretive] inquiry evaluators focus on capturing program processes, documenting variations, and exploring important individual differences between various participants’ experiences and outcomes ... A naturalistic [-interpretive] inquiry strategy is selected to describe naturally unfolding program processes and impacts (1987). However, this researcher-writer would like to advise that since it remains the intention of the current study to learn about the BLSC, with a view to improving it, the purpose of the current study evaluation is defined as ‘formative’. The purpose of the current study is to assess the quality of the daily processes of the three educational programme courses in order to perfect them.

To summarise, the current study is ontologically and epistemologically consistent with the naturalistic-interpretive and social constructivist methodologies. This is understood to mean that
truth and reality do not exist independently of human thinking, but emerge as a result of human interactions and environments. Effort has been made to construct meaning by interpreting points of view from different perspectives using multiple methods. It is believed that truth and reality will become known as a result of the engagement of this researcher-writer with the students and lecturers who constitute the current study participants. It is equally believed that the naturalistic-interpretive perspective will solicit a more detailed range of study participant viewpoints. Adopting such paradigm will aid in comprehending and interpreting study participant experiences in the BELC and FP. It is desired that this will then assist this researcher-writer in formulating sound, remedial recommendations in order to improve the quality of the BELC, as well as the entire FP.

4.5 Research Design: Mixed Methods Case Study

In compliance with the exploratory nature of the methodological approach adopted in the current study, the research design of the current study employs a sequential mixed methods case study. In scholarly literature, mixed methods case study research is a procedure for collecting, analysing and integrating both quantitative and qualitative data for the purpose of better understanding the research problem (Creswell, 2005; Borkan, 2004). The rationale for mixing the two types of data is based on the premise that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods is sufficient to grant a complete, detailed picture of the case under study. Therefore, the current study uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to complement each other, and to take advantage of the strengths of each method (Green & Caracelli, 1997; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).
Case study research is one of the methodologies that is commonly used in answering qualitatively-driven questions which endeavour to discover meaning, to investigate processes, and to expand an in-depth understanding of an individual or group (Lodico et al., 2006). Case studies investigate and report the complex dynamics and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other aspects of unique instances all of which strive to reflect real life circumstances (Cohen et al., 2007). According to Pring, case study methodology derives its importance from the ‘emphasis upon the uniqueness of events or actions, arising from their being shaped by the meanings of those who are the participants in the situation’ (2000, p.40).

Case studies can be differentiated from other forms of research because case studies tend to focus on a ‘bounded system’ (Merriam, 1998). In this regard, Bassey attests that a case study is ‘an empirical enquiry which is conducted within a localised boundary of space and time’ (2003, p.109). In other words, the bounded system can be determined by asking whether there is a limitation to the number of people involved in the study, or a finite amount of time.

For example, in the current study the ‘case’ is a group of 55 first-year BELC students and the three lecturers of the BELC. All of these participants are learning and teaching in the FP. Thus the current study is bounded by number. Additionally, students are learning in the FP for a limited duration of four years. Hence, the current study is bounded by time. Finally, the FP programme is taught at the educational institute. Therefore the current study is bounded by place. In conclusion, Stake (2005) emphasises the complexity of a case study. He explains that a case study is not something that can be looked at, or analysed, detached from its context: rather, understanding the details of the case study context enhances the ability to analyse the whole case study.
In the current study, a case study is deemed to be an appropriate methodology for the following reasons: (1) The nature of the research questions were best answered by using a case study, as the purpose of the current study was to seek answers about the views of the different students and lecturers regarding the quality of the BELC, and the reasons behind their perceptions. (2) As an evaluator, this researcher-writer sought to investigate study-participants’ everyday processes in the BELC in order to interpret the findings more accurately. (3) This researcher-writer administered and employed both qualitative and quantitative methods in the current study, which is one of the characteristics of case studies.

However, the case study approach has some limitations. Stufflebeam (2001, p.35) cautions that ‘the main limitation of the case study is that some evaluators may mistake its openness and lack of controls as an excuse for approaching it haphazardly and bypassing steps to ensure that findings and interpretations possess rigor as well as relevance’. This researcher-writer was aware of the importance of the exact plan which had to be rigorously followed, as well as the different steps which had to be assiduously taken. This researcher-writer assures that none was bypassed.

Specifically, the current study is designed as a piece of formative evaluation research. It employs an Eclectic Approach of evaluation, under the umbrella of the naturalistic-interpretive, social constructivism paradigm. It employs a sequential, mixed methods case study approach as its methodology. That is, the quantitative and the qualitative phases of the current study were conducted in sequence (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Creswell, 2003). The quantitative phase is represented by the closed-ended questionnaire. The semi-structured interviews and the students’
journal-diaries constitute the qualitative phase. Students were asked to keep journal-diaries of their everyday experiences in the BELC, within the department of FP.

First, the questionnaire was administered, followed by the semi-structured interviews with the participants. At the very end of the course, the students’ journal-diaries were collected. The following figure visually represents the design of the current study:

![General Design of the Study](image)

Figure 4.1: General Design of the Study
4.6 Research Questions

The current study attempts to answer the following questions:

1) What are the current practices of Basic English Language Courses (BELC) in the Foundation Programme (FP), at the educational institute?

2) What are students and lecturers’ evaluative views about Basic English Language Courses (BELC) in the Foundation Programme (FP), at the educational institute?

3) What suggestions are made by students and lecturers for the improvement of Basic English Language Courses (BELC) in the Foundation Programme (FP), at the educational institute?

The importance of the first research question derives from the necessity of becoming acquainted with the context of the evaluand. Osborne-Daponte (2008) suggests that an evaluator must develop a thorough understanding of a programme at the beginning of an evaluation. This familiarity will help to clarify the processes which an evaluator will employ. Osborne-Daponte further contends that ‘any evaluation that is done without a thorough understanding of the program can be of no constructive use’ (Osborne-Daponte, 2008, p.4). Familiarity with a study context involves acquiring knowledge about different factors. These embrace social and cultural factors as well as the site setting. Familiarisation continues throughout the whole evaluation cycle. An evaluator’s knowledge is in constant flux as information from different sources is constantly received.

The second question constitutes the principal research question of the current study. It seeks to solicit the student and lecturer viewpoints of the BELC from four different perspectives. These four
perspectives were specifically determined after conducting a preliminary study, as well as informal interviews and meetings with students and lecturers in the BELC. These were undertaken in order to investigate participant opinions of those areas which most need to be improved, and thus, evaluated. Such approach is supported by Stufflebeam, who contends that ‘the questions addressed in [social] constructivist studies cannot be determined independently of participants’ interactions. Evaluator and stakeholders together identify the questions to be addressed’ (2001, p.72).

The third research question requests that the student- and lecturer-participants suggest their recommendations for improving the weaknesses of the BELC, and hence, for improving the entire FP in general. The importance of this question derives from the premise that no one understands difficulties more than the actual people who experience them on a daily basis. Consequently, it was crucial to listen to participant suggestions in order to solve these difficulties and overcome these problems.

### 4.7 Data Collection Instruments

The current study made use of both qualitative and quantitative instruments of data collection. The qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, students’ journal-diaries, document analysis and the open-ended items on the questionnaires. The quantitative data were collected through closed-ended questionnaire items.

In educational programme evaluation, the selection of procedures to collect necessary data from a variety of sources requires careful attention (Kawamura et al., 2006). The quality and variety of
the collected data determines the success of the programme evaluation. When conducting evaluation studies, evaluators can choose amongst different quantitative or qualitative methods of data collection, or combine them.

Taking into account the nature of the current study, and the limited amount of time allotted to collect data, the data collection instruments had to be prepared beforehand. An effort was thus made to render a balance between flexible design, available time, resources, and access provided. For instance, this researcher-writer could not use the observation method in the current study because lecturers refused to permit observation of actual classes. That obliged this researcher-writer to search for another way to collect detailed information about the processes which occur inside the classroom; hence, the journal-diary method was employed to compensate, in part, for the lack of observational data. Another example was the choice of auditory recording, instead of video recording, during interview sessions, and whilst collecting information to describe the evaluand setting. Although video recording would have helped to present a more vivid picture of the setting, it required facilities and equipment which were difficult to arrange within the given time.

With regard to the manner in which qualitative research is related to the social constructivist stance adopted in the current study, Greene et al. testified that ‘qualitative advocates emphasised the [naturalistic-] interpretive, value-laden, contextual and contingent nature of social knowledge’ (2005, p.274). Thus, the justification for giving more weight to qualitative methods in conducting the current study’s research rested on the nature of the current research itself. The current study’s research attempted to learn more about social constructivism, which accounts for the social and cultural context in which participants construct their knowledge.
The current study’s heavy dependence on qualitative research methods derives from an awareness that the study-participant viewpoints are the most important element in answering the proposed research questions. What was most desired in the current study was the construction of reality by the BELC and the FP’s students and lecturers. In an attempt to understand the study-participants’ experiences, it was essential to attend to the setting, and to obtain information regarding the study-participants’ daily lives. Therefore, the current study-participants’ historical, cultural and physical settings will be described and evaluated.

The social constructivist approach has focused the current study principally on qualitative research methods for the collection of study data. Yet the usefulness of quantitative methods in such an interpretive study cannot be denied. Thus, the adoption of both types of data collection methods can yield valuable information in any evaluation, as they serve different purposes, yet complement each other. Ignoring either type of data would be pointless and self-defeating (Brown, 1995; Richards, 2001). Johnson and Christensen corroborate that ‘the mixing of methods would add very useful and complementary information’ (2004, p.34). Brown rightly remarks that ‘Sound evaluation practices will be based on all available perspectives so that many types of information can be gathered to strengthen the evaluation process and ensure that the resulting decisions will be as informed, accurate, and useful as possible’ (1995, p.232).

To conclude, one must recall that given the exploratory nature of the current study, it was necessary to liaise the concerns of the study-participants with the design of the data collection methods (Albaker, 2008). The opinions of the study-participants were also taken into consideration when
deciding study questions to be asked (Albaker, 2008). Such participant-liaison with a study’s design is in keeping with the naturalistic-interpretive, social constructivist approaches. The succeeding section will discuss the different methods, and their designs, employed in the current study.

4.7.1 Quantitative Data Collection: Questionnaires

The questionnaire survey is a popular research instrument, and has been proven beneficial in establishing opinions and commentary on a wide range of issues (Newcomer & Triplett in Wholey et al., 2004). Such research instrument is facile to analyse, familiar to most people, less intrusive than telephone or face-to-face surveys, and very cost-effective when compared to face-to-face interviews (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Richards accurately comments that “questionnaires are easy to administer and information can be obtained from large numbers of respondents” (2001, p.301).

The justification for the use of a questionnaire as the current study’s qualitative data collection method is that, although questionnaires are usually used in quantitative research, in the current study the questionnaire results are not an end in themselves. Fogelman (2003) argues that questionnaires can be a useful source of data used within a case study. Brown (1995) also contends that questionnaires, when used to evaluate courses, ‘are probably the most efficient and common way of obtaining student feedback on courses and teaching’ (1995, p.200). In addition to method triangulation concerns, questionnaires facilitated the exploration of general student trends which were perceived in the early stages of the current study.
Still, questionnaires do have limitations and disadvantages. Gillham (2000, p. 8) lists the most common disadvantages of questionnaires. One shortcoming is that a study’s participants are usually not motivated to answer the items on a questionnaire. In the current study, the questionnaire was administered by this researcher-writer who vigorously emphasised to the student-participants the great personal relevance which the questionnaire held for them as students in the educational institute. By so doing, many student-participants enthusiastically recounted their points of view about course improvement.

A second shortfall in questionnaires is that misunderstood questions cannot be corrected. To prevent this from occurring, this researcher-writer was available at all times during questionnaire completion in order to provide clarification of any questions which the student-participants might have. Also, in the developmental stage of the questionnaire, many items were modified, and the wording of some questions was changed after piloting.

4.7.1.1 Questionnaire Design

Three separate questionnaires, one for each of the three BELC (writing, reading and conversation), were specifically designed to glean general student views about these courses (See appendices 1, 2, & 3). Before the end of the semester, for every BELC, a course evaluation questionnaire was administered to each first-year, BELC student-participant who was matriculated. Although a separate questionnaire was designed for each course, all three were parallel. The questionnaires differed only in those items which were concerned with course-specific issues such as particular course goals and objectives.
The purpose of the questionnaires was to identify the student-participants’ viewpoints on different aspects of the BELC which they had studied. The questionnaires also solicited suggestions for course improvement. Students were asked to express their viewpoints on the four fundamental aspects of the course: (1) course goals and objectives; (2) course content and resources, or instructional materials; (3) teaching and learning practices; and (4), student assessment and feedback mechanisms. Specially emphasis was placed on any contribution which was suggestive of course improvement.

Questionnaire queries were derived both from scholarly literature reviews (Alderson & Beretta, 1992; Weir & Robert 1994; Erozan, 2015), and from the concerns and claims raised by the study-participants in the informal, preliminary meetings and interviews realised before the official initiation of the current study. Questionnaire queries were designed to generate general data which could develop an understanding about student-participant viewpoints toward the BELC and the department of GR. The questionnaire queries also strove to lay the groundwork for the semi-structured formal interviews which were carried out at a later stage. The current study questionnaire was divided into themes. Each theme had items with closed-endings, as well as general opened-ended questions. The latter permitted students to explain their viewpoints in greater detail, or to add related information and suggestions.

Questionnaire development required a period of several months, during which time the instrument traversed several draft stages. The first questionnaire draft was submitted to staff members in Zayed University for comments and amendments. Then, further comments and alterations were
introduced by this researcher-writer’s academic supervisor. After refinements were agreed upon, a final draft of the three questionnaires was produced and translated into the Arabic language. As students in the BELC and FP, the current study’s student-participants are supposed to be proficient in the English language. Yet, many students were neither able to express themselves in English fluently, nor to understand some of the English language technical lexicon. By providing the questionnaire in the Arabic language, opinions and more completely detailed answers were rendered.

The questionnaires focused on six different areas: (1) the students’ general backgrounds; (2) course goals and objectives; (3) course content and resources, or instructional materials; (4) teaching and learning practices, (5) student assessment and feedback mechanisms; and (6), overall course evaluation.

The introductory cover page of the questionnaire described the current study and its purposes. It informed the participants of the importance of the questionnaire, and the significant value of the student contribution to the current study. It also stressed ethical considerations, such as their anonymity, as well as their right to withdraw from participation in the current study. It concluded by providing this researcher-writer’s contact details for any further comments.

The first part of the questionnaire embraced four closed-ended items which related to the student-participants’ non-academic details: age and academic background, and the BELC which they found most difficult. Study-participants also had to specify the degree of difficulty which they experienced in each of the three BELCs by using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from ‘always’
to ‘never’. The Likert scale was selected because it is a provenly insightful, investigatory method for acquiring individual points of view. Brown and Rodgers (2002, p.120) assert: ‘Likert scales are generally useful for getting at respondents’ views, judgments, or opinions about almost any aspect of language learning.’ Also, because all of the first-year student-participants had to take the same three BELC in their first semester in FP, the four closed-ended items which related to the student-participants’ non-academic details were attached to only one questionnaire, to avoid repetition.

The second part of the questionnaire, which was concerned with the BELC goals and objectives, included ten fixed-response items using a five-point Likert scale (1 equals ‘strongly agree’, and 5 equals ‘strongly disagree’), wherein study- participants specified the extent of their agreement or disagreement with a particular statement. This scale was also utilised in all of the succeeding sections in answering the closed-ended items. The second part of the questionnaire also included one opened-ended item, wherein student-participants were requested to offer suggestions as regards improvement of the BELC goals and objectives.

The third part of the questionnaire consisted of ten items, including eight closed-ended items, which were related to the BELC content and resources, or instructional materials, used in the BELC. Herein student- participants were able to express their opinions concerning the BELC content, resources and instructional materials. The remaining two items in the third part were opened-ended. These inquired about student-participant opinions and suggestions for the improvement of BELC content, resources and instructional materials.
The fourth part was comprised of ten items. The first subset embodied nine items which requested student-participant opinions of the teaching practices and techniques employed by their lecturers in the BELC classroom. The second subset was an opened-ended item which requested suggestions for teaching practices and techniques which lecturers might employ in order to assist students in enhancing their English language ability.

The fifth part of the questionnaire consisted of 11 items. These focused on student-participant assessment, feedback mechanisms and performance in the BELC. There were ten closed-ended items which asked the students to express their viewpoints on diverse concerns related to the measurement of their performance in the BELC. These asked about the efficiency of the assessment tools employed by lecturers to measure student-participant progress; and about feedback mechanisms by which lecturers corrected student work. The final query of the fifth part included one opened-ended item. It requested that student-participants suggest about the best manner to assess them in the BELC.

The final part was constituted by three opened-ended items inquiring about overall BELC evaluation. Student-participants were asked for their opinions regarding the positive and negative aspects of BELC, as well as their suggestions for overall BELC improvement. The sole, remaining subset of the final part of the questionnaire was optional. It granted student-participants the opportunity to provide their contact details, provided that they were willing to be contacted in order to participate in a related interview.
In constructing the questionnaire items, diligence was taken to clarify the goals and objectives of the current study. In this manner, each item would be directly referenced against one or more of the research goals and objectives. Similarly, the analysis of the data to be gathered was pondered assiduously. Designing three evaluation questionnaires did not prove a facile task and, as noted above, the evaluation questionnaires passed through a continuum of revision in order to reach their final result. In those endeavours many resources were of assistance. These resources included Weir and Roberts (1994, pp.276-289), and Alderson and Beretta (1992, pp.305-330). The subsequent piloting process is deliberated in section 4.12.1 below.

### 4.7.2 Qualitative Data Collection

In the current study, the qualitative data collection consisted of four different methods. It included (1) opened-ended items in the questionnaire; (2) two different semi-structured interviews with both student- and lecturer-participants on the three BELC courses under investigation; (3) student-participant journal- diaries; and (4), document analysis related to the three BELC courses and to the FP in general. The succeeding sections will discuss the design, and the developmental process, of the last three of these instruments.

#### 4.7.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The interview method is the principal data collection tool of the current study. Unlike the questionnaires, which consisted of questions and pre-set answers to which participants were asked to specify the extent of their agreement or disagreement, the interview allows in-depth and detailed
personal views to be solicited. Cohen et al. (2007) attests that the use of interviews in research is based on the premise that knowledge can be generated between humans, often through conversations. The interviewer and the interviewee construct knowledge together by discussing the social situation. Moreover, interviews permit both the interviewer and the interviewee to exchange opinions on varied phenomena and to explain their interpretations from their own points of view.

Three salient interview forms are noted in scholarly literature: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Neither a highly structured, nor a completely opened-ended interview, was favoured for the current study. Highly structured interviews do not allow for detailed in-depth views and explanations, and serve almost the same purposes as questionnaires. Unstructured interviews require much time to sieve through in order to solicit and to cull the type of information needed. Therefore, in the current study, semi-structured interviews were used. In this kind of interview, ‘researchers usually prepare a list of questions to be asked but allow themselves the opportunity to probe beyond the protocol’ (Lodico et al., 2006, p.124). It was believed that this type of interview would optimise the use of the available time without risking much loss of information.

The semi-structured interview format has many advantages in qualitative educational research. It possesses flexibility in that it allows the interviewer to probe for more detailed information. It further enables the interviewer to resolve misunderstanding. It is additionally adept at testing the limits of the interviewee’s knowledge. Moreover, if an appropriate climate is created, a semi-structured interview permits the researcher to gain an authentic picture of those beliefs which a participant truly holds (Cohen & Manion, 1994). In a semi-structured interview, researchers have
a general idea of the purpose which they desire to achieve from the interview; that is, researchers are directed by a set of general themes in order to encourage the interviewees to respond and to explain their viewpoints (Radnor, 1994).

The interviews were guided by the four general themes mentioned in section 4.7.1.1 above. The purpose of the interviews is to state the answers to the research questions in a formal, organised method, whilst at the same time allowing participants to explain their world and realities in their own words. Kvale (2007, p. 51) states that in a semi-structured interview ‘there is openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the specific answers given and the stories told by the subjects’. This was the case whilst conducting the current study’s interviews. Questions arose during the current study’s interviews which were not part of the prepared list. This permitted the interviewees to speak naturally and spontaneously about their own BELCs.

It is recognised, however, that despite its strengths, the interview research tool holds some disadvantages. Interviewing is time-consuming, as it requires attention to the functionality of the recording device, and arranging a specific time and an appropriate location for the interview. Moreover, Cohen and Manion (1994) remind that the interview, as a method of research, could suffer from a problem of validity. This caveat suggests that the interview should be combined with other research instruments. Bearing such limitations in mind, in the current study, an effort was rendered to illuminate potential problems whilst designing the interview and the interview schedule. Concern was also given to the techniques employed whilst interviewing. This researcher-writer would like to underscore that the interview research tool was implemented in order to
supplement the questionnaire. The questionnaire was tested for validity (see section 4.12.2 for a discussion of the reliability and validity of the questionnaire).

As an interview is an interpersonal encounter, it is crucial that the interviewer establish rapport with the interviewee. Likewise, it is essential that the interviewee trust the interviewer. Without trust, it is most likely that the answers obtained will be biased (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). In the current study, this researcher-writer attempted to pursue some techniques for establishing trust and rapport with the interviewee-participants. For example, the reasons for the current study were explained. It was additionally confirmed to the interviewees that their responses would be anonymous and confidential (ibid.). Such techniques have the potential of encouraging greater participant cooperation with the interviewer (Hedrick et al., 2000).

**Lecturer-Participant Interviews**

The three lecturer-participants who were teaching the three BELC courses during the spring semester, 2015 to 2016, were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The list of interview questions (Appendix 4) was divided into five themes: the first four themes focused on fundamental aspects of this evaluation: (1) course goals and objectives; (2) course content and resources, or instructional materials; (3) teaching and learning practices; and (4), student assessment and feedback mechanisms.

The fifth theme was an overall evaluation of the BELC. The last theme probed the lecturers about their views of the positive and negative aspects of the BELC, and their suggestions for
improvement of the BELC. During the interview, this researcher-writer allowed opportunity for the modification, deletion, and inclusion of certain questions, depending on the interviewees’ responses.

The purpose of these interviews was to solicit the lecturers’ spontaneous views concerning the current state of the BELC; and also the lecturers’ viewpoints on the strengths and weaknesses of the BELC in terms of the four fundamental aspects specified in the evaluation model and the research study questions. The lecturers were also requested to offer suggestions for the improvement of the BELC courses, in order to enhance the FP in general.

**Student-Participant interviews**

After the administration of the course evaluation questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were availed of as a second data collection technique. The interviews were aimed at gathering in-depth data regarding student viewpoints on different aspects of the BELC in which they had studied. Students, too, were requested to offer their suggestions for the improvement of the BELC.

The student interviews consisted of six parts: (1) general questions which queried the students about their preference for a specific language skill, and whether they considered the skill important; (2) course goals and objectives; (3) course content and resources, or instructional materials; (4) teaching and learning practices; (5) student assessment, feedback mechanisms and performance; and (6), overall BELC evaluation (See Appendix 5).
4.7.2.2 Student-Participant Journal-Diaries

Journal-diaries provide a narrative record of those events which student-participants experience whilst attending the course. These could include problems encountered, critical incidents and other situations that arise in their everyday BELC experiences (Richards, 2001). Journal-diaries can be useful in presenting reasonably detailed and specific data. They can also capture information that may be ignored by other investigatory tools (ibid.). An advantage noted by Given (2008) claims that ‘diary writing is beneficial in eliciting personal yet structured responses … Diaries are particularly appropriate in recording routine or everyday processes that are otherwise unnoticed if not documented’ (2008: 213).

Journal-diaries have many advantages over other types of data collection instruments. Journal-diaries can provide reliable information on situations that are difficult to remember, or that might be facilely forgot. Other methods of data gathering, such as traditional interviews, cannot provide these attributes. Journal-diaries assist in overcoming issues of interviewee timidity as regards the collection of sensitive information. Participants can prove to be more timid and inhibited in face-to-face encounters. Journal-diaries can also be used to complement interview data in order to offer a richer source of information on individual behaviour and experiences on a daily basis.

Yet as with any other method of data collection, journal-diaries exude some disadvantages. They may provide information that is unsystematic, which makes it difficult to decide on the manner in which to employ the information which is offered. They also require a time commitment on the part of the participant (Richards, 2001).
In the current study, three student-participants in each of the three BELC volunteered to maintain journal-diaries about their daily experiences in the BELC. Student-participants were asked to scribe freely about any topics which they wished. They were encouraged to express their feelings about the positive and negative aspects concerning their BELC course(s). They were permitted to do so in either the English or Arabic languages.

Journal-diaries can be in different formats, such as open-ended questions, or a specific set of fixed responses (Given, 2008). In the current study, student-participants were provided with a journal-diary format of five broad statements to comment upon (Appendix 6). For example, student-participants were asked ‘to describe a typical class of the BELC, from its commencement until its conclusion, embracing the usual teacher methodologies, behaviours and routines, et cetera’). Other recordations included observations viewed, and feelings experienced, during the BELC. It was requested that students describe frustrations and successes, as well as occurrences which were liked and disliked. Students were also at liberty to write about additional topics.

The journal-diary procedure used in the current study found beneficial for many reasons. It contributed by offering specific, detailed information about the daily practices and incidents relevant to student-participants in the BELC. Other tools of data collection, such as interviews, did not produce the same results due to time constraints. The utilisation of journal-diaries offered students the opportunity to speak freely and honestly as regards their feelings toward BELC lecturers. Such intimacies may have otherwise proven difficult to express in an interview due to
timidity. It can thus be securely stated that the journal-diary procedure was deemed useful as it revealed a more detailed portrait of the everyday BELC, and the FP,

4.7.2.3 Document Analysis

Documents realise a critical part in the explanation of routine, embedded practices. Documents can also provide information which explains particular behaviours (Albaker, 2008). Cortazzi (2003) and Yin (2003) declare that ‘documents’ incorporate letters, agendas, administrative documents, progress reports, formal evaluations of the same site, policy documents, regulations and official statistics.

In the current study, documents related to the FP in general, and the BELC specifically, were collected in order to be reviewed and evaluated. The documents collected included:

1. Course policy sheets (course outlines or course descriptions);
2. Course resources, or instructional materials (course books, handouts, supplementary materials);
3. Student assessment tools and feedback mechanisms (quizzes, midterm and final examinations, homework tasks);
4. Official programme statistics (number of enrolled students).

Some documents were difficult to obtain and to review, whilst others were readily offered by the academic administration. All of the documents were convenient to store, and contained exact names and references. Some documents tended to describe an ideal status, whilst others contained
information that contradicted testimony which was obtained from the interviews. It is believed that further exploration of these issues is needed.

Data obtained via course policy sheets, course resources, or instructional materials, and student assessment tools and feedback mechanisms were mainly useful in the descriptive stage of the current study’s evaluation process in order to answer the first research question.

### 4.7.3 Relationship of the Research Instruments to the Research Questions

The following table (Table 4.1) clarifies how each of these research instruments aided in answering each of the research questions proposed in the current study. The research questions were delineated in detail in section 4.5 above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Research Instruments</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Documents involved in each instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1   | Description of the current status of the courses. | 1. Document Analysis 2. Questionnaires | 55 students  | • Course policy sheets  
• Instructional materials  
• Student assessment tools  
• Feedback Official programme statistics  
• Questionnaires |
| 2   | Evaluation of the three courses. | 1. Questionnaires 2. Interviews 3. Students’ Diaries | 55 students 18 students & 3 instructors 9 students | • Questionnaires students’ journal-diaries |
| 3   | Suggestions for improvements. | 1. Questionnaires 2. Interviews 3. Students’ Diaries | 55 students 18 students & 3 instructors 9 students | • Questionnaires students’ journal-diaries |
4.8 Participants

Sampling is a crucial practice in any research. The careful selection of an appropriate sampling strategy is primordial to all qualitative researchers (Cohen et al., 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The participants in this study can be categorised under two principal subgroups: (1) the FP students who were enrolled in the BELC; (2) and, lecturers who were teaching the BELC in the spring semester of the 2015 to 2016 academic year. According to the Registrar’s Office in the Administration Department, there were 350 students in the whole FP, of whom 56 students were in their first year.

Of the 56 enrolled, first-year students, 55 answered the questionnaires distributed to them in the classroom (One student was absent for medical reasons.). Therefore, almost the entire cohort participated in the questionnaire. Arabic is the mother tongue of all of the students, and English is their foreign language. All of the students (55) were Emirati. The majority of the sample (44: 80%) were between the ages of 18 and 20, whilst eight (14.55%) were between the ages of 21 and 25. Regarding their schooling background, the majority of the students (53: 96.36%) had graduated from governmental primary and secondary schools in which the Arabic language is the medium of instruction. Two had graduated from international schools, in which the English language is widely employed as the medium of instruction. Most of the students were attending the department of FP’s BELC immediately after graduation from secondary school.

The choice of student interviewees was based on the ‘criterion sampling strategy’, according to which all of the student-participants, who are willing to participate, and who meet some specific
criteria of relevance and importance for the current study, were selected (Patton, 1990; Kuzel, 1992). The criteria were any students who filled in the questionnaire, elaborated on their answers to the open-ended items, and were willing and available to be interviewed. Students were asked not to write their names on the questionnaire unless they were willing to be contacted to participate in a follow-up interview. This researcher-writer was therefore able to contact and to interview 18 students who showed their interest and willingness to participate in the interviews (eight students for the writing course, six students for the reading course, and six students for the conversation course).

Based on the same criteria as the interview, student-participants were asked if they would be willing to volunteer to keep a journal-diary of their daily BELC experiences. Three students from each course were able to maintain a journal-diary, which made a total of nine student journal-diaries. All of the journal-diaries were collected at the end of the semester. The procedures by which all these data were collected is discussed in detail in section 4.10 below.

The FP has a total of 6 English lecturers, of whom the three lecturer-participants who taught each of the three BELC courses – writing, reading and conversation – were interviewed. All three lecturers were Arabs, two males and one female, aged between 35 and 50 years old. All the lecturers hold Master degrees; two from a United Kingdom university, and one from the United States of America. They had between five and 20 years of teaching experience.

Although each course has its own goals and objectives, the lecturers were responsible for designing their own courses, selecting their course resources, or instructional materials, developing their
student assessment tools and feedback mechanisms, and their grade distribution system, whilst bearing in mind the unified goals and objectives to be achieved. They engaged in ten to fifteen teaching contact hours per week. The lecturer-participants of the current study participated in semi-structured interviews, wherein they evaluated the BELC in terms of the current study’s three research questions, specified in section 4.6 above. They evaluated the BELC by showing their advantages and shortcomings, and by suggesting recommendations to improve the quality of the BELC.

4.9 Data Collection Procedures

In the current study, the data were collected in two principal phases by using a sequential process. The quantitative questionnaire data was collected and analysed in the first phase. The qualitative data were collected and analysed in the second phase. The rationale for using this consecutive design is that the quantitative results provide a general understanding of the student viewpoints. The qualitative results are useful for refining and explaining those statistical findings, as well as for exploring participant viewpoints in greater depth (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Creswell, 2003). Before starting the first phase, the current study site was visited in order to gain permission and to make initial contact with the study-participants.

4.9.1 First Contact with Study-Participants

Permission to realise the current study was negotiated at the commencement of the second semester of 2015. The educational institute Administrative Office, and the FP, were contacted at an early stage in order that permission was acquired to visit the site and to conduct the current study. The
permission request was supported by a letter from this researcher-writer’s university, The British University in Dubai, The bin which the nature of the current study was clarified. Having obtained official approval, this researcher-writer informed all of the lecturers of the three BELC of the current study. Care was taken to delineate the expectation which the lecturers should have. Preliminary visits to IAT were then arranged.

The purpose of the preliminary visits was to become acquainted with, and to interview, the student- and lecturer-participants informally. This researcher-writer also listened to student and lecturer opinions regarding BELC weaknesses. The student body and lecturers also offered opinions about those BELC weaknesses which, they believed, should be the focus of the current study. Osborne-Daponte points out that ‘the best way for the evaluator to start building an understanding of the program is for the evaluator to conduct informal interviews with a number of stakeholders’ (2008, p.12).

This researcher-writer visited IAT site at regular intervals, and at different times of the day. The purpose of such visitation was to meet different students from different sections of the three BELC courses under study. This researcher-writer also contacted the IAT’s Registration Office in order to request information related to the current study. A list of all 56 newly registered students in the English programme was provided by the IAT’s Registration Office. The FP also provided copies of all of the documents related to BELC, including the programme orientation booklet which contains information about the English programme and BELC entry requirements, goals, objectives and policy, as well as the principal programme courses with a detailed description of each of the courses.
At the current study site, this researcher-writer met a large number of student-participants. The students were requested to speak freely and without fear. It was stressed that the purpose of the researcher-writer was to improve the quality of student learning within the BELC. The researcher-writer was surprised to discover the large number of difficulties which student-participants were confronting; difficulties which left them struggling with their studies. After noting these difficulties, it was realised that it would prove impossible to treat of all such difficulties in one single study, due to the restricted time allotted, and that this researcher-writer was conducting the current study alone. Patton accurately avers that ‘No evaluation can answer all potential questions equally well’ (1997, p.42).

Consequently, an abbreviated questionnaire was designed. It asked participants (1) what the four most negative aspects in the BELC were; and (2), what participants considered the focus of the current study should be (see Appendix 7). It was believed that the responses to those questions would identify the four most critical participant difficulties within the BELC. In turn, those difficulties would form the focus of the current study. The questionnaire was then distributed to all 56 first-year students of BELC in the FP. Analysis showed that four questionnaire responses predominated: (1) course goals and objectives; (2) course content and resources, or instructional materials; (3) teaching and learning practices; and (4), student assessment and feedback mechanisms.

The subsequent process of designing the qualitative and quantitative research instruments in the mixed-methods fashion of the current study is described in detail in section 4.8 above. Next, this researcher-writer requested permission of the BELC lecturers to attend the conclusion of their
lectures in order to seek out student-volunteers to maintain journal-diaries of their BELC course experiences. It was emphasised that maintenance of journal-diaries was optional, but that entries should be made at regular intervals throughout the BELCs. The student-participants were given the option of employing either the Arabic or English languages in the maintenance of their journal-diaries. It was promised that an outline with pre-established headings would be provided to the student-participants in order to aid them in generating ideas whilst making their journal-diary entries.

Three students from each of the three BELC courses, forming a total of nine, were willing to participate in keeping journal-diaries. These nine student-participants were informed that their journal-diaries would be collected at the conclusion of their BELC course’s final examination. The journal-diary participants were recruited at this early stage of the current study in order to give them the maximum amount of time to write about their daily BELC experiences. Data collection continued in two phases over a period of approximately four months.

4.9.2 Phase One

The first phase of data collection comprised the main questionnaire, which was distributed to BELC classes over a period of ten days. An entire class period of 45 to 50 minutes was set aside on each occasion in order to provide students sufficient time to complete their answers. The fact that the questionnaire was translated from the English to Arabic language rendered it more facile for students to comprehend. Although it is supposed that students be proficient in the English language upon their acceptance in English programme, many students were neither able to express
themselves in English freely or efficiently, nor to understand some of the English language technical lexicon. Thus, by providing the questionnaire in the Arabic language, more opinions were garnered, and more greatly detailed answers were obtained, over a wider range of questionnaire items. Hence, a 100% response rate was realised. The closed-ended questionnaire items were analysed quantitatively by employing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). After completing the analysis process, intriguing items and significant results were noted so that further details and explanations could be obtained during the interviews.

4.9.3 Phase Two

This phase started after the analysis of the questionnaires. It was at this point that the statistical results had provided a general understanding of student viewpoints regarding a variety of BELC concerns. The journal-diaries were then collected from the nine journal-diary volunteers. Also at this time, appointments were arranged with the 18 students who had expressed a willingness to be interviewed.

Because of lack of physical space at the IAT, a lecturer’s office was requested in order to conduct this interview. The interview was commenced by reiterating the purpose of the current study, and the usefulness of student-participant information. It was additionally stressed that a participant held the right to withdraw from the interview at any time. Student-participants were given the option of a face-to-face or a telephone interview. Almost all male students were interviewed face to face while some female students opted for the telephone interview, a more culturally appropriate option in a gender-conservative society.
In social science scholarly literature, telephone interviewing is an important method of data collection (Cohen et al., 2007). Borg and Gall (1996) maintain that telephone interviewing is a method that produces comparable information to the face-to-face interview. Moreover, telephone interviews ‘yield high response rates … provide more control of the question ordering, allow you to use longer questions and skip patterns, and ask for respondents to recall information during the interview’ (Newcomer & Triplett in Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, 2004, p. 265).

Still, telephone interviews display some disadvantages. For instance, facial and body expressions cannot be perceived whilst conducting an interview. In the current study, however, given the nature and the purpose of the research, this did not prove to be a crucial matter. Whilst, Newcomer and Triplett remind that telephone interviews are relatively expensive (cited in Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, 2004), all of the telephonic interviews of the current study were conducted by using a landline telephone which was a free service.

As regards the three BELC course lecturer-participants, specific times were arranged for face-to-face interviews in their offices. These interviews were conducted in the English language and required between 40 and 50 minutes. These interviews were tape-recorded, after gaining permission from the lecturer-interviewees. These three interviews were completed over a period of three days. At the conclusion of each interview, the lecturer was requested to provide documents related to the course, such as course descriptions and sample examinations, which would assist this researcher-writer in evaluating the course.
4.10 Data Analysis Procedures

In the current study, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The closed-ended data, which was collected by using the questionnaire, were analysed quantitatively. The data culled from the interviews, journal-diaries, documents and open-ended questions in the questionnaire were analysed qualitatively. The approach which was followed in presenting the data analysis is based on combining quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings. Such combination is undertaken in order to better comprehend the different participant viewpoints, and in order to reach a meaningful picture of the research problem(s). The data analysis is presented in line with the three research questions of the current study.

4.10.1 Questionnaire Data Analysis

After collecting the three sets of questionnaires for the three courses, all the questionnaires were numbered for convenient management. Closed-ended responses were entered into a computer database, and analysed by using SPSS. The percentage and frequency counts of the responses to each item of the questionnaire were presented. Bryman and Cramer claim that one of the great advantages of using SPSS is that ‘it enables you to score and to analyse quantitative data very quickly and in many different ways’ (2001, p. 15).

Although the percentages of the five-point Likert scales (strongly agree; agree; neutral; disagree; and strongly disagree) are displayed separately in the tables, in the analysis itself, this researcher-writer calculated and rounded percentages of agreement and disagreement for all of the student questionnaire items and combined the ‘strongly agree/agree’ and ‘strongly disagree/disagree’
responses. This method left three categories. Given the interpretive nature of this study, data is neither being analysed as scientific statistics, nor is statistical significance being sought. All of the frequencies and percentages were calculated for each category in the questionnaire, and the data was exhibited visually in the form of tables as shown in Chapter V below.

4.10.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The documents related to the English programme, student responses to the open-ended questionnaire items, data from semi-structured interviews with students and lecturers, and student journal-diaries were all analysed and coded using ‘exploratory content analysis’. First, data were transcribed, translated where necessary, and codified. Next, a constant comparison method of the whole data was performed by reading and rereading, within and across, the data (Lalik & Potts, 2001). This methodology helped analyse the data logically and sequentially in terms of formulating codes, organising the categories and themes, creating thematic charts, weaving the data, and finally presenting interpretive comments in the form of a persuasive argument(s).

At the start of the data analysis process, it was challenging to combine all of the data under specific themes and categories. This researcher-writer started reading the transcribed data line-by-line and coding each idea which was encountered. This process resulted in voluminous amounts of data being coded according to the theme which they were addressing. Microsoft Word computer software was used to cut and to paste quotations from the data, to categorise the data under a specific theme, and to put the data all in one file. Different colours available in Microsoft Word were used to distinguish the variety of themes generated. The transcribed data were read more than
once in order to generate the initial categorisation of themes and sub-themes. The initial categories and themes underwent a continuous process of modification, including adding more relevant categories, deleting non-related ones, and combining others.

As mentioned earlier, the student-participant interviews were conducted in the Arabic language, and then translated into the English language. In addition, since the participants of the journal-diary data collection method were free to write either in the Arabic or English languages, the Arabic language journal-diary entries were translated into the English language. The translation was checked and verified by an official translator at Zayed University, who holds masters in translation and is a bilingual speaker of the English and Arabic languages. The process of transcribing the recorded interviews occupied an entire month. The translation of all of the data required another two months. After transcribing the interviews, the data were electronically mailed back to the interviewees for their validation. Participants reviewed their transcripts, and confirmed that the transcripts reflected the messages which they wanted to deliver. Then, the process of analysing the interviews began.

The analysis of the interview data followed the three concurrent flows of activity which were suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994): (1) data reduction; (2) data display; and (3), conclusion drawing. Different techniques and hints for data analysis were employed. These were suggested in scholarly literature (Radnor, 2001; Holliday 2002; Bryman, 2008). The first process was constituted by the reduction of the extensive body of data. It was carried out by cutting the data into smaller chunks by coding and labelling in order to assign units of meaning to the data (Radnor, 2001). This process was successful, as it converted the titanic amounts of data into more
controllable fragments (Bryman, 2008). Next, the data were displayed by creating thematic charts; these charts were modified by combining similar categories and themes, and by creating other new ones. Finally, conclusion drawing was achieved by a method which Holliday (2002) called the combination of the data. This was accomplished by commenting and creating arguments to produce a detailed description, and insightful views, about the study-participants in relation to the BELC.

4.11 Strategies for Ensuring Quality Data and Verifiable Conclusions

In research, specifically in evaluation studies, ensuring the quality of the data is essential. Thus, one of the major concerns of the current study was to guarantee that the data was reliable and valid, and that it reflected the reality of the BELC. Several procedures were pursued to achieve this goal, and the next sections will discuss these procedures in detail.

4.11.1 Piloting

Problems may occur when one is collecting data by using untested instruments. Researchers thus tend to pre-test the instruments which they employ in order to forestall potential problems. Such piloting is an important cautionary procedure, and De Vaus (1993, p.54) recommends that researchers ‘do not take the risk. Pilot test first.’

In the current study, a sample course evaluation questionnaire was pilot tested in two stages. First, the questionnaire was distributed to 30 students who had passed the BELC the previous academic year. After the first pilot test, it was determined that there were inefficiencies in the design of the questionnaire and the evaluation model. It was determined that the questionnaire questions did not
provide sufficient information in order for the participants to address the three research questions proposed in the current study. Consequently, the form of the questionnaire was changed so that items were categorised under four principal themes, focusing on each of the three research questions. This made it simpler to compose sufficient questions in order to cover different aspects of each of the three research questions. It also made the data analysis and presentation more systematic and facile to follow.

After categorising the items under four themes which focused on each of the three research questions, it became evident that some items were irrelevant or redundant. Thus more revisions were made. In the second piloting stage, 20 volunteer students from the first pilot-year-group were asked to complete the final draft of the revised questionnaire in order to ensure that there remained no ambiguity or misunderstanding. It was then concluded that only a few clarifications were still needed. These were related to the wording of some items. Those items were thus clarified by taking into account pilot-year-group suggestions. The experience of piloting the questionnaire was instructive in that it allowed this researcher-writer to test the questionnaire items for comprehensibility. It also permitted this researcher-writer to ascertain that student responses were relevant, and sufficiently detailed, in relation to the three research questions and current study objectives.

Since the current study’s main data source was the student semi-structured interviews, it was crucial to trial the interview format and to develop interviewing skills. Therefore, before conducting the interviews, and as suggested by Dörnyei (2007), a trial interview was conducted. To pilot the lecturer semi-structured interview format, this researcher-writer interviewed three
instructors at the educational institute, who are specialised in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL). Many alterations were made to the lecturer interview, as suggested by the three instructors. Due to this trial, and added input, this researcher-writer gained more confidence and learnt more interviewing skills. For example, it was learnt that prompts are a very useful technique which can be employed whilst interviewing participants. Leech (2002, p.667) confirms that ‘Prompts are as important as the questions themselves in semi-structured interviews. Prompts do two things: they keep people talking and they rescue you when responses turn to mush’.

Regarding student semi-structured interviews, there existed a glaring need for piloting and practicing, especially after it was decided to conduct telephone interviews. This piloting took place with three female student volunteers who were in their second year of the FP. Since it was this researcher-writer’s first experience in conducting a telephone interview, the added practice aided this researcher-writer in becoming accustomed to the interview data gathering method. The pilot-participant comments and suggestions were informative and helpful. At the conclusion of the piloting processes, alterations and amendments were applied to the interview format(s).

4.11.2 Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

In conducting questionnaires, the researcher must be aware of reliability and validity. Both factors can influence the quality of the data which the researcher obtains. Osborne-Daponte (2008: 86) emphasises that validity ‘refers to the extent to which there has been an approximation of truth’ - that is, the degree to which validity measures what it is supposed to measure (Pallant, 2005). To check the validity of the questionnaire, ‘content validity’, or face validity, methodology was
employed. Content validity is defined as the extent to which a device represents the content of interest (Punch, 1998). This was achieved by presenting the questionnaire design to some experts in education in general and TESOL in specific at Zayed university. These professional educators were requested to comment and to suggest improvements to the questionnaire items. In addition, colleagues who specialise in TESOL, and who are in the final year of their PhD studies, were requested to review the questionnaire design. Later, the final draft of the questionnaires was translated into the Arabic language. The translation was reviewed and verified by an expert at Zayed University, who holds masters in translation and is a bilingual speaker of the English and Arabic languages. Two other colleagues, who work as official translators, also ensured that the translation was accurate. The pilot study, discussed above, also corroborated the validity of the questionnaire.

It is noteworthy to recall that the reliability of research indicates the degree to which it is free from random error. In the current study, ‘internal consistency’ was employed to ensure reliability. According to Pallant (2005), internal consistency is the degree to which the items that make up the scale are all measuring the same underlying attribute. Internal consistency can be measured in several ways. The current study’s research employed the most commonly used statistic: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient Test, which provides an indication of the average correlation amongst all of the items which compose the scale. Different levels of reliability are required, though Nunnally recommends a minimum level of 0.7 (cited in Pallant, 2005, p.6). When the test to confirm the internal consistency reliability of the three course evaluation questionnaires had been carried out, it was found that (1) the Writing questionnaire obtained a Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient of 0.74;
(2) the Reading questionnaire of 0.71; and (3), the Conversation questionnaire of 0.73. Each of these results is considered adequately internally reliable.

4.11.3 Establishing Trustworthiness for the Qualitative Data

Qualitative research has been criticised by many researchers for its limited reliability. Critics argue that the ways in which data are collected and analysed in qualitative research are affected by researcher bias. Therefore many researchers are reluctant to accept its trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004). Consequently, different frameworks and strategies for ensuring the quality of qualitative research have come into existence. The application of the validity and reliability terms in qualitative and naturalistic-interpretive research differs from the application in quantitative and scientific-positivistic research. They are ‘conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in qualitative paradigm’ (Golafshani, 2003, p.604).

The strategies that a qualitative researcher can pursue in order to ensure trustworthiness can be controversial. For instance, Eisner (1998) argues that there are predetermined tests to ascertain the truth of qualitative research. He contends that the believability of a piece of research can be achieved by coherence, consensus, and tightness of the narrative style; that is, there must be a sound, scholarly presentation of the data and its analysis, as well as a markedly vivid liaison between the reported results and the researcher’s conclusion. A variety of criteria have also been proposed for evaluating the quality of qualitative studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested a trustworthiness framework focusing on four major areas:
1) Credibility (parallel to internal validity in scientific research);
2) Transferability (parallel to external validity/generalisability);
3) Dependability (parallel to reliability);
4) Confirmability (parallel to objectivity).

Although Eisner’s idea of believability as a criterion to corroborate the validity of qualitative studies is thought-provoking, Lincoln and Guba’s trustworthiness framework is more appealing and precise (Albaker, 2008). Therefore, in the current study, several strategies to address the four Lincoln and Guba criteria were applied. They are deliberated in the following sections.

**4.11.3.1 Credibility**

The term ‘credibility’ refers to ‘whether the participants’ views of the setting or events match up with the researchers’ portrayal of them in the research report’ (Lodico et al., 2006: 273). Because qualitative research normally derives its results from multiple constructed realities, it is essential for qualitative researchers to assure that their final conclusions are credible to their research participants (Gass & Mackey, 2005). In the current study, different strategies were applied to achieve credibility. For example, the accuracy of the description and interpretation of the data were corroborated through triangulation on different levels and participant confirmations (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Moreover, copious amounts of time were spent in examining the study setting. Much time was dedicated to meaningful interactions with the student- and lecturer-participants. Such a prolonged time period assisted in establishing strong levels of trust and rapport with the participants (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). This preliminary groundwork facilitated the current
study’s research mission when the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and journal-diaries were effectuated.

4.11.3.2 Transferability

‘Transferability’ refers to a reader’s judgment about the degree of similarity between one context and another, and the ability to apply, or reapply, the same research, depending on the original researcher’s description of the original setting (Given, 2008). The current study, despite the fact that the findings relate to one specific educational institute in the United Arab Emirates, offers one example based on first-year students which can be transferable to a similar context (Shenton, 2004). The current study’s details and descriptions can help a reader to decide whether the current study’s participants, site, resources, policies, and culture are transferable, or re-applicable, to another study setting. (Lodico et al., 2006).

It must be emphasised that the aim of this study is to generalise across contexts and to stress the unique characteristics of each teaching/learning situation. The process of the current study’s evaluation presents the reader with one example of one possible manner in which to investigate and to evaluate a language programme. Thus, the current study and its results and recommendations can be transferred to other contexts. Mindful that other educational programmes in all colleges and universities in the UAE are controlled by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, the current study and its results and recommendations can confidently be transferable to other local colleges.
4.11.3.3 Dependability

Lodico et al., (2006, p.275) define the term ‘dependability’ as ‘whether one can track the procedures and processes used to collect and interpret the data’. In the current study, dependability was addressed by describing and explaining the processes within the current study in detail. Such a description may help to enable future researchers to use the current study’s evaluation approach in other circumstances and contexts.

4.11.3.4 Confirmability

‘Confirmability’ reflects the need to ensure that the research findings and interpretations are the result of the views, opinions and experiences of the participants, rather than the preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004; Given, 2008). No claims must be made that cannot be substantiated by the data. Confirmability was achieved in the current study by applying participant validation, whereby original participants from whom the data was collected, validated the results of the analysis, as well as the interpreted data and its conclusions. This was to confirm that this researcher-writer’s interpretations were consistent with participant views (Radnor, 2001). Confirmation was achieved by returning the interview transcripts to the participants by electronic mail, and by telephoning other participants who did not give electronic mail addresses. Participants were asked to confirm that the transcripts, and the interpretations rendered by this researcher-writer, reflected their actual viewpoints, and were consistent with their perceptions. Accordingly, a few changes were made.
Moreover, an ‘audit trail’ was employed whereby commentary was received from an independent reviewer. After exhibiting the research processes to the independent reviewer, the independent reviewer was requested to verify that the research, and processes utilised, were consistent and academically sound, at both the scholarly literature and methodological investigatory levels.

4.11.4 Triangulation

The fourth procedure which was applied in the current study to ensure its validity was ‘triangulation’. The necessity of triangulation is based upon the premise that reality cannot be reached via one approach alone (Guion, 2006). Golafshani declares (2003) that triangulation is a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation processes, analysis and findings by implementing the use of multiple methods of obtaining data in one study (Gass & Mackey, 2005). In the scholarly literature, different types and levels of triangulation have been identified.

In the current study, ‘investigator triangulation’ was used by asking two investigators to peruse and to verify the translation of the students’ Arabic language interview transcripts. This was done to ensure accurate translation. Also, data triangulation was achieved by collecting the data from two different participant groups: students and lecturers.

In addition, at the level of methodology, the current study uses ‘methodological triangulation’, which conforms to the application of a variety of research methods which are utilised in order to investigate a certain phenomenon. In this regard, Patton asserts that ‘triangulation strengthens a
study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative methods’ (2001, p.247). Therefore, a variety of data collection methods were incorporated in the current study, including questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, journal-diaries and document analysis. The rationale behind this is that a single data collection method is not sufficient in providing adequate support for scholarly studies (Gass & Mackey, 2005) Weaknesses inherent in a single data collection method are compensated for by the strengths of other methods (Jack & Raturi, 2006). It is acknowledged, however, that triangulation of plentiful data and numerous participants is not a sophomoric task; it requires attentive effort and plentiful time.

4.12 Ethical Considerations

Engaging in social research means obtaining different sorts of data from a variety of individuals. Wellington (2000) insists that the main criterion for any social research is that it should be ethical. He contends that it is very important for every researcher ‘to place it (ethics) foremost in the planning, conduct and presentation of his/her research’ (Wellington, 2000, p.54). This is because research scholars, and communities involved in human social research, are becoming more aware of the risks to which they may expose participants during their studies. Such awareness has led to the formation of a wide range of ethical guidelines and principles of procedure (Wellington, 2000; Busher, 2002; Stake, 2005).

Whilst conducting the current study, this researcher-writer was aware of a number of ethical issues. Such awareness took on added potency because the current study was transpiring in a conservative
social setting. Participants were assured that they would be respected as individuals, and that consummate care would be taken not to harm them in any manner. This was achieved by following various ethical guidelines.

At the outset of the current study, a Certificate of Ethical Research approval form was submitted to the British University in Dubai. The certificate explained the purpose of the current study, and the procedures to be followed whilst collecting the data. The certificate was approved after confirming that particular attention would be paid to ethical considerations. Next, access to the research site was gained. Initial contact with the educational institute’s administration was made. Academic administrators were presented with a formal approval and introductory letter from the researcher-writer’s academic supervisor. Permission was granted to enter the institute campus at any time. Creswell (2009) recommends that the researcher should develop an ‘informed consent form’, in order to allow study- participants to show their agreement before they engage in a study. Such a form will underscore one’s right to participate in a study voluntarily, and the one’s right to withdraw from it at any time. In the current study, an informed consent form was developed, attached to each of the questionnaires. Each interviewee was also asked to grant their consent before their interview.

According to the British Educational Research Association’s (BERA) ethical guidelines, researchers must take the necessary steps to ensure that all participants in the research understand, and agree to, the process in which they are to be engaged, including the reason for which their participation is important, and the manner in which their participation will be used (BERA, 2004). Therefore, before the distribution of the questionnaire, this researcher-writer was personally
introduced. The personal and academic position of this researcher-writer was explicitly divulged to the current study’s participants. The students in each of the current study’s academic sections were provided with detailed information about the purpose of the current study and its importance. It was also explained to the students that they were absolutely free to withdraw from participation at any moment. Care was taken to ensure that students understood every item on the questionnaire. Throughout the entire class sessions of the current study, during which the questionnaires were completed, this researcher-writer was physically present and personally available.

Awareness of the importance of anonymity and confidentiality was also extant throughout the current study. Hence, study-participants were asked to return their questionnaires anonymously. Pseudonyms were used for all of the interview study-participants in order to protect their identity. Study-participants were given further assurances, both written and verbal, that no one would have access to their data except this researcher-writer, and that no personal information of any study-participant would be disclosed.

4.13 Limitations of the Study

This section of the current study thesis presents an awareness of the boundaries imposed by time, the nature of the study, and other circumstances. One of the principal limitations of the current study is the absence of classroom observation. The current study was thus limited to the questionnaire, semi-structured interview, journal-diary and document analysis as methods of data collection.
Yet, in the belief that honest words may still not be as informative as an astute witness’s observation of real-time deeds, this researcher-writer attempted to attend classes of the three BELC courses under evaluation; however, lecturers refused access to their sessions. Within similar contexts, several previous attempts by other researchers (Al-Edwani, 2005; Al-Haji, 2004; Osman, 1996) to observe classes at the same context have proven unsuccessful. Al-Edwani explains that ‘within the ethos and hidden norms of the institution they were seen as an intrusion into the tutors’ teaching methods or considered to be a form of evaluation of their teaching skills’ (Al-Edwani, 2005, p.83). Kinnaman concurs that

Despite its promise for progress, program evaluation still has a tarnished reputation among educators. In fact, for many of us, just hearing the word evaluation evokes a negative response. It conveys the risk of failure and creates an atmosphere of vulnerability. It tends to conjure up fears, warranted or not, that someone’s position or program may be in jeopardy (1992, p.2).

This researcher-writer was obliged to find other methods to compensate for the lack of access to daily classroom procedures; hence student journal-diaries were used. Participants of the journal-diary method were asked to paint a detailed picture of events and routines which normally occurred in classes. One of the broad statements that students were asked to comment on was: ‘Describe a typical class from this course (from beginning to end, e.g. what the teacher usually does, etc.)’. Admittedly, observing actual in-class activities would have unveiled a more accurate portrait than a journal-diary. It would have also facilitated the verification of whether specific study-participant claims and comments were borne out in praxis and fact.
Another limitation of the current study concerns itself with the human data sources. The current study did not involve the participation of second-, third- and fourth-year students who had completed the BELC in previous years, or graduates the educational institute, who, as currently are employees, could have provided illuminating information, as regards the instructional needs of future BELC students. Other parties, such as the head of the FP, and the Dean of the educational institute could also have added new dimensions to the current study. The participation of these parties would have strengthened the current study. Yet, due to time constraints, access challenges, as well as the fact that the current study was conducted by a single researcher-writer, this was not possible.

As it is, the accomplishment of the current study was not a simple task in an educative culture wherein the lecturer is the sole authority and students are considered as passive receivers. One of the challenges that was confronted whilst conducting the current study was to convince students to express their views freely. Many students were consistently hesitant to speak freely about their lecturers or any aspect of their BELC. This is typical in a traditional Arabic teaching and learning setting (Safi, 1995).

### 4.14 Summary

The current study was principally designed to be a qualitative case study. Yet a mixed-methods case study approach was also pursued. To this end, a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed. These included questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, student journal-diaries and document analysis.
The purpose of the current study was to evaluate and to improve the BELC of the FP, at the educational institute, in the UAE. This was realised by investigating student and lecturer viewpoints of the three BELC courses (writing, reading and conversation), relative to the current study’s three research questions. To achieve such purpose, the current study adapted an eclectic approach as a formative evaluation model.

As principally qualitative, the current study is epistemologically and methodologically consistent with naturalistic-interpretivism and social constructivism. Research methods were piloted and tested before application. A number of strategies were pursued in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. Ethical issues were also of significant concern to the current study, and were taken into consideration by applying different scholarly academic guidelines and procedures.
Chapter V

Findings and Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter has as its intention the exposition of the results of the current study, as well as an analysis of those results. The outcomes of this investigation are categorised into four principal groupings. These, in turn, will be examined successively, in accordance with the three basic investigatory questions which underpin this inquiry. Subsequently, there will appear a content analysis of the study’s findings, based upon the varied sources utilised, such as documents, interviews, surveys and questionnaires, journals and diaries. Afterwards, the reader will find that several major topics, classifications, and subsidiary categories have been elaborated.

Of these themes, section one will illuminate the daily setting of the educational institute in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with special mention being made, and focus being given, to its Foundation Programme (FP), and the Basic English Language Courses (BELC).

Section two of this chapter will bring to the fore those opinions and insights of students and lecturers with respect to the BELC. Therein this writer will spotlight the areas of course objectives, the correlative teaching-learning dynamic, and the assessment paradigms of each of the three BELC.
In conclusion, section three will evaluate study-participants’ (lecturers and students) suggestions regarding their recommendations for the enhancement of the teaching-learning experience, and especially the BELC, in the above-mentioned educational institute.

5.2 Description of the Current Practices at the Study Site

What are the current practices of Basic English Language Courses (BELC) in the Foundation Programme (FP), the educational institute?

This section will elucidate the location of this study from different perspectives and varied points of view. A view of the study-site environment will be sketched. As was evinced above, in section 4.6, the conditions of labour and study, as well as the overall environs, profoundly impact upon the student body and learning, as well as on the faculty’s pedagogic practice and ability to impart knowledge (Osbourne-Daponte, 2008). It is thus essential to depict accurately the place of this study. Research has indicated that an accurate description of an inquiry’s location assists in the clarification, and subsequent interpretation, of a study’s data and results. This researcher-writer will portray the learning objectives of the English Programme at FP the institute’s admission policy, along with the tactile, concrete learning environment, including available resources and physical-plant facilities, the pedagogic staff of the three BELC courses, those course objectives and contents, as well as the matrix of assessment and evaluation of each of the three BELC courses.

At this juncture, the reader should be apprised that this portion of the analysis will be largely descriptive. Its descriptive nature is due to the fact that this part of the analysis rests principally on
foundational documents which were utilised to acquire basic information, and whose purpose will undergird the overall study. This technique has been encouraged by Holder and Zimmerman because “the evaluator must clarify what the program[me] is intended to accomplish and determine the measurements of program[me] performance that are feasible and relevant for the goals of the evaluation. This involves a review of program[me] documents.” (2009, p.21). To this end, information culled from documentation sourced from the institute will be analysed. Said documentation will include course descriptions handouts, the FP-English programme’s handbook, and the directory of the educational institute.

5.2.1 The English Programme at Foundation Programme

The English Programme at Foundation Programme was initiated as a simple ‘language unit’, whose mission it was to provide additional institute departments with English language courses correspondent to their varied student levels and needs at different times. The aim of teaching English language in this section is stated to be “equip[ing] students with both the English Language and academic study skills they will need to succeed in their subject studies” (2010, p.25). The language of instruction in the FP is entirely English.

The educational institute Directory (2010), underscores the general aspirations, as well as specialised goals and targets, of the English Programme at FP. Those general aspirations embody the following:

1. Apply critical thinking skills in finding and making use of information systems;
2. Develop the skills of self-assessment and self-monitoring;

3. Develop the skills of working in groups and as leaders while achieving learning goals;

4. Develop the reading skills required in order to understand written texts relevant to their needs;

5. Develop the writing skills required in order to produce relevant written texts at the required level of competency;

6. Develop listening skills in order to understand relevant spoken texts; and,

7. Develop fluent and accurate speaking skills to interact appropriately and at the required level.

5.2.2 Admission Policy

Admission and acceptance in the educational institute requires that prospective students demonstrate specific prior achievements. (1) Applicants to the educational institute must be a UAE citizen. Both male and female students can apply (2) Applicants must possess a General Secondary Certificate of Education (GSCE), or an equivalent qualification (3) Students with an overall average of 70% and above are eligible for admission (4) Applicant must score 500 or above on EmSat. 5) Applicants must score 60% on a departmental admissions test which is marked out of 100. (6) Applicants who have scores of TOEFL 500/iBT 61, or IELTS (Academic) 5.0 will be directly admitted to the Program. (7) Applicants need to take an admission interview
5.2.3 The Learning Environment

As was stressed above, since physical surroundings significantly impact on student performance (Brown, 2001), it is essential to take into account these surroundings as part of this study. Hence, there will follow a delineation of the college’s learning ambience. This will incorporate an assessment of both classrooms and buildings, as well as those facilities and resources to which students and lecturers are apportioned.

The educational institute shares its campus with another college which leaves the educational institute with fewer classrooms. Therefore, the institute cannot accommodate the huge numbers of newly accepted students every year. The total number of students at the institute is 1,300. Most of the classrooms have a capacity of 20 students; however, in many cases, more than 30 students attend classes. The limited availability of rooms usually causes problems when the administration needs to open a new class to accommodate more students. While collecting the data, it was noticed that the desks in all classrooms are arranged in rows due to limited space, which sometimes affects the lecturers’ teaching method and style. These cramped conditions contributed, for instance, to the reluctance of some teachers to try to put students into small groups or pairs in order to practice group activities and tasks.

Classrooms are equipped only with whiteboards and desks. Other teaching aids such as overhead projectors and computers need to be pre-arranged by the lecturer. Therefore, such important teaching aids are not available all the time in classrooms to all lecturers.
One main library is available to students and lecturers. The main library’s hours of operation are from 08:00 ante meridiem (am) to 04:00 post meridiem (pm). This seems to be a short period of time for many students as some may have classes for the whole morning and therefore cannot visit the library until the afternoon. The library is well equipped, with an automatic system that allows the user to search its index. It has fifteen computers for students’ personal use. Books are updated annually according to the lecturers’ requests.

On the other hand, there is only one computer room with internet access, which is available for all lecturers to book. Also, there are no specific study rooms allocated for students to use in their free time. As a result, many students sit on the floor in the corridors between classrooms or in empty classrooms while waiting for their next lecture.

5.2.4 Teaching Staff

According to the educational institute Directory (2010, p.3), ‘the faculty members of the FP are a highly qualified group of academics and professionals who are committed to finding innovative ways to meet the educational needs of students’. There is a total of 6 lecturers in the English Programme who hold Master degrees in English Linguistics or Literature. Some of the specialities include applied linguistics, literature, sociolinguistics, course design and curriculum development. The lecturers consist of three males and three female, from countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia. However, none of the academic staff specialises in teaching any of the four language skills. All members take part in other duties, such as organising workshops and participating in
conferences, and each must join one of the department councils and to participate in other activities at the institute.

5.2.5 Course Objectives

The English Language Programme Handbook of 2010 readily stipulates that every English programme course holds its own set of distinct objectives. The handbook also contains a concise descriptive sketch of each course offering. It is interesting to note that the goals and targets of the English language courses were decided upon, and put in place, by the institute and departmental administrations at the commencement of the programme’s first academic year, 2010. To their merit, there has existed no need to alter them in any manner since their inception. Turning to the following subtopic, the course objectives will be introduced.

5.2.5.1 Writing Course

The writing course, in accord with the English Language Programme Handbook, is ‘an introductory course in teaching writing to help students - not only to communicate in writing - but also to learn’ (2010, p.20). The handbook declares that the writing course bolsters and buttresses the syntactic structures, idiomatic expressions and lexicon previously instructed, and specifically endeavours to support students in order that they achieve the following objectives:

1. Express themselves clearly in writing.
2. Discover the close relationship between writing and thinking.
3. Recognise various approaches and techniques of teaching writing.
4. Reinforce the basic skills of writing: punctuation, spelling and composing more complex sentences.

5. Improve in writing different forms of letters, invitations and messages.

6. Improve writing coherent and cohesive compositions (ibidem).


5.2.5.2 Reading Course

The reading course is attentive to the enhancement of the skills necessary for the ready decipherment of the sound-symbol relationships that make reading, scholarly and leisure, possible.

The department handbook portrays this course as focusing ‘on the mastery of reading skills within the reading process’ (English Language Department Handbook, 2010, p.18). It introduces students in a systematic and progressive way to the reading techniques which they need in order to be successful in work as well as life. Moreover, it is fashioned to develop, intrinsically within each pupil, his/her ability to read gainfully with alacrity, pleasure and comprehension. The reading course strives to promote the students to realise the following objectives:

1. Develop reading skills: skimming, scanning, identifying cause and effect, et cetera.

2. Build up vocabulary and terminology.

3. Be able to extract the theme and identify the main ideas when reading an English text.

4. Understand the structure

5. Argue for or against a subject.

5.2.5.3 Conversation Course

Through the replication of an ample array of real-life conversational experience, the conversation course emphasises the socio-linguistic skills upon which oral expression and auditory comprehension rest. Additionally, the reading class lends singular attention to pronunciation by granting especially large frames of instructional time to the physical and mechanical formation of English sounds within the human buccal and pharyngeal cavities. The English Language programme Handbook (2010), attests to expose students to a replete gamut of conversational and situational English language exercises, with native speakers, and complemented by the assistance of auditory and visual educative materials. The reading course sustains pupils in their attainment of the following objectives:

1. Develop production skills in sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation.
2. Identify and use common idiomatic expressions.
4. Develop listening strategies, such as note taking, through personal observation and listening tasks.
5. Translate orally symbolic forms (Diagrams, charts, tables, et cetera).
6. Recognise formal and informal patterns of speech.
7. Express ideas on a variety of topics in English clearly.
8. Increase English vocabulary.
9. Be able to respond to questions concerning many aspects of daily life.
10. Understand a variety of accents (‘Englishes’) of spoken English language.

(English Language Programme Handbook, 2010, p.16)
Extrapolating from the above findings, this writer suggests that each of the BELC contains precise, pre-determined set of objectives. It is thus concluded that the student-needs assessment did not occur prior to the establishment of the course objectives. Therefore, it is necessary that these course objectives should be borne in mind by the lecturer when s/he produces and assembles daily classroom course materials. In turn, it will be enlightening to ascertain how the course objectives are perceived by the students and lecturers, and to annotate the areas of concurrence and discord between the two groups. This topic will be broached later in this chapter.

5.2.6 Course Content and Materials

This section will unveil and specify the content and materials used in the BELC, making use of evidence gleaned from observations of the English Language Programme Handbook, course descriptions, materials, textbooks, and sundry and divers supplementary materials. This data was compiled directly from the English Language Programme itself, as well as the individual teachers of each particular course.

5.2.6.1 Writing Course

The English Language Programme Handbook (2010) characterises the content of the writing course as one which dwells extensively on those mechanics of writing that are required to forge the succinct and efficacious communication of ideas. The arts and arenas of calligraphy, punctuation, lexical selection, orthography, syntax and sentence diagramming, paragraphing and thematic cohesion, as well as content relevance form the core of the writing course. It is for this reason that ‘students learn to produce the kind of practical writing that many people do in their everyday life,
such as writing memos, writing to get things done, messages, forms, invitations, letters and giving written instructions and other types of writing that anyone might have to do at some time or other’ (2010, p.21).

The prior contents are extracted from the writing course description of the English Language Programme Handbook. Yet when this writer commenced to analyse the course description synopsis, which was obtained from the course lecturer, the actual content was discovered to be different. For example, on the course description synopsis, typically disseminated to the students at the semester’s first lecture, the course plan is constituted by the following:

• Part One: Writing Correctly

1. Sentence construction – word order

2. Punctuation

3. Spelling and usage

• Part Two: Writing Confidently

1. The well-crafted sentence

2. Polished punctuation

3. Spelling and usage

• Part Three: Writing with Style

1. Paragraph writing

2. Composition

3. Punctuation and presentation

4. Writing an essay
Such surprising discordance between English Language Programme Handbook’s course description, and the lecturer’s course synopsis, could owe itself to the fact that some instructors do not literally follow all that is specified in the English Language Programme Handbook; rather they employ their own materials and accentuate that content which they find most germane. One must also take into account each particular teacher’s instructional style, strengths and preferences. The resultant focus frequently falls on only partial listing of the departmental course objectives.

The sole course textbook is entitled *Writing Skills -- A Problem-Solving Approach*, written by Coe, Rycroft and Ernest, and published in 1983 by Cambridge University Press. It is supplemented with excerpts from a diversity of additional resources. The textbook aspires to afford pupils with problem-solving exercises via the utilisation of an array of writing styles and varied exercises. The themes of the textbook consist of formal and informal letters, reports, brochures and guides, articles and story writing. Said exercises permit students to practise the use of specific written language genres. The same exercises also allow pupils the opportunity to organise their ideas in a written format. Additional numerous drills and tasks also incorporate activities such as the reconfiguring of scrambled sentences, and the liaising of words and phrases into coherent wholes. The textbook’s authors reiterate that their book’s exercises are well suited for collaborative group engagement. Confoundingly, the course lecturer is relying on a somewhat aged edition of the textbook. This antiquated edition applies great emphasis on the problem-solving approach to writing. Oddly, the problem-solving approach to writing is not included as one of the characteristics and/or objectives of this course. (See examples of some writing activities from the textbook in appendix 8)
5.2.6.2 Reading Course

The English Language Programme Handbook states that ‘This course covers a broad range of topics pertaining to the students’ intrinsic interests, and focusing on the target reading skills which students are expected to develop throughout the course’ (2010: 19). Moreover, the course includes varied exercises that are concerned with reading skills, and which are related to the subject matter of the course textbook.

One textbook, *More Reading Power*, by Beatrice Mikulecky and Linda Jeffries, and published in 2003 by Longman, is utilised. This textbook, which, as previously expressed, focuses on student-centred reading skills, also concentrates on the process-approach to reading. It is designed for the intermediate to high-intermediate student-reader. Its subjects and themes include comprehension skills such as skimming and scanning, critical-thinking, reading speed, grasping main ideas and summarising. The purpose of the textbook is to develop the students’ cognitive awareness of their reading processes so that the pupils will prove capable of reading in manners that will be expected of them on the university level. Although the textbook’s authors affirm that the teacher plays a vital role in a successful reading class, the textbook yet attempts to encourage students by honing their awareness of the reading and thinking cerebral processes. The accomplishment of this goal is attempted through exercises that require students to engage in pairs and/or groups. It may be asserted that the textbook is not primarily centred on merely the content of reading alone; rather it strives to pinpoint the students’ attention to their own cognitive and cerebral reading-thought methodologies. Hence, the textbook philosophises reading as a mental procedure. To that end,
individual reading skills are presented as part of that mental progression. (See examples of some reading activities from the textbook in appendix 9)

5.2.6.3 Conversation Course

Striving to enhance student competence in verbal communicative skills, the conversation course was designed to be supple in nature, as opposed to pursuing a rigidly defined weekly schedule with ossified instructional materials (English Language Programme Handbook, 2010: 17). The conversation course encourages pupils to respond to questions regarding diverse facets of their everyday lives, to expostulate opinions over a variety of subjects, to enrich their lexicon and to partake of the ‘art’ of conversation. The English Language Programme Handbook (2010), asserts that the conversation course invigorates students to engage in differently accented English listening exercises which are complemented by note-taking tasks. These methods of study endeavour to augment the students’ comprehension and communicative capabilities by exposing them to an array of English accents within a spontaneous, idiosyncratic true-to-life ambience. The conversation course does not make use a designated textbook; rather the course revolves around the oral discussion of divers topics, such as summer destinations, and people's homes and lives. It also stages role-play drills in an effort to recreate sundry situational settings that demand an impromptu verbal response. (See examples of some listening and speaking activities from the textbook in appendix 10)
5.2.7 Course Assessment

The coming section elaborates the tools and the assessment score distribution utilised in the evaluation of pupils in the BELC. These are formed around a study of the course description synopsises which were procured from the lecturers of the three courses. The final examinations of the three courses were also obtained.

The educational institute Directory (2010) states that the criterion for student evaluation is a standard, final, written, English examination. This examination constitutes 50% of students’ overall marks. The remainder of the pupils’ marks are determined by a division, or average, among homework scores, attendance and the mid-term examination mark. Yet, not all course lecturers utilise this matrix. Some lecturers distribute marks in accord with their own grading methodologies. However, no matter the precise evaluative procedure, every student’s achievements, for each course in which s/he has been enrolled, are graded by applying the following criteria of Table 5.1:

Table 5.1 Marking Criteria. Source: The Educational Institute Directory (2010: 36).
5.2.7.1 Writing Course

In accordance with the course description synopsis, purveyed by the writing course lecturer, evaluative procedures in this course might consist of surprise tests, short tests and achievement tests based on objectives taught in the classroom such as those following:

1. Punctuating a passage.
2. Providing coherence and cohesion devices for a rambling passage.
3. Marking the main part of an essay and extracting the main ideas in summary form.
4. Identifying errors on selected excerpts.
5. Writing on pre-assigned or freely selected topics.
6. Inserting some conjuncts, transition words or abbreviations into an assigned text.

The marking/grading distribution in this course corresponds to the following: course work is valued at 20%; the mid-term examination is worth 30%; and a final examination is weighted by 50%. The final examination is partitioned in five categories, which test specific writing skills. These sections are: punctuation, editing, transitional/liaison words and phrases, attitudinal words and phrases, and free writing. In this latter category, students are requested to pen no more than ten lines regarding the possible reasons for their poor standards in the English language.

5.2.7.2 Reading Course

The reading course description outline attests that the marks in the reading course are apportioned in accordance with following: quizzes are given a value of 10%; assignment are valued at 10%; the mid-term examination score is worth 30%; the final examination is appraised at 40%; and
attendance holds a value of 10%. The final examination is segmented in four units, each relevant to an individual reading capability. The first unit is comprised by a reading comprehension question, wherein pupils read two separate passages and respond to questions about them. The second unit centres on lexicon. The third unit treats on inferences formed from a description. The last unit is constituted by a ‘mind-map’ question, in which students read a written passage, and then sketch a ‘cognitive-mental-map’ which depicts their understanding of passage’s main idea and supporting sentences.

5.2.7.3 Conversation Course

The course description summary of the conversation course affirms that its marking distribution is determined by five oral presentations, each of which valued singly is worth 10%, for a total value of 50%; a mid-term presentation examination of a worth of 20%; a final project presentation weighted at 20%; and participation mark apportioned at 10%. For the five oral presentations, students engage in groups, pairs and individually on an array of subject matter akin to summer holidays, dramatising a children’s tale, interpreting and characterising a sketch, painting, or photograph, and a discussion of current events. In the mid-term presentation, every pupil is requested to confect a pedagogic game. Afterwards, the student presents the game in class, elaborating on the game’s objectives, the resources needed, its rules, and the time required to play it. To culminate, the student is also asked to explain how s/he acquired, or came by, the idea for the game.
In the conversation course final examination, each student chooses a bag of variegated items. S/he then must employ these objects to devise a narrative. The conversation course lecturer’s criteria to assess this presentation grants a certain number of points for preciseness of grammar, variation and sophistication of vocabulary, clarity of pronunciation, vocalization/intonation, body language, narrative creativity, and audience enjoyment.

5.2.8 Summary

English Language Programme and BELC documents serve as the basis of this analysis and constitute the principal medium by which the writer answers this study’s first research question. The focal point of this analysis is to describe the study site and spotlight the study site’s salient traits in order to lay the ground-work for the subsequent sections of the data analysis. The data analysis illustrated that the physical location of the study site is antiquated and the accommodative quality of the edifices is insufficient. Moreover, the purposes and mission of the English Language Programme are not designed in accordance with the students’ interests and necessities, but are wholly determined based on the preferences and viewpoints of the institute and departmental administrations. Even though the lecturers in the English Language Programme are well qualified, none is specialised in instructing the four language skills. Finally, each lecturer of the BELC provides his/her students with a course description synopsis wherein the expected outcomes, course content and student assessments are elaborated. The coming section will attempt to investigate and ascertain the students' and lecturers’ views of the BELC.
5.3 Participants' Evaluative Views of the Basic English Language Courses

What are students and lecturers’ evaluative views about Basic English Language Courses (BELC) in the Foundation Programme (FP), at the Educational Institute?

The research question above will examine the distinct opinions and points of view of students and lecturers about various attributes of the BELC at a ground-breaking Institute of Applied Technology. To this end, research data was culled from both opened- and closed-ended questionnaires and quasi-formal interviews with students and lecturers. Student diaries were also assessed and analysed. The quantitative and qualitative research data was first scrutinised and later combined, where appropriate, with the opinions and points of view students and lecturers. After dissecting the data numerous topics and sub-topics was found salient. These are elaborated upon in sequence, and categorised under the four major themes upon which this study focuses: (a) course objectives, (b) course content and teaching resources-cum-materials, (c) teaching and learning, and (d) evaluation and feedback procedures in the courses. Figure 5.2 highlights these themes. It is essential to underscore that the assessment of the BELC is grounded entirely on the students’ and lecturers’ opinions and points of view, as well as their general experiences.

The concern of ‘voice’ is considered key in this evaluative study because this kind of study-analysis has not been previously undertaken in the English Language Department.
5.3.1 Course Objectives

The first consideration of the research data analysis is the objectives of the BELC. This writer’s principal query was the following: From the vantage point of students and lecturers, to what degree has each course realised its objectives? The following sections will put forward the opinions and points of view of the students and lecturers as they relate to each course’s objectives.

5.3.1.1 Writing course

The analysis of the writing course evaluation questionnaire, as it regards the course objectives, demonstrates that questionnaire respondents concurred with three of the ten listed writing objectives. Items (5), (1) and (10) drew the largest amount of student concurrence: 81% of the pupils agreed with item (5) ‘Reinforce the mechanics of writing (punctuation and spelling)’, 78% with item (1) ‘Reinforce the grammatical structures’, and 57% with item (10) ‘Increase knowledge of English language vocabulary’. This might illustrate that the lecturer has chosen to target the grammar objectives to a greater degree than writing-focused objectives. The other seven of the ten
items showed the lowest levels of student conformity, as shown in Table 5.2. This finding lucidly evinces that some portion of the basic writing skills and methodologies are not being instructed. For example, only 4% of the students’ opinions coincided that knowledge of different writing genres was being imparted (item 8). On the other hand, 77% of the pupils’ opinions diverged from this statement. This might reveal that the lecturer is omitting to teach multiple writing genres. The instruction of diverse writing styles is thought to be an essential corpus of knowledge in the EFL writing classroom. This revelation could also signal that the lecturer lacks the ability or proclivity to instruct the genre-approach to writing. In addition, item (7) shows that 60% of the students conveyed their discord with the following statement: …that during this course they had learnt how to compose a well-formulated essay, and understood its basic components, such as introduction, body and conclusion. Perhaps this testifies to the possibility that the lecturer also disregards another key writing objective, and dwells inordinately on the teaching of syntactic rules. This, in turn, may owe itself to the lecturer’s dearth of qualification in the instruction of English writing. As we can recall from the description of the lecturing staff in section (5.2.4), none of the lecturers is specialised in this arena.

In the document analysis section (5.2.5.1), it can be observed that the central, stated objective of this course is to teach students how to write. According to the students, nevertheless, said objective has not been realised. A yet more clear proof emerges in the coming qualitative data analysis.
Table 5.2 Students’ views of the objectives of the writing course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reinforce grammatical structures</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Express myself clearly in writing</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Understand and learn 'creative writing'</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Recognize various approaches and techniques of teaching writing</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reinforce the mechanics of writing (i.e. punctuation and spelling)</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Write coherent essays</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Write a well-structured essay (i.e. introduction, body &amp; conclusion)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Write different genres (i.e. letters, invitations, and messages)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Learn how to spell English words correctly</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Increase knowledge of English language vocabulary</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data were garnered from interviews with eight students. In answering the question, ‘What do you think the aims of this course are?’ six of eight students suggested that the course centred on teaching them the fundamentals of grammar, punctuation and how to search for the definitions of lexical entries in dictionaries. For instance, in her interview, Hessa said:

*I think that the teacher was focusing on educating us how to use correct grammar and punctuation; I think this is the main goal of this course.*

This attests that, in accord with these pupils, the course attends more greatly to the improvement of student writing ‘mechanics’ than to student writing skills. This was corroborated by Mr Ahmad, who stated that the above skill-set is one of the prominent course objectives:
In fact, the goal of the writing course is to improve students’ punctuation, grammar, and spelling... we have a wide scope of concerns. We’re talking about sentence-level editing, punctuation, sentence manipulation and summary making.

That indicates that in the opinion of this lecturer, students must master mechanics before they commence drafting and composing written works. To buttress this viewpoint, Mr Ahmad rendered the quotation that follows:

...In particular, for basic writing, based on facts and my experience, our students need to be instructed on a sentence level rather than an essay level. Why? Because they are so weak in terms of grammar, word order, and so on so forth.

Rashid remarked critically during her interview on the flagrant failure to incorporate many course objectives in the actual course itself, hence:

The course, as it says in its description, should teach us how to write a paragraph and an essay, the basics of writing and research, but this did not take place in our current course. I don’t think the aims of this course have been achieved.

In confirmation of the quantitative findings viewed before, the objective of how to write by mastering and utilising varied English writing genres was not met. An example can be seen in Fahad’s diary:

We did not learn how to write invitations or letters. I don’t know why the teacher ignored them. I wish I had learned this skill, as I have a friend in the UK and would like to send her a letter, but I don’t know how.

There exists a discrepancy of opinion between the lecturer’s and his students’ points of view as regards the realisation of the course objectives. The lecturer claims that he has attained the targets and objectives of the course. Yet, his students demonstrated a discordant point of view. His students affirm that only the mechanics of writing were instructed throughout the writing course.
There are several feasible explanations for such a variation of viewpoint. One interpretation may suggest that the lecturer does not possess sufficient familiarity with the objectives of the course. Another possible explanation might be that the lecturer believed that, first and foremost, there existed a need for the mechanics of writing prior to all other pencraft-pursuits. Perhaps the lecturer’s inner-understanding of writing is one that dwells on grammar, punctuation and spelling. His inner-focus might have dictated his teaching targets and methodologies. Possibly he lacks the relevant qualifications to instruct writing as his students desire and the course description declaims. A final possibility rests on the notion that, in the lecturer’s view, the students hold a low proficiency in English, since they are recent secondary school graduates. However, there should be no reason for the lecturer not to teach his students how the structure of an English essay is composed.

The evidence above is astonishing, as it is vividly show, based on the students’ responses, that the bulk of the course objectives remained wholly unfulfilled. One is left to examin that if a/the lecturer is not invested in imparting the knowledge entailed by the course objectives, why do we/they set such objectives? One probable response might be that the lecturer is not accountable to the institute administration concerning that which transpires inside a given classroom. Perhaps a given lecturer teaches a particular course by departing from his own point of view, personal abilities, tastes and interests. If valid, this begets a critical dilemma at the undergraduate stage of UAE tertiary education. Why are lecturers not observed, critiqued and evaluated in order to ascertain whether they have realised the course objectives for those courses which they instruct?
5.3.1.2 Reading course

An analysis of the reading course evaluation questionnaire validates that the students acceded to eight of the ten reading course objectives, fluctuating from 53% to 86% (see Table 5.3). Such an affirmative finding might illustrate that this lecturer is dedicated to addressing the actual reading course objectives by concentrating on refining students’ reading skills; for example, skimming, scanning and reading speed. The result of this analysis also authenticates an overall agreement among students that a majority of the essential reading course objectives were indeed satisfied. Conversely, students related their discord with two objectives. Statement (9) inquired whether the reading course objective of developing the students’ critical stance in English reading had been met. 19% of the students affirmed this statement, yet 53% dissented. This type of reaction, within the context of the UAE, should not astound. Emirati students are not accustomed to expressing their opinions pertaining to the content of their reading. In Emirati culture, from the very commencement of their academic endeavours, Emirati students are neither enjoined, nor requested, to show their own opinions; rather they are encouraged to accept the knowledge which their elders and institutions purvey. Said survey outcome may also owe itself to the UAE’s societal tendency of inculcating in its youth the habits of not probing beneath surface knowledge more profoundly. Another feasible explanation for this result may be that the learning style, favoured in UAE primary and secondary school education, is characterised by the grammar and translation methodology, whereby students imitate the grammar and translation that their teacher dictates via drilling. There are often no meaningful opportunities for students to formulate their own critical viewpoints or conclusions. A tertiary lecturer should assume the responsibility for altering these habits by
‘sculpting and forging’ students to become heuristic, and thereby develop their own voice and viewpoints.

Item (10) brought to the fore that only 17% of students concurred that they had learnt summarisation, whereas 60% disagreed. In this researcher’s personal experience as an English instructor, the acquisition of summarisation skills are some of the most protracted, and vexing, in the consumption of time that they require. It may thus have occurred that the lecturer did not possess sufficient time to complete the entire summarisation objective. This suggestion might be especially accurate if one considers the unusually numerous objectives of this course.

Table 5.3 Students’ views of the objectives of the reading course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Develop my skimming skills.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Develop my scanning skills.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Build up vocabulary and terminology.</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Understand English sentence structure.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Identify the main ideas of the text.</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Guess the meaning of new words from context.</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Express my opinion about a text that I have read.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Improve my reading speed.</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Develop a critical stance in reading.</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Learn how to summarise what I have read.</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, after dissecting the interview data, it became demonstrable that for five of six students the central thrust of the course was to enhance their reading abilities. These students principally articulated their impressions of the course objectives as follows:

...to speed up our reading (Maiam).
...to improve my reading skills such as skimming and scanning (Ahmad).
...to enrich my English vocabulary (Amna).
...to get the main idea of a reading text (Salem).
...to guess the meaning of new words (Wa’ad).

In a separate assertion, the lecturer of the reading course, Mr Samir, encapsulated the focal point of the course as:

This course has been designed to help our students to be very good readers in the department of English, and also to be qualified English language teachers in their future profession as EFL teachers in the primary stage.

The preceding finding corroborates that in this course both the students and lecturer comprehended the objectives to be attained. However, and despite the probable achievement of the course objectives, the interview analysis and diary data expose that three of six students seem discontent about the content which they had studied in this course. They attest that the lecturer concentrated on some reading skills, at the expense of others. This is laid bare by the succeeding comment made by Rahaf in the interview:

We did not cover all the skills: we only focused on a few. The teacher kept repeating the same tasks until we got fed up. I wanted to learn something new but the teacher insisted on progressing slowly.

Other students waxed even more outspoken by criticising the course objectives. They declared that the course objectives contributed little to their reading skills. Sara explained in her journal:
This course did not add a lot for me, I didn’t learn new skills. All it did was reinforcing the skills that I already know from school. I think scanning and skimming is something we have already learnt when we were at school, there was no need for such skills: come on, we need to learn something new.

The preceding results establish that the lecturer successfully attained the bulk of the course objectives. The dilemma present here, however, lies in that many students showed their discontent with these objectives. This revelation may result from the students’ prior mastery of some of the reading skills which this course proposes to address. There exists the possibility that a portion of these reading skills may already have been imparted at secondary school. It additionally appears likely that the lecturer does not possess an accurate awareness of the students’ English level, or their previously attained knowledge. Hence, one conclusion that might be drawn from this finding bespeaks the importance of rightly evaluating student needs prior to the establishment of objectives for any course.

5.3.1.3 Conversation Course

The data analysis of the course objectives for the conversation course evaluation questionnaire substantiates that most student opinion concurred that eight of the 14 course objectives pertaining to speaking skills had been attained. To illustrate, item (3) reveals that 95% of student opinion coincided with the assertion that this course aided them in acquiring greater confidence in the speaking of English in public settings. This outcome might suggest the lecturer’s success in overcoming the prevalent student fear of committing errors while speaking. Item (1) pinpointed the concurrence of 89% of the students with the statement that the speaking course had furthered their speaking skills in sound, stress and intonation. Item (7) corroborated the agreement of 86%
of the student body that the speaking course had benefited them in their pronunciation of English language phonemes.

In the typical Emirati context, many lecturers tend to demure from such linguistic details as pronunciation because even lecturers frequently prove deficient in their ability to pronounce some English sounds properly. This circumstance may owe itself to the disparity between Arabic and English sounds: for instance, Arab students encounter frustration in distinguishing between the English sounds /p/ and /b/, owing to the fact that in Arabic those phonemes are articulated as only one sound, /b/. A possible conclusion to aver is that the lecturer of this course is assured of his/her prowess in imparting refined and detailed elocutionary skills. Item (9) verifies that 70% of students affirmed that this course had augmented their lexical repertoire; albeit 21% dissented from this assertion. The elevated percentage of student concurrence might foretell that the lecturer acknowledges the primacy of possessing a lush lexical reservoir. To this end, the lecturer strives to endow the student body of the same

Overall the respondents disallowed the six course objectives pertaining to listening skills (see Table 5.4). Item (11) informed that merely 9% of the students averred that the course had assisted them in their ability to comprehend the world’s panoply of spoken English accents; howbeit 70% disapproved of this statement. Owing to the existence of a myriad of expatriate communities in the UAE; for instance, Indians, Filipinos and Arabs from a multitude of Arabic-speaking countries, exposure to spoken varieties of English (our planet’s ‘Englishes’) must not be minimised. On the contrary, a knowledge of divergent ‘Englishes’ is firstly useful in the inter-community inter-actions of the Anglophone polyglot and entrepot that is modern UAE. Emirati students are normally

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exposed to only the typical United Kingdom (UK) and/or United States (US) accents that they readily listen to on routine English language textbook cassettes. Lamentably, most Emirati students are wholly unaware of other ‘Englishes’. UAE tertiary programmes should assume it as part of their mission statements to expose students to a host and plethora of English speech varieties.

**Table 5.4 Students’ views of the objectives of the conversation course**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Develop speaking skills (i.e. sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation).</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Use common idiomatic expressions.</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gain confidence in English speaking in public.</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Develop listening strategies such as note taking.</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Speak about visualised data (i.e. diagrams, charts &amp; tables)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Recognise formal and informal patterns of speech.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pronounce English sounds and words correctly.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Express my ideas clearly on a variety of topics in English while speaking.</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Develop vocabulary repertoire.</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Respond to daily life questions.</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Understand a variety of spoken accents in English.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Recognize main ideas in short audio listening segments.</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Develop my listening for details.</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Guess the meaning of spoken words from context.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As identified earlier, in section 5.2.5.3, one of the course objectives proposed to ‘develop listening strategies, such as note-taking, through personal observation and listening tasks’. When surveyed by item (4) whether this objective was effectuated, only 16% of the students corroborated that the
objective had been met; whereas 59% countered that the objective had not reached. In her interview, Manal lamented not having had the opportunity to acquire this skill:

*We did not practice any listening activity during this course. The teacher did not teach us how to take notes when listening to something in English, which I believe is a very important skill that I was waiting to learn before attending this course.*

Correspondent to the viewpoints disclosed in the questionnaire, interview analysis data signifies that the students concurred that the main body of objectives associated with speaking skills were accomplished. Listening skills objectives were, nonetheless, thoroughly neglected. Specifically, in his interview, Fahad averred:

*I think this course was aiming at increasing our self-confidence in speaking in public, to be fluent in speaking without hesitance, and to increase our vocabulary repertoire. However, we didn’t focus on listening at all.*

The preceding quotation corroborates that the lecturer realised many of the objectives pertaining to speaking skills, but did not attend to listening skills. The succeeding response by the lecturer, Mrs. Nuha, confirms this assertion:

*Mainly, this course aims at teaching students the development and production of the skills of intonations, rhythm and stress (when to put stress on words). They also have to know how to produce different types of vocabulary, so they expand their vocabularies. They have to learn how to integrate the four skills at the same time, but all in speaking. Eventually you will see that almost all of them [course objectives] go around one thing, which is vocabulary and speaking fluently. That’s mainly what it is.*

It was noteworthy to recognise that the lecturer did not cite any objective, drill or exercise pertaining to listening skills. This outcome may be ascribed to multiple reasons. From the vantage point of the lecturer, it is conceivable that numerous students may possess a paucity of fluency and pronunciation. Hence, the lecturer might have decided that the course’s principal goal should first
address these speaking deficiencies. An added explanation could be the scant physical teaching kit accessible to the lecturer; for example, a tape recorder or cassette, the availability of which might have bestowed greater focus on listening skills.

An additional motive could be that the lecturer could not procure sufficient time to encompass speaking and listening skills in a single course. This condition points up the possibility that the English Language programme designers were not sufficiently candid and pragmatic as they formulated the course objectives. This researcher-writer declares that it is frankly not possible for a lecturer to meet all the course objectives in a single course. Impracticable proposals pertaining to course objectives eventually provoke failure. Courses, and their participants (lecturers and students), come to be deemed inadequate, through little fault of their own.

Based upon the preceding analysis, the impression is strongly conveyed that some aspects pertaining to the objectives of the three courses demand attention. In the writing course, for instance, the objectives too heavily spotlighted mechanics, to the exclusion of the art and leisure of writing; thus, converting a writing course into a mundane grammar class. Regarding the reading course, the students resoundingly rejected the course objectives, suggesting that, for the most part, the course objectives were staid and stale, traversing ground already trodden, and that the course did not bestow any new skills or intellectual aggrandisement. Appertaining to the conversation course, although the lecturer and students voiced their contentment pertinent to the speaking skills objectives, there remained much student disenchantment concerning the listening skills. Finally, and frequently, there were instances wherein no realistic balance existed between the course ‘objectives of theory’ and ‘the reality of practice’.
5.3.2 Course Content and Materials

This section will illuminate the various themes investigated in the three Basic English Language Courses, and the choice of instructional resources utilised in each course. An array of diverse topics was observed. These included a paltry number of genres, writing prompts and compositional subject matter offered in the writing course. Comment was also made regarding the uninspiring and monotonous reading titles presented in the reading course. However, there did prove to be invigorating and innovative talking-points proposed in the conversation course. The autonomy of lecturers in selecting topics also came to the fore. The section dedicated to teaching materials will explore the utilisation of textbooks and worksheets, including their uses, accessibility, aptness for the course and students, the attitudes projected by these materials, and manners in which these materials are employed for evaluative purposes.

5.3.2.1 Language Skills Topics

5.3.2.1.1 Writing Course

An analysis of the writing course questionnaire data demonstrates that 19% of the respondents concurred that the course embraces an assortment of prompts and topics, whereas 74% disavowed this assertion, as displayed in item (3) of Table 5.5. This high percentage of dissonance is explained in more profound detail in the succeeding interview data.
Table 5.5 Students’ views of the content & materials of the writing course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Course topics are appropriate to my interests.</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Course materials are chosen by the teacher and me.</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>This course had a variety of topics.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The materials used in this course were attractive</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Course materials are easy to use and understand.</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Audio-visual aids were used in class.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Course materials are appropriate to my proficiency level in English.</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Supplementary materials e.g., notes, games, and stories, are used</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In harmony with the above questionnaire outcomes, a careful culling of the interview data laid bare that there is an alarming dearth of challenging subject matter incorporated in the writing course. This was roundly corroborated by eight students from this course who were interviewed. To spotlight one, in her interview, Hamad highlighted that:

*During the whole course, I remember that we only wrote about three topics. First, at the beginning of the course, the teacher asked us to write about any topic of our choice to diagnose our level. The second time, which was in the midterm exam, we were asked to write about our favourite pet. Finally, in the final exam, we were asked to write about our plans for the summer holiday.*

This commentary shows that the bulk of student writing revolved around the students’ assessment; and therefore, it was disconnected from their daily learning exercises and experiences in the classroom. This was additionally articulated by Norah, a student who, in her interview, commented:
We have not written about any topics of writing at all during the course. I want to learn how to write, as I will be a teacher of English.

The lecturer, when interviewed, voiced a divergent opinion. Mr Ahmad, in his response to the question regarding those topics which the course had been examined, said:

Well, we have a broad range of topics. We’re talking about sentence-level editing, punctuation, sentence manipulation and summary making.

This revelation may signify that the lecturer misunderstands the nature and emphasis of the writing course. On the other hand, perhaps the teacher feels strongly that grammar-based instruction should provide the major thrust in ‘his’ writing course. This attitude might explain the reason for which the lecturer erred in not teaching his students how to compose different general-topic essays, such as in fashion or athletics, or how to decide upon their own favourite subject. Hence, in her interview, Mubarak suggested negatively about the exaggerated emphasis consumed by grammar-related instruction. He suggested the following:

I think we need to focus on writing about the topics that we are interested in more than the other aspects of writing, which I see as complementary, such as the use of punctuation marks. We did not learn how to write about a topic or to express the main idea, the opening sentence or anything related to writing.

Mubarak’s remark insinuates that the lecturer believes that students must first master the mechanics of writing before engaging in the art and process of writing. This conclusion provokes small surprise in view of the teacher’s opinion about the mission and objectives of the writing course, as observed in section 5.3.1.1. Such an attitude impacts on other components of the course, like course objectives, teaching methodology and student evaluation.
5.3.2.1.2 Reading Course

In the case of the reading course, however, item (3) of the questionnaire confirmed that 53% of students coincided with the statement that the course encompassed a multiplicity of topics, though 15% dissented, and 26% were neutral, as exhibited in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Students’ views of the content & materials of the reading course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Course topics were appropriate to my interests.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Course materials were chosen by the teacher and me.</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>This course had a variety of topics.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The materials used in this course were attractive.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Course materials were easy to use and understand.</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Audio-visual aids are used in class.</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Course materials were appropriate to my proficiency level in English.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Supplementary materials were used.</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This result was corroborated by the reading course interview data analysis, which evinced that a wide gamut of themes was taught in that course. Yet, in spite of the varied topics, four of the six students interviewed still recounted discontentment with the material which they had read during this course.
Item (1), of Table 5.6 above, verifies that 55% of students disagreed that the topics taken up in the
course were engaging. When interviewed, Hind stated her view of the topics taught in this course:

*All we read were topics from the textbook, and it was too long and old. I think it is better if we read from other sources than the textbook: for example, reading interesting essays from newspapers.*

Hind’s observation bespeaks that the lecturer was too closely dependent upon the ponderous and
arcane thematic materials in the textbook. These, in turn, held the students’ interest poorly. Students indicate that they are more inspired to read about subject matter concerning their own interests.

Rashid, another student, suggested a process of time allotment for each topic during the reading
course. During her interview, she remarked:

*One of the negative aspects of this course was that sometimes we spend a lot of time discussing a single topic; it gets boring since we keep repeating ourselves.*

Rashid’s point of view might suggest that the lecturer does not manage time well. Perhaps an
excessive amount of time is spent on too few subjects and students grow bored. This observation
may also allude that the lecturer does not sufficiently consider the students’ opinions as they pertain
to thematic material examined in class. It often occurs in the Emirati context, that students’
opinions are not respected. The tendency among Emirati students is to obey their lecturer without
daring to divulge their views about an issue. This quandary is further investigated in succeeding
sections.
In addition, during their interviews, five of six students addressed their disenchantment with the difficulty-level of the written works which they read in the course. For example, Kholoud averred:

*We need more difficult passages to get some more new vocabulary, because a lot of the passages that we read in this course are not that challenging.*

From this outcome, one might surmise that the lecturer is under-evaluating the students’ English level, and hence assigning them reading passages which are too unchallenging. Such an eventuality would point up the necessity of ascertaining student abilities and preferences prior to the commencement of any pedagogic programme. Despite student criticisms, Mr Samir offered a contrary view of how topics which were chosen for the course. He elaborated:

*I ask them to bring some articles that challenge their own thinking...to bring things that reflect the culture of native speakers of English, like American, British or even non-English-speaking countries. From time to time, I talk about educational leaders like Montessori and other leaders like Martin Luther King and others so they can discover the identity of leaders and why you would want to follow these kinds of leaders. Sometimes we have debates on topics from the target culture, like Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Easter and so on.*

Mr Samir’s testimony declares that the lecturer does, in fact, grant the students the opportunity of showing their opinions in order to verify if they are satisfied with the material which they read; however, it is possible that students might have not replied. The lecturer is well apprised that Emirati students proceed from an academic background in which they are not encouraged to contribute; rather to obey the lecturer, and to imbibe the course content, no matter that they may disagree, or it is not to their interest. Mr Samir put in relief that she attempts to animate students ‘to have their say’. Yet, for one to transcend an upbringing of passivity to one of decision-making and participation bespeaks a process that requires time. The fruits are infrequent, though the effort is made:
I am very open-minded to their criticism. I’m always trying to challenge them and give them the choice to say yes or no for things.

Student passivity might be ascribed to the historically well embedded Emirati didactic process which induces timidity, and renders a student body too demure to declare its opinions. This may especially be the case with respect to topic-selection by a tertiary-level lecturer. Across the years of their pre-tertiary schooling, Emirati students are bestowed with no meaningful voice in selecting topics to be taught. Topics are decidedly determined by the teacher or the textbook, not by collective consensus.

5.3.2.1.3 Conversation Course

The analysis of the speaking course questionnaire data, item (3), sustains that 82% of the student-respondents concurred that a host of topics were presented in the conversation course. In item (1), 74% of student-respondents avouched that those topics were correspondent to their interests (see Table 5.7). Such an outcome affirms that student-respondents suggest that the conversation course subject matter was positive. Additional details concerning this issue came to the fore during the analysis of the qualitative data.
The lecturer and students both coincided in that a panoply of prompts were presented in this course.

All six conversation course students, who were interviewed for this study, related positive views regarding the course topics. Jamal, for example, reflected:

*The varied topics of conversation made us very happy, as if you are flipping through a magazine of interesting topics. We covered some topics such as the UAE traditions, weddings in the UAE. The teacher helped us to compare weddings in the UAE to those in the USA. The teacher also related the topic of weddings in the UAE to her personal experiences, as she talked about her son’s wedding.*

The preceding quotation might be indicative that the lecturer selects subject matter to which Emirati students are accustomed, like Emirati customs and matrimonial rituals, both of which usually become familiar to Emirati youth before they reach the tertiary level of their formal education. Based upon Jamal’s testimony, it might be concluded that the lecturer is cognizant of the students’ level, and is, therefore, striving to circumvent obscure or difficult themes which could discourage
student participation. In contrast, Jamal’s revelation might suggest that the lecturer favours subject matter which is not sufficiently formidable for the students. If demonstrated to be valid, the previous point could signify that the conversation course is not commensurate with a tertiary level of learning.

Further aspects of the conversation course can be observed in Alia’s interview below:

We had an interesting activity like showing the difference between minimal pairs such as night and knight, knew and new. In addition, there was an activity in which the teacher gave me an envelope full of objects to describe orally.

Nayef, another student enrolled in the course, remarked during his interview that the lecturer was thoroughly original, and that the course made use of prompts which the students had previously not experienced:

I remember that the teacher also used some educational games such as Sudoku and Shipwreck.

Mrs Nuha exuded confidence when underscoring how multifaceted the subject matter of the course was. She affirmed:

I have discussed a lot of them [topics]. For example, we have discussed summer destinations, the secret code game and the preposition game. We have talked about recipes. We have words where students have to know meanings in context. There are educational games. There is acting out children’s stories. There are many things they are doing.

Mrs Nuha elucidated an intriguing and logical explanation for such a diversity of subject matter.

Students are different and they have different backgrounds. I always try to expand speaking activities on different issues. For example, I go into home economics, family issues, politics, religion, modelling and makeup: anything to make it interesting for some students. You’ll find that other students are not interested in this, so the next day you will see the topic that I raise in the classroom will be for
those students who were not interested in the previous day’s topic. Then they will be interested that day.

The preceding analysis may connote that the conversation course incorporates stimulating content. It might further prove that the lecturer has evinced skill in successfully capturing and retaining student attention through the clever incorporation of a myriad of appealing topics. Regrettably the prior point may also lend credence to the suspicion that the conversation course over-compensates in the realm of speaking skills at the expense of listening skills. It is evident, judging from the lecturer’s commentary, that she has neglected exercises suitable for listening skills.

5.3.2.1.4 “Choosing topics that I like”

The discounting of student opinions in the selection of course content and topics within the BELC is show in the majority of courses. For instance, in the data analysis of the writing course questionnaire, item (2), pertaining to the liberty of the students in the selection of course content, it was made clear that 36% of the student-respondents concurred that the 166 content materials were a bipartite compromise between the lecturer and students (see Table 5.5). Such testimony signifies that better than half of the student-respondents - 56% - coincide in the belief that they retain little voice in the determination of topics for the writing course. This conclusion serves to corroborate the qualitative data analysis, in which six student-respondents declared their disgruntlement with the mode in which their viewpoints, pertinent to course content topics, were disregarded. To underscore the former frustration, Laila, in her journal-diary, commentated the course as follows:

*I’m really bored and frustrated with writing about topics that are dictated by the teacher. Every time we come to write about a topic, it should be what the teacher*
imposes upon us. I’m not allowed to write about topics that relate to my needs, problems, tendencies, interests or even personal issues such as teenage problems. I am dreaming of writing about a topic of personal interest to me. I told myself: why not write on my own? I did it once and stopped afterwards because I was not motivated to write more, as nobody will read them.

Forthrightly, the course lecturer, Mr Ahmad, blamed the students. When queried on the proposition of granting the students the liberty to select subject matter of their own interest to evaluate, he proclaimed:

*I’ll tell you something. Unless the teacher instructs them, they won’t respond. Yes, we give them the choice to write about anything of their choice, but unfortunately they have a misconception about what research is. Research is not cut and paste, plagiarizing from the internet and books and so on with their names at the bottom. We always tell them that this is not right. Whatever you read, you have to rewrite using your own words. Usually this doesn’t happen because they can’t do it.*

There appears an incongruence between that which the students assert and that which the lecturer declares. Students reprove their lecturer for not granting them the opportunity to determine their writing course content topics. This denial, the students attest, provokes lassitude and enervation. The lecturer retorts that the students are not predisposed to write until they are thoroughly enjoined by their lecturer. The lecturer redoubles that given the wherewithal to compose on topics of their free will, the students would plagiarise.

Such divergence of opinion might owe itself to several explanations. The lecturer might be under-evaluating student capabilities to determine writing course content topics. Or, perhaps the lecturer has apprehended previous individual attempts at plagiarism, and generalised from them to blame the entire student body on an a priori basis. As observed and narrated by many students, this specific lecturer is inclined to pursue a traditional approach to teaching, in which the lecturer
incarnates the nucleus of the didactic setting. In sum, this researcher-writer is inclined to believe that it probably proves opportune that a lecturer grant students the ability to select thematic materials in which they possess personal interest. It is prayed that an approach toward individual investment, and personal pedagogic empowerment, will prompt and provoke student participation in furtherance of the mastery of the course learning objectives.

Reading course item (2), of Table 5.6, sets out that 40% of students acceded to the assertion that they were granted the liberty of selecting the topic content and learning resources in conjunction with their lecturer. 36% of students, however, registered their dissension from the same statement. To spotlight the same issue, student Abrar, in her interview, commentated the course in the succeeding fashion:

*I remember that Mr Samir gave us the chance to select any article or story about any topic of our own interest to read and comment on. But this has happened only once during the whole semester. I wish that we did this more often*

Although it proved itself to be a course of modestly improved situation, this researcher-writer suggests that the curtailment of academic liberty in course topic selection has rendered a malevolent effect upon the reading course students’ experience. As was observed previously, a large number of students were uninterested in the content topics which they were obliged to read. This might be ascribed to a setting in which the lecturer seldom permits students to determine their own course content topics. This researcher-writer believes that when students retain the opportunity to examine a theme of their interest, they will exhibit greater motivation to participate in the classroom, to cooperate with the lecturer, and to master the content.
The conversation course questionnaire data analysis, item (2), demonstrates that 34% of students concurred that they had shared the opportunity to determine course content topics in conjunction with their lecturer. Yet, interviewee students replied differently. Five of six interviewee students, a percentage higher than 34%, affirmed that they had been permitted the liberty to select course content topics which later served as a basis for class discussions. Student-interviewee, Jasim, reiterated the lecturer’s tolerance and liberality in the course content topic choices:

*We were given the chance to choose whatever we want to talk about. At the end of each class, Mrs Nuha often asked us, ‘Guys, what would you like us to talk about in the next lecture?’ Sometimes we even have a vote on this.*

Perhaps the preceding incongruence between the questionnaire outcomes and the interview testimonies might be ascribed to the simple possibility that different individuals hold distinct points of view. In its totality, this result is indicative that the lecturer was more inclusive and receptive of student preferences. This manner of inclusivity and student empowerment has proved to be advantageous, as will be further observed when this analysis-finding takes up the degree to which students were subjectively ‘pleased’ by the course.

### 5.3.2.2 Selection of Teaching Materials

This portion will feature the variegated instructional resources, such as textbooks and worksheets, utilised in the three distinct courses: writing, reading and conversation.

#### 5.3.2.2.1 Writing Course

The writing course reveals several concerns pertaining to the employment of instructional materials. According to writing course questionnaire data analysis (see Table 5.5), item (4) verifies
that 9% of students concurred that the course instructional materials were appealing. 72% were in disaccord with this assertion. That the course textbook was outdated may explain the former result. Mention was made before, in section 5.2.6.1 of this chapter, concerning inferior qualities paper and pictures. Item (5) substantiated that 45% of student opinions coincided that the materials in this course were convenient to use and facile to comprehend. 38% validated that the materials were suitable to their level of English expertise. These results lay bare that the majority student view relating to the course instructional materials was pejorative. The succeeding methods of evaluation - interviews and journal-diaries - proved necessary and insightful in assessing this contention with greater specificity.

Mr Ahmad, during his interview session, confirmed that he put into play a gamut of varied instructional aids:

I depend on different sources rather than a fixed book. Yes, there is a prescribed book. I think that, as a teacher, I have to adjust to the level of the students. If I see that a book is a little bit inaccessible, then I will resort to my own material. I select some excerpts from the internet for students for their reading. I have two books. I have tried to select some excerpts from each of the books.

Mr Ahmad further delineated the manner in which he adapts his instructional materials in accordance with student ability-levels:

Changing the course materials depends on the teacher and the level of the students. It depends on how teachers look at the level of the students and adjust. It is widely known that published textbooks address a certain group of learners. This is based on learners from different parts of the world. We have to adjust the material sometimes to suit our students. What I mean by “adjust” is to give them more time to understand the terms and the instructions.
To the contrary, several students disclosed varied viewpoints. Five students pinpointed via their interview responses that the lecturer did not make use of the textbook which he had obliged them to purchase. For instance, Hessa expounded:

*At the beginning of the course, the teacher asked us to buy a writing book that we never used. I don’t know why he asked us to buy it since we are not going use it. Maybe the teacher wants us to read it by ourselves, but we are not used to this. Our secondary school teacher used to tell us what to study and what not to study. We cannot figure out what is important to us and what is not. We really need guidance on how to use the book.*

The preceding testimony focuses attention on the Emirati students’ over-reliance on the classroom teacher. In fact, this Emirati pedagogic reality is in need of critical evaluation and ‘rethinking’. This researcher-writer was an Arab student who graduated from the identical pre-tertiary education system. Grounded in that very personal experience, this researcher-writer believes that Emirati students are not prepared by their pre-tertiary educational experience to be self-reliant and intrinsically motivated seekers of knowledge. Emirati students are too dependent on the classroom teacher at primary and secondary schools. At school, it is the classroom teacher who summarises, interprets, and dictates all content and meaning. In the parental house, it is the privately-hired, home-based tutor who condenses all content and meaning for vapid memorisation preceding examinations. This educational background does little to prepare the Emirati student to read for pleasure or self-exploration. Neither does it prepare the Emirati student to write for leisure or self-actualisation. Equally injurious is that English is not presented as a language at school, rather as a subject. In the view of this researcher-writer, it is imperative that the Emirati educational experience, from the primary through tertiary stages, be transformed from vacuous recitation and instructor-centric ‘diktat’, to a lifestyle based upon student-self motivation for personal improvement.
Khalid, another student, penned in his journal-diary the succeeding commentary in defence of the identical demand stated above:

> We have finished the course and we have not read one page of the book that the teacher asked us to buy. This is really frustrating. It is a waste of money.

During her interview, student Saleh made light of the manner in which the textbook fell so readily into desuetude:

> I think the writing textbook is used as a decoration, as we have never used it during the course. Therefore, I could not comment on the suitability of the book to our level, as I don’t know what is inside it.

The employment of the lexical entry ‘decoration’ is hyperbolic symbolism, evocative of an objet d’art in an antiquarian’s boutique; an object never put to a practical purpose. Farah, in her journal-diary, scribed the succeeding observation:

> The book that the teacher asked us to buy was not opened to read a single page in class or to do any homework.

It is noteworthy to observe that students visualise the textbook as such an integral part of the academic process that, without it, they are unable to study. Remarking on the same during her interview, Fatima said:

> The textbook is very important to me. I’m used to studying in class or at home from a book. Since we were young at school, we used to carry our school bags full of textbooks, study from the textbook, and answer the textbook exercises. The textbook for us is like a strong weapon in our hands.

Samar, another interviewee, punctuated the inutility of attempting to study without a course textbook:
Having no textbook to study is a new concept for me, which I did not like, as I feel that I am lost without it.

Asma intimated during her interview that she astutely avoided the purchase of the course textbook for the succeeding motive:

I did not buy the textbook, as I heard from previous students that we would not use it. So, I thought of saving my money.

The preceding incongruence enjoins the lecturer to consider the value and relevancy of the course textbook from the student’s point of view. Although lecturers may desire to introduce novel concepts, for the student body, the course textbook remains a source of orientation and stability. A course without a textbook is too unfamiliar to a student, and provokes too much insecurity. This does not signify that lecturers may not employ outside supplementary instructional sources. It does request that the faculty remain cognizant that the deep-seated, student-familiarity with the textbook can prove comfortable and vital in the mastery of course learning objectives.

5.3.2.2.2 Reading Course

The only instructional material employed in the reading course was the course textbook. The analysis of the reading course questionnaire data, item (5), authenticated that 81% of students, concurred that the course textbook was facile to utilise and to comprehend. 8% disavowed this statement (see Table 5.6). Initially, such a result may be acknowledged affirmatively, and register no further inquiry. Yet, should a lecturer select too unchallenging a textbook, it may provoke monotony among student body. Item (7) confirms that 35% of students acceded to the assertion that the course textbook was commensurate to their current developmental stage in the English
language. 50% dissented from this statement. It is noteworthy to beware that though students may praise a course textbook for its ease-of-use, it may simultaneously fall so far beneath student ability levels that the course quality becomes grossly depreciated with respect to student learning and the mastery of novel material. This quandary will be explored anew in greater depth in the coming section.

The qualitative data analysis discovered that there remain disputes pertinent to the textbook and its usage. The lecturer, Mrs Nuha, proved candid when acknowledging the inadequacy of the course textbook for her students’ academic level. She articulated her perspective by the succeeding remark:

*I think it’s below their level. It’s for the general course, not for major English student teachers.*

Mrs Nuha also showed her discontent with the current course textbook, and confessed that she is avidly in search of an alternative.

*I’m looking to find another book that’s really suitable for the needs of English language undergraduates, either from secondary school or from our department.*

Conforming to the sentiments of their lecturer, some students deplored that the course textbook was inferior to their current stage of academic development. Jameela bemoaned the following:

*I found the textbook and its exercises extremely easy to answer; even if you had given me these questions before taking this course, I could easily have answered them. I always get bored when doing the tasks from the textbook because they are way below my English level.*

Depicting the textbook as monotonous, in their interviews, Bedoor and Mariam, critiqued it respectively:
This textbook is very boring; most of its exercises are not useful. Although the reading course is very useful for us, this book is not helping at all.

Please change this textbook! It is really below our level as students at an institute; it is suitable for schools, not us!

The course textbook has shown itself to be too monotonous, excessively facile and devoid of creative variety. The lecturer, too, sustains this viewpoint. This may be demonstrative that this lecturer is not aware of her students’ developmental level. In turn, it may explain the motive for which the lecturer has selected the course textbook and auxiliary materials based on her own preconceptions, rather than student necessities and preferences. This researcher-writer suggests that it is incumbent on lecturers to assess student developmental levels competently, and accordingly select course textbooks and supplementary materials based on those students’ necessities and preferences. The institute administration is also obliged to support the lecturing staff in their process of selecting relevant course textbooks and diverse teaching aids. The same administration should submit the entire procurement process to periodic review, critique and improvement.

5.3.2.2.3 Conversation Course

The conversation course questionnaire data analysis, item 4, illustrates that for 62% of students, the course instructional materials resulted appealing and attractive. To buttress, item (5)’s analysis unveils that 61% of the student-respondents concurred that course instructional materials were facile to utilise and to comprehend (see Table 5.7). Such outcomes might be demonstrative of general student satisfaction with the course instructional materials. The assessment of item (7)
confirms the opinion that 53% of students coincide that the course instructional materials were suitable for their stage of English ability. 8% of the student body dissented from that assertion. As was made mention beforehand, no particular textbook was made use of in the conversation course. The lecturer distributed worksheets. When Danah, a student, was interviewed, she substantiated this:

The teacher used to distribute hand-outs and topics that we sometimes choose and then we discuss them in class. Students held varied points of view pertaining to the absence of a course textbook. Two interviewees endorsed the premise of a ‘course-without-textbook’. Engagingly, Rashid equated textbooks to tedium and boredom:

*There was no conversation textbook, which I personally see as a good idea. It got rid of the traditional teaching methods where the textbook is a symbol of the burden and boredom of study.*

This researcher-writer encounters the quotation above to be a sagacious one. It proposes that some students recoil from the conformity and restrictiveness that a textbook may impose. They espy it cautiously from afar as a mechanism of control and vanquisher of creativity. This researcher-writer views such reply as unexpectedly provocative in that Emirati students are typically well bound and affixed to textbook dependency. Still, another point of view emanated again from Dalal who, during her interview period, maintained the essentiality and utility of a course textbook:

*When I have a textbook for conversation, I know what I will study tomorrow, instead of being surprised by the new topic. I also need to revise what we have studied in this course, but I can’t do it properly, as there is no book, to which I am used.*

In concurrence with some student attitudes toward textbooks, Mrs Nuha upheld the absence of a textbook throughout the conversation course.
I don’t think we need a textbook in a conversation course: it will not be useful, plus the topics will be as old as the date of publication of that book. We depend on our own choice of topics, and this is much more enjoyable for me.

Arguable here is that course textbooks should assuredly be related to the essence of the course instructed. Within a writing course, students require a textbook from which they can cull samples of writing genres, as well as some fundamental writing guidelines. Yet in the context of a conversation course, the absence of a course textbook, substituted by worksheets and sundry other talking prompts, might well suffice. Vitally, students must be, in some manner by the lecturer or peers, animated to chat, to propose, to defend, and to discuss. Emirati students, it should be recognised, are well wedded to course textbooks, and are accustomed to relying on them mightily throughout the learning venture. Still, at the tertiary level, lecturers might find it worthwhile to attempt to free their Emirati students from the course textbook. Perhaps the inculcation of liberal, free-flowing, intellectual exploration should become today’s requisite for the traditional-minded Emirati student-scholars.

The course contents and instructional materials encompassed by the three BELC have evoked diverse points of view, affirmative and pejorative, from all groups of participants. The writing course content topics and titles drew harsh criticism from the student body. The reading course, too, was subjected to hearty objection for its dreary title-selections and its textbooks-too-facile. It was the conversation course, however, which garnered ample accolades for its compelling topics, pertinent prompts and convenient to comprehend supplementary worksheets.
5.3.3 Teaching and Learning

Herein the reader will encounter the third focal point of this study-analysis: teaching and learning - the methods of imparting knowledge, as well as those of assimilating, retaining, and manipulating that knowledge, within the BELC. Teaching techniques and methodologies will be scrutinised. Thereafter, an examination of student opinions appertaining to the teaching supplements, which lecturers employ, will be undertaken.

Stemming from the data, there has emerged an array of salient points of study with regard to the instructional approaches of the lecturers.

5.3.3.1 Writing Course

An evaluation of the interview results made known that the lecturer’s instructional writing methodology is instructor-centric. Mr Ahmad plain-spokenly enunciates his opinion below:

*I’ll tell you something. Unless the teacher instructs them, they won’t respond. I always lead the class because these students are always being passive!*

*Unfortunately, we actually have to sometimes select only a few students who are really hard workers. The rest, they just sit and do nothing and receive nothing.*

The impression given is that the learning preference to which the students are most inclined has induced the lecturer to pursue an instructor-centric thrust, despite the same lecturer’s pronouncement that he is opposed to such approach. This may signify that the lecturer is not exercising sufficient effort to alter his instructional style. Consequently this lecturer has surrendered to a teaching technique in which many students are rendered passive for the duration
of instructional time. Perhaps some students are not passive, carefree, or of low proficiency, but only timid or uncertain.

Also, teaching by ‘isolation’; that is, by focusing on the ‘hard workers’, may have a negative impact on the ‘shunned’ students in their future. When today’s tertiary students are one day contracted as teachers, they might ignore portions of those students assigned to them.

It was communicated that the technique of one staff lecturer was to devote him/herself to the most capable and responsive students and to ignore the non-participatory ones. In this respect, Mr Ahmad’s earlier intimation should be recalled:

Unfortunately, we actually have to sometimes select only a few students who are really hard workers. The rest, they just sit and do nothing and receive nothing.

This preceding quotation may show that the lecturer engages closely with only a reduced number of students, and holds no interest in actively incorporating the remainder into the collective class setting. Perhaps the lecturer possesses scant knowledge of a minimal number of persuasive techniques to animate and to incorporate wayward and/or timid students. A dearth such as this illumines the urgency of continuing education programmes for lecturers.

Data assessment further evinces that the writing course lecturer possesses a concrete academic and classroom management strategy when treating with academically less well developed students. Mr. Ahmad attests his point of view henceforth:
Well, I’ll tell you something which is really honest. Sometimes we have to teach students very little things in order for them to actually cope with the course. Do you know what I mean? If we try to treat them as a native speaker, it won’t work at all. They will actually have a catastrophe in terms of success. We try to actually treat them gently, bearing in my mind that the objective is achieved. We do this as much as we possibly can.

The quotation above suggests an absence coherency on the part of the lecturer. Initially the lecturer characterises the student-learners with exaggeratedly low English language competency. At another time, the same lecturer might interact with the student-learners as if they were native speakers. Possibly the lecturer is uncertain concerning the level of academic expectation to which the students should be held accountable. This researcher-writer holds the belief that the lecturer should strive to achieve greater equilibrium pertaining to his assessments of the student-learners. It will be at that moment that the lecturer can undertake to instruct the student-learners from a stable, data-supported conclusion of their English language level, rather than a variable, oscillating notion of their abilities which can be given to extremes.

The preceding revelations also underscore inconsistency in the points of view of the writing course lecturer. The writing course lecturer intimated that he focuses on the most participatory students while neglecting the remainder. Yet in a previous quotation, the same lecturer assured that he did instruct the less-participatory students, albeit in small increments so that they could ‘cope’. Still, in a third citation, the same lecturer makes reference to a competitive learning style which he utilises in the classroom. It is this researcher-writer’s opinion that these three remarks are contradictory, and should be reconciled. Moreover, the researcher-writer believes that the lecturer should take into consideration all student necessities, forge an affirming yet inspiring classroom setting, employ differentiated teaching methods, and incorporate diverse evaluative practices.
Overall, the results show in Table 5.8, below, illuminate that large numbers of students were displeased with the instructional practices utilised in the writing course. Frequently the students took issue with the paucity of practice writing in the classroom. The questionnaire data analysis, as observed in Table 5.8, item (1), makes known that 16% of students confirmed that they practised diverse writing exercises in the course. 72% contradicted this statement. Another critical outcome is discovered in item (2), wherein only 19% of students acceded to the assertion that there existed productive student-teacher rapport within the classroom. Fully 48% of students differed from that opinion. Such results might exemplify that the lecturer did not offer the students a sufficient array of writing drills and activities. In turn, this may have proven conducive to fragile and unfavourable student-teacher synergy. In summation, such findings display a shortfall of practice writing. This controversy is delved into more deeply in the succeeding qualitative data analysis.

Table 5.8 Students’ views about the teaching & learning in the writing course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Varied activities are used</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Good student-teacher interaction.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teaching methods are interesting.</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Class participation is encouraged.</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Class environment is motivating.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Course exercises/tasks are effective in improving my writing skills.</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Group work is encouraged in class.</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>English is the only language of instruction.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The teacher talks more than me.</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Corroborative of the quantitative data, an examination of the qualitative outcomes discovered that many students verified a dearth of writing practice. For example, two students committed their discontent to their journal-diaries as regards the absence of writing drill opportunities. Samera expressed the succeeding opinion:

_Actually, it is called a writing course, but no actual writing takes place in this course. It should be called any other name except writing. We have never been taught how to write an introduction, developmental paragraphs or a conclusion. What we actually learnt was punctuation marks such as the semicolon, apostrophe and comma. Only the semicolon is new for me, but other than that, I have learnt them all at secondary school._

The citation above paints an impoverished picture of the pupils’ perception of this course. The reiterated response received from the greater part of the student body was that they did not practice the steps of composing a paragraph in English. This grew especially evident when the lecturer was requested to exemplify the teaching methods that he used; he responded as follows:

_If we take punctuation, first they are taught how punctuation should take place, types of punctuation and the place and time for using specific punctuation._

The researcher-writer begs that it be noted that the above example is a grammar-based example which serves to substantiate the assertions provided by the students.

A considerable number of the students added that they had not received assignments to complete outside the classroom. Two student-respondents attested to an absence of homework assignments.

_We don’t practise how to write a full paragraph. We have no homework or assignments to write, although we should do so in a writing course._

_The teacher did not give us any homework; all he gave us was exercises, exercises and exercises in class from the hand-outs that he gives us._
This outcome may be ascribed to many factors. The lecturer could be of the belief that grammatical drills satisfy a writing course’s learning objectives. The lecturer might also be deficient in the requisite skills and professional background to instruct a writing course, such as the course objectives declaim, and the students desire.

Conversely, it might be that the students are not proficient in English grammar. Some deftness at grammar cannot be unentwined from compositional writing. Consequently, practice writing and concretised engagement with writing genres, cannot be carried forward if grammar levels are too rudimentary. Nonetheless the course was announced as an English writing course which proposed to enhance tertiary student compositional writing ability, not grammar. All student interviewees resolutely punctuated their desire for concrete, in-class practice writing. Hessa accentuated a commonplace quandary:

*I like writing; however, I can’t write … they didn’t teach us how to write when we were at school. I don’t practice writing at home … I thought that our teacher would teach us how to write. I think writing is very important for my future career, because in any job I will need to write in English and also of course if I become a teacher of English.*

Another noteworthy revelation, revealed in questionnaire item (9), lays bare that the immense majority of students (83%) felt that the lecturer loomed so large in classroom discussion that spartan space remained for students to practice English. A mere 14% deemed their lectures undominated by extensive ‘teacher-talk’, as show in Table 5.8. Though pedagogically undesirable, plentiful classroom observations have averred that teachers usually speak more than students (This issue will be discussed in the following chapter.). Expressed in their interviews and scribed in their
journal-diaries, a majority of the current students reiterated that the lecturer did not grant them sufficient time to hold forth orally in class. Consequently there was no practice in the ‘give and take’ of discussion. Nawal corroborates the same opinion in his journal-diary entry below:

*I left my job, my kids, my home and woke up at 6:30 to go to university to listen to what you will say, but you did not even let me talk in class. You just commanded us to listen. No talking! No participation! No objection! You laugh, talk and reply to your own questions and we are just listeners. This is unfair.*

The preceding quotation substantiates that the student is conscious of her desired areas of improvement. The manner in which she conveys her needs and opinions bespeaks a self-actualising learner who is desirous of enhancing her English. In the Emirati educational environ, the tendency is for teachers, lecturers and professors to assume such engrossing leadership that no opportunity remains for students to participate in the decisions or practices of the classroom. This researcher-writer implores that lecturers be cognizant of the students’ desire to collaborate in some of the decisions and practices of the course and classroom. Incorporating students in the assumption of responsibilities purveys an opportunity for them to develop more self-reliance and creativity, in addition to ameliorating their English.

A further contention raised by the students concerned their lecturer’s emphasis upon punctuation in the English as a Foreign Language writing course. In the opinion of the student body, the emphasis on punctuation consumed unnecessarily large blocks of time, but, contradictorily, still remained limited in scope. Student-interviewee, Ali, accentuated the extensive, in-class emphasis placed upon punctuation:
I think the teacher has taught us how to use the punctuation marks. However, we spent a lot of time on learning how to punctuate and how to use them in writing. All we used to do was to write down a sentence from the handout and punctuate it on the board and the teacher would tell me what was wrong with it.

Similarly, many students conveyed that the only activity-exercises which they were assigned were grammar-based. During her interview session, Hessa corroborated the same:

The teacher in this course only focused on two things: punctuation marks and grammar exercises in the form of multiple-choice questions. He did not explain the grammar rules to us, but he used to photocopy handouts full of grammar exercises and help us to answer them correctly. He said to us, I’m not supposed to teach you grammar, but I will give you an idea of what it is like.

The resultant revelations propose that the lecturer deems the course to be one of syntax and grammar. This determination might be due to the lecturer’s opinion that the student body is not sufficiently well versed in English syntax and grammar. Thus, the lecturer chooses to spotlight English syntax and grammar as the thrust of the course.

We insist that you have to be consistent using grammar. If you use the past tense, you have to use the past or past perfect, when there are actually two verbs in succession, and so on and so forth. Sometimes we are forced to do some grammar work, which is not actually our job to do. You can’t do it without it. When we talk about writing, we talk about accuracy.

The preceding quotation may insinuate the lecturer’s belief in the necessity of grammar. The employment of the lexical entry ‘insist’ lends credence to the lecturer’s predisposition that accuracy is the primordial consideration in writing. Perhaps this accounts for the lecturer’s devotion of an entire semester in order to assure that students do not err grammatically. Evidence is borne that instructor-centricity, as well as the grammar and translation method, are the lecturer’s principal teaching techniques. These observations may also reflect the manners by which this lecturer was
imparted knowledge during the lecturer’s formative scholastic years. For instance, the grammar and translation process of learning was popular in the UAE at the time of this lecturer’s youth.

By evaluating the data of questionnaire item (3), it was disclosed that 15% of students concurred that the instructional practices of the writing course lecturer were interesting (see Table 5.8). This finding was verified and further examined as part of the qualitative data analysis. The lecturer’s employment of ‘discovery learning’ was demonstrated to be one of the practices adopted in the writing course. Remarking on this, Mr Ahmad explained:

*I’ll give an in-class task, for instance. Each student is given a chance to come to the board, write part of the task, and discuss it in front of all students. The students share these common mistakes. When they look at the board, they will realise and write down their mistakes relating to punctuation, grammar, spelling, cohesion and coherence. They are made aware of it.*

This instructional procedure was reemployed in nearly every class. A vast number of students communicated that they were fatigued of such redundancy. Hanan made the succeeding remark during her interview:

*We found this very boring to the extent that some of us were yawning and others were sleepy in class.*

Although this proved to be an effective practice for some students, it was not conducive to learning for others. This authenticates the necessity of differentiating instruction dependent upon student variables such as ability levels and styles of learning.
Some of instructional practices in the writing course are inefficacious for the Emirati learner. In the Emirati educational context, competition in learning is preoccupying and off-putting to students and parents. The source of this preoccupation was divulged by Mr Ahmad, who acknowledged:

\begin{quote}
We [teachers] give them [students] colours or names to create some sort of rivalry in the writing class.
\end{quote}

Notwithstanding the benefits derived from classroom rivalry, one assumes the uncertainty that an atmosphere of envy and enmity may be generated among students. This researcher-writer considers that although students should be prompted to engage in teams, a greater emphasis should be laid on cooperation, as opposed to competition.

An additional complaint centred on the lecturers’ too infrequent comprehension probes and queries for understanding. In her journal-diary, Fahad penned the following:

\begin{quote}
The teacher should be able to check our comprehension instead of saying, ‘Do you understand?’ I am too shy to say that I did not understand, as I would lose face in front of my colleagues. We are used, in our secondary schools, to never saying that we don’t understand, even if we don’t. This is because I am afraid that my classmates will say that I am stupid and I don’t understand quickly from the first time. I am sure there are other techniques to check our comprehension other than, ‘Do you understand?’
\end{quote}

Rawan’s assessment is demonstrative that the lecturer might be unknowledgeable in the didactic techniques of probing for student comprehension. This researcher-writer judges comprehension queries so vital that they should be effectuated at the conclusion of every class session.

One of the teaching mechanisms show in the writing course consisted of the lecturer’s focused employment of the dictionary as a means to assist students in their acquisition of novel lexicon. In
one of her journal-diary entries, Humaid, recounted an instructional practice which encompassed
dictionary use:

The teacher told us to write down a piece of news from the magazine or the 
newspaper in our notebook. This piece of news should have at least five new words 
that the teacher would help us to look up in the dictionary. In another class, he gives 
3-4 words to different students to look up in the dictionary. After that, he double-
checks the answers with many students.

Emirati students are not typically instructed in the usage of hand-held, paper-bound dictionaries at 
their primary and secondary educational levels. Perhaps dictionary drills will prove to be a valuable 
learning objective at the tertiary level. Not only does familiarity with the dictionary dovetail with 
the goal of building lifelong, independent learners; in the short term, dictionary use provides 
students with access a broad spectrum of lexical entries which will greatly assist their writing.

Yet, students seem discontent that this is the only skill which they took with them from the course. 
Rashid explicitly spotlighted during his interview session that the lecturer advised students to 
purchase various dictionaries at the first lecture. In this same regard, she added:

The teacher showed us different types of dictionaries and asked us to buy some good 
one. This was helpful, but all we do in the writing course is to find out about the 
new words in text and how to look them up in the dictionary, nothing more! I know 
that dictionary helps, but I see my problems not in how to look up the words in the 
dictionary, but in how to write well in English.

Salem explicitly confirmed in his journal-diary that the only knowledge that the teacher had 
impacted in the writing course was the use of the dictionary. The succeeding excerpt makes evident 
that student’s disenchantment with purchasing and utilising the dictionary:

I finished my basic writing course, but the outcome is nothing. The only thing that I 
remember learning out of this course was using the dictionary that the teacher asked 
us to buy. One day he said ‘buy this dictionary’. The next lecture he gave us the 
name of another dictionary to buy. This teacher may think that I have a bank full of
From the outcomes above, one might conclude that the lecturer has assumed debilities in student syntax and lexicon, consequently conceding more time and effort to those subject matters in classroom presentations. This researcher-writer, though sentient to the explanations provided by the lecturer, considers that equilibrium must be established between the sphere of student deficiencies and the course objectives that must be fulfilled.

The lecturer’s responses blamed the students for English language shortcomings. One ponders the degree to which the writing teacher’s predisposition may influence his manner of teaching; he declared:

*I’ll tell you something. Writing is un-teachable. Writing comes with practice, and with actual intensive reading and receiving good quality education right from the first steps. You can only teach writing to students who are already qualified for writing. This is my point of view.*

The preceding lecturer-response may suggest that the students are not sufficiently qualified in certain skills, and that subsequently writing and composition are not yet ‘teachable’ courses for them. The preceding lecturer-quotatation validates the students’ views, when, later in this analysis, the students confess their inability to write.

When a lecturer perceives writing as ‘unteachable’, it may signify that s/he believes that students should learn writing ‘independently’; that is to say, not in the commonplace Emirati pedagogic trend of ‘dependency’ on the teacher. So vital is the comprehension of this duality in the UAE that the conflict between the independent learner versus the dependent learner was taken up at another
point in this study. In general, Emirati tertiary level students, particularly during their first years on that level, are not accustomed to undertaking writing practice – or any other skill practice – independent of explicit direction from, and close scrutiny by, the lecturer. These students are not sufficiently capable in English as a Foreign Language writing as they commence their tertiary level. At this stage the UAE tertiary student is best served by lecturers who are able ‘to staircase’ gradually their students’ mastery of writing. Tertiary level Emirati students must first be instructed about how to write in simple English. Much afterwards, academic essays, compositions, and various genres can be broached.

Expecting Emirati tertiary students to write in manners which they have never been taught, and to do so as independent free-thinkers, on an intellectual mission of self-exploration, is unrealistic. Lecturers must lesson-plan, instruct and evaluate students according to their students’ developmental ‘place in time’. Lecturers must also be conscious of the historic and academic traditions from which those students have emerged. It is this researcher-writer’s view that those tasks must be effectuated prior to judgments on student competencies and levels.

To summarise, the lecturer’s teaching techniques in the writing course were instructor-centric, showing some additional attributes of grammar and translation practices. It was routinely the lecturer who directed the class, during which time emphasis was placed on accuracy. A majority of the students were not pleased with the instructional practices and techniques. The most salient point of contention was the absence of practice and discussion.
It can be concluded that the lecturer must concede to the students greater opportunities to participate in class. It additionally appears that the teacher does not concentrate on many of the essential abilities that first-year tertiary students should master in a foundation writing course. These skills encompass cohesion, coherence and unity of theme, lexical variation, the style or genre of writing appropriately to the task, as well as the essentiality of revision. At this juncture, it captures one’s attention that the necessity of retaining qualified lecturers, who are cognizant of course objectives, and able to impart the knowledge and mastery of those objectives, should reside foremost in one’s mind. Lecturer orientational programming and professional development opportunities are fundamental to self-development, updating one’s knowledge repository and the sharing of pedagogic life-lessons.

5.3.3.2 The Reading Course

The reading course questionnaire data (see Table 5.9) exhibits that the lecturer’s instructional techniques were affirmatively received by the students. Item (1) recognises that 82% of students acceded to the comment that a multiplicity of exercises were undertaken in class. Item (2) demonstrates that 91% of students concurred that there had been student-lecturer rapport conducive to the mastery of the learning objectives. Item (3) elucidated that 71% of students coincided with the opinion that their lecturer’s instructional methods were interesting. These percentages vividly verify student fulfilment with the reading course instructional and learning techniques.
Table 5.9 Students’ views about teaching & learning in the reading course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Varied activities were used</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Good student-teacher interaction.</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teaching methods were interesting.</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Class participation was encouraged.</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Class environment was motivating.</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Course exercises/tasks were effective in improving my reading skills.</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Group work was encouraged in class.</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>English is the only language of instruction.</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The teacher talks more than me.</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative data analysis evinced that the reading lecturer makes use of a variety of instructional techniques. Yet divergent accounts were provided by the lecturer and her students. When queried about the discrepancy the lecturer, Mr Samir, undertook a comprehensive explanation of those learning objectives which she highlights when he instructs English as a Foreign Language reading:

We’re trying to present and address so many skills under the reading skills, like predicting, scanning, skimming, guessing meaning, identifying cause and effect, identifying main and supporting ideas, identifying facts and opinions, and arguing. In addition, I use different techniques such as speed-reading, guest speakers, discussion, book critique, debates and free reading.
Based upon the prior commentary, the lecturer incorporates an ample variety of reading skills. When requested about instructional activity which she most frequently employed, Mr Samir responded that he accentuates speed-reading:

*Usually, we start with reading speed. They [students] have a chart. Before the final, they have to submit this chart of their speed at reading 500 or 1,000 words. They start with seven or eight minutes, and by the end they should reach two or three minutes. I’m challenging them to see their graphs and the graphics of their reading. I’ll do it here in the classroom with them. This reading chart goes over their reading speed from the beginning of the course until the end. This is one part. We do this for the first ten minutes.*

The lecturer’s emphasis on this exercise might owe itself to the possibility that the lecturer has realised that students require too much time in order to finish reading assignments and/or assessments. This is to be expected in the Emirati educational setting because most Emirati students have never become habituated to reading. Emirati students, and Emirati citizenry in general, do not read in their first language, Arabic. Overcoming this trait by persuading and enheartening students to read during class sessions is a beneficial characteristic of this course.

Pointing up deficient levels of student vocabulary, Mr Samir related that the strengthening of the students’ lexicons constituted an additional focus in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language reading:

*Also, I am focusing on building their vocabulary. They lack a lot of vocabulary, synonyms or antonyms, understanding parts of the grammatical structure. What’s the difference between an adjective and an adverb and so on in terms of reading skill? These are the scope of this course.*

An added activity practised in the reading course is book critique. In this respect, Mr Samir stated:
As I told you, I have free reading. They have to choose any book. It should be English language, and it should be written by a native speaker. It should be a book they choose. They have to write and be critical about the author, what they liked and what they didn’t like about the characters. They have to submit a written critique of their chosen book before the midterm and before the final too.

This type of instructional technique may prove to be captivating and stimulating. It might prove captivating because it rests on student preference. It thereby permits greater student investment in the reading material. Consequently, it might signify greater student inclination to examine earnestly the content that they read, and later, to evaluate it critically. It possibly results stimulating because Emirati students have not been raised or trained as critical thinkers prior to their tertiary education.

This researcher-writer was bemused, however, by the reason for which the lecturer importuned that the students’ book selection “should be written by a native speaker”. It might simply signify that the lecturer possesses scant confidence in the quality of an English language book authored by a non-native Anglophone. By extension, the lecturer perhaps perforce holds native-speaker publications to be the optimal, exemplary ideal of the English written word. This researcher-writer remains guarded about such a conclusion as there exist a plethora of published tomes penned by a host of non-native Anglophones. Many of these are acclaimed to reside at the highest standard of English language usage and content.

In her interview session, Mr Samir adds his incorporation of debate in the reading class. The succeeding excerpt illumines the manner in which she organises debate for the purpose of sharpening student critical thinking:
Also, there is a reflection from time to time. They have to bring an extract from a newspaper, magazine or any English-language product. They bring it to the class and we have a debate about it. It’s on any controversial issue.

The above quotation puts in relief that the lecturer is expending great effort to encourage class participation. The lecturer does so by requesting that students bring to class, for the purposes of debate, an excerpt that has grasped their attention.

In his interview, the reading lecturer also touched upon the technique of guest speakers:

I tried to contact native speakers to be my guests. I contacted people in journals or magazines, and the Times and other newspapers. We have two or three. I contact them, but most of them are reluctant to come because this is the first time somebody has asked them to participate in an educational setting.

The preceding quotation points to the lecturer’s efforts to arrange for the appearance of guest speakers in the reading course classroom; albeit without success, as they were not accustomed to engaging in discussions in educational settings. This researcher-writer wonders whether inviting a native speaker to a reading course is as valuable as extending the same invitation, but for a conversation course.

Regardless of the affirmative responses related by the lecturer above, as well as the student questionnaire data analysis, the interview data reveal that there exists incongruence between student opinions and those of their lecturer. When students were interviewed, several contrary concerns were voiced. The bulk of students bemoaned that only lecturing and question-and-answer instructional practices were employed. Students showed that they were opposed to these instructional practices because, as precisely these methodologies had been utilised in their pre-tertiary education, they were expectant of more modern and novel approaches to the dissemination
of university level knowledge. In her interview parley, Hadeel divulged the succeeding opinion referent to the instructional practices employed:

*Our reading teacher usually asks us question and we respond to these questions; most of the questions were coming from her [the teacher]. I always see the teacher in front of the class talking about a topic and explaining it while we are setting and listening. I think these methods are fine, however; if she used other methods these may be suitable and more interesting for us.*

The above quotation exemplifies that students are exasperated by the traditional lecturing style of teaching, and are scouting for new techniques wherein the students enjoy opportunities to carry out larger roles in the classroom. Lecturing imparts a deleterious impact on students, as it contributes to their passivity. The same opinion was corroborated by Mariam, who, in her interview dialogue, articulated the succeeding:

*Most of the time the teacher was using one method, that is lecturing. We do not have enough time to participate in class. Her aim was to complete the course objectives and finish them within a specific time.*

The outcomes above showcase that students suggest that the lecturer should decrease her dependence on lecturing, and instead avail herself of different instructional practices which allow for greater student participation in the pedagogic enterprise. Such opinion insinuates that students are not pleased with their learning process and setting. It further points up the degree to which a lecturer’s selection of interactive materials depends upon student attitudes regarding the general learning process. Perhaps the former may serve as a clarion call that lecturers be cognizant of, and attentive to, more efficient and appealing instructional techniques.

Another shortcoming of the reading course, as expressed by the students, was that the lecturer exaggeratedly concentrated on one set of reading skills whilst ignoring other equally relevant
reading techniques. Among her interview remarks, Jamela accentuated the lecturer’s excessive targeting of reading speed:

*I think the focus of the reading course was only on how to read faster. Sometimes I feel that we took this course only to improve our speed in reading.*

This preceding citation casts our attention on student criticism of the lecturer. The impression is given that the teacher concentrated on reading velocity at the expense of other reading skills. This could prove indicative of the lecturer’s being plagued by poor time management. This researcher-writer shares the point of view that excessive emphasis on specific skill-sets will provoke student fatigue and indifference, further allowing reduced amounts of time for the introduction and assimilation of other essential reading abilities. In fact, four students coincided, in their interviews, that they are deficient in the basic reading skills. Hadeel, for instance, attested the following:

*The teacher is focusing on some reading skills such as skimming and scanning, and forgets that we first need to learn the basics of how to read correctly before any other reading skills.*

The excerpt above makes evident that students are conscious of their low reading level, and that they are also aware that their level should have evaluated by their lecturer prior to the commencement of the course.

Although the lecturer exercised much effort in raising student English as a Foreign Language reading levels, in their interviews several students stated that the lecturer did not pay proper heed to their English language ability levels. Two well expressed cases of this deficit, by Fahad and Ali respectively, are exhibited below:

*The teacher speaks very fast; I find it difficult to understand her when he does that. I’m not used to listening to English at this speed.*
I think we need to be taught English from scratch, because when I joined the Foundation Programme at this institute, we started right away to be taught advanced English. I feel that I cannot cope with it; it’s above my level right now.

Such findings can be liaised to the Emirati student’s primary and secondary academic experiences, wherein s/he was instructed in the English language, but with the Arabic language as the medium of instruction. This may illumine the reason for which the students often cannot absorb all of the information which the lecturer purveys in class.

Despite the lecturer’s declaration that she instructs multitudinous reading skills in class, this researcher-writer has been obliged to conclude that skimming, scanning and speed-reading were the sole skills imparted in this course, as these were the only abilities repeatedly corroborated by the students. Admittedly, it is feasible that the incongruence may owe itself to the lecturer’s fear of being viewed as ‘less-than-perfect’ by this researcher-writer. It may additionally be ascribed to the often present gap between theory and practice, and/or the lecturer’s dearth of supplementary professional development.

5.3.3.3 Conversation Course

Upon evaluating the conversation course questionnaire data, it was exposed that students were pleased with the lecturer’s instructional approach. As will be noted in Table 5.10, items (4), (3), (2), and (1) drew the greatest levels of student concurrence: 98% of students acceded to item (4), ‘class participation was encouraged’; 95% agreed with item (3), ‘teaching methods were
interesting’; and 88% of student opinions coincided with items (2) and (1), ‘[there was] good student-teacher interaction’ and ‘varied activities were used [class]’.

Table 5.10 Students’ views about the teaching & learning in the conversation course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Varied activities were used</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Good student-teacher interaction</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teaching methods were interesting</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Class participation was encouraged</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Class environment was motivating</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Course exercises/tasks were effective in improving my speaking skills.</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Course exercises/tasks were effective in improving my listening skills.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Group work was encouraged in class</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>English is the only language of instruction</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The teacher talks more than me</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be discerned from the preceding table that items (2) and (3) sustain lucidly that students ‘strongly’ concur that there was a beneficial student-to-lecturer rapport, and that the instructional techniques were engaging. This denotes the large degree of positivity with which students view these concerns. The preceding outcomes signal that students were much gratified with the instructional practices which the lecturer applied in this course. It may aptly be inferred that it is now essential to examine the reasons for the gratification. The succeeding qualitative data analysis will attempt to purvey a more profound explanation of this issue.
As noted before, the reading and writing course lecturers employed traditional instructional approaches, such as lecturing, the grammar and translation method, and question-and-answer formats. These were viewed unfavourably by a preponderance of the student body. Yet the conversation course proved different. The teacher incorporated diverse teaching techniques. One such technique, which, at first blush, appears intriguing, is an pedagogic game. When requested to elaborate upon her conversation course instructional methods, Mrs Nuha remarked:

*What I’m doing with these students is games and activities. From group activities, they go to pair activities, then to individual activities.*

The lecturer elucidated the incorporation of educational games:

*I do give papers because they have the secret code game. It needs paper and it has letters. They have to work out what type of letters these stand for. If I have the letter ‘B’ which doesn’t stand for ‘B’, it stands for the letter before ‘B’, which is ‘A’, you see? They have to figure it out and then they come up with sentences.*

The two aforecited quotations are illustrative of the lecturer’s employment non-traditional instructional approaches such as pedagogic games. Said instructional style seems to grasp student attention, and serves as a motivation for their participation in classroom exercises and events. This alluring outcome is substantiated in the questionnaire data analysis (see Table 5.10, item 5), wherein 79% of students averred that the classroom setting was invigorating. No student-repondent (0%) voiced disaccord with this assertion. A response of such positivity must expressly register student satisfaction with more modern instructional techniques. It merits mention that the expression of ‘new methods of teaching’ is applied herein to the current Emirati milieu, and should be taken to signify that although such ‘new methods’ may not be ‘new’ on the global stage, they are not yet widespread on the Emirati educational scene. Thus, the ‘new methods of teaching’ do appear ‘new’ to the traditionally reared Emirati students. Emirati students are accustomed to more
aged approaches of instruction prior to, and upon, their arrival at their tertiary educational venues. As such, said ‘new methods of teaching’ do appear novel and engrossing to a preponderance of Emirati students. ‘New methods of teaching’ do often grasp the attention the Emirati students, and animate them to wax more participatory in class.

Quantitative and qualitative data analysis revealed that the conversation course lecturer was triumphant in her choice of instructional techniques. When interviewed about her own opinion of her instruction in this course, Mrs Nuha replied as follows:

*I don’t want them to be shy with each other. I want them to be more confident. That’s number one. Number two, at the very beginning, we start as a whole class, talking to each other. From a whole class, we divide into two groups, like a debate that we do. Then after the two groups, we go into four smaller groups, then to pairs and individuals. It’s a process of very general to very specific.*

The outcome above might betoken that the lecturer acknowledges the essentiality of creating classroom comfort in a conversation course from the beginning. Perhaps it is for this reason that it was urgent for the lecturer to assist the students in becoming acquainted with each other. The lecturer correctly declares that achieving confidence is a primordial classroom concern in an English as a Foreign Language conversation course. Mrs Nuha utilises graded instructional tasks, which encompass whole-class exercises, as well as individual student assignments. Team-group events were observed on several occasions whilst evaluating the data derived from this course. Item (8), in Table 5.10, corroborates that 71% of students acknowledge that team exercises are promoted in this course. Demonstrative of the lecturer’s prodigious team exercises, Mrs Nuha, herself, expounds:

*There are so many activities. One is cooking. As long as I’m teaching students, females, I bring small cards with recipes, ingredients and the procedure. I’ll divide*
them into groups of three. They look at the recipe or the dish. I give them 10 minutes to look at it and discuss it. They come in front of the class. They have to divide into different parts. One of them tells the ingredients. The other one would say half of the procedure, and the third one would say the other half. This is one way we can do it if it’s a group of three.

Commensurately, all six student-interviewees verified that they studied singly, by pairs, and within team-groups. Student Amal corroborated this:

> We worked in groups. There were five presentations, two in groups, two in pairs and the last individually. Each presentation equals ten marks, so the total is fifty.

Amal stated that ‘discussion’ was a commonplace classroom occurrence in the conversation course: ‘Discussion was something that we would do every day’. This researcher-writer believes it to be essential that a conversation course undertake student-to-student discussion and verbal exchange on a regular basis. The researcher-writer finds that the frequent engagement in student-to-student discussion is a beneficial trait offered by the conversation course. In the opinion of the researcher-writer, the utilisation of discussion verifies the lecturer to be well versed in the various approaches and practices of a sound conversation course.

Worthy of mention is that the activities realised above were undertaken in spontaneous fashion. In their interviews, three students recounted that the teacher was opposed to memorisation and rote-recitation learning. An example is elaborated by Rashid:

> I remember once, the teacher told us to tell a story spontaneously; however, I was very anxious, so I went and memorized it by heart, word for word. Unfortunately, the teacher was angry with me for doing this.
A prodigious number of students verified that they had benefited from the exercises. The most common response spoken was the following: “The exercises were very useful”. In her interview dialogue, Laila reiterated the efficaciousness of the conversation course instructional techniques:

*I was not so fluent in English before I started this course. Now, I have gained much confidence and fluency in my skills and abilities. I am not worried about any speaking tests, as I feel that I have improved greatly during the course.*

In the section above, the conversation lecturer elucidates her methodology of instructing English conversation. Therein she accentuates her employment of individual assignments, pair work, team-group efforts and pedagogic games. Yet she restricted her perspective of the conversation course to speaking only. Thereby, she disregarded listening. Neither the lecturer nor the student body made reference to the instruction of listening. Yet in the view of this researcher-writer, to the essential skill of listening, due attention must be bestowed. It behooves students to be exposed to broad examples of authentic English language in their auditory classes in order that this might be conveyed toward enhancing their adeptness at conversation.

**5.3.3.4 Teaching Aids**

Teaching techniques consist of the employment of instructional aids. This section will focus on the incorporation of diverse instructional aids in the BELC. The writing course questionnaire data analysis illustrates that 68% of students ran counter to the opinion that instructional aids were utilised in class, whilst 16% affirmed this assertion. In item (6), 22% of students averred that auditory and visual aids were employed in class (see Table 5.5). Both the lecturer and students acknowledged that the whiteboard was the exclusive instructional aid utilised. Below, Mr Ahmad
references his usage of the whiteboard: “I’ll give an in-class task, for instance. Each student is given a chance to come to the board [and] write part of the task”.

In their interview sessions, two students referenced the utilisation of the whiteboard in their writing course. The first citation, by Fatima, describes the relationship of the whiteboard to an in-class punctuation activity:

All we used to do was to write down a sentence from the handout and punctuate it on the board and the teacher will tell me what is wrong with it.

Norah, another student, related that the whiteboard was used minimally throughout the writing course:

It is a shame to come to class every other day, leaving our family and commitments, just to write two sentences on the board and correct their punctuation mistakes.

The preceding comment might exemplify that the lecturer is not applying sufficient effort in introducing diverse instructional aids into the classroom. On the contrary, perhaps the lecturer is overly dependent upon the whiteboard because it is already conveniently extant. The preceding remark might also signify that the lecturer has not yet attained the capability of incorporating distinct instructional aids. Perhaps, therefore, the lecturer simply does not search out instructional aids for class.

It is this researcher-writer’s sentiment that in essential tertiary English language courses, in which students may show divergent styles of learning, it is incumbent on a lecturer to make use of varied sorts of instructional aids. When distinct learning styles are present, it behooves a lecturer to capture the attention of, and to impart knowledge to, all of the students present. Computer Assisted
Language Learning, CALL, might prove itself exceedingly efficacious in further honing student mastery of the learning objectives.

With respect to the reading course, in item (8), nearly half of the students (48%) concurred that ‘outside’ learning resources augmented the lecturer’s class presentations.

Further, item (6) sustains that 48% of students averred that auditory and visual resources were employed in the classroom (see Table 5.6). The majority of the students also referenced the whiteboard as the principal instructional resource employed. Yet, only the lecturer made reference to her intermittent utilisation of auditory listening tapes and PowerPoint presentations. Mr. Samir encapsulated his opinion as follows:

*Sometimes I help them with audiotapes and PowerPoint presentations, but not all of the time.*

The bulk of student answers testify that they utilised no instructional aids beyond the classroom whiteboard. Consequently, to this researcher-writer, it seems that the lecturer may not want to suffer a loss of prestige, and thus declaims that she has employed sundry aids, albeit ‘not all the time’. Morosely, lecturers in the English Language Programme exude ignorance of the essentiality of inserting divers instructional aids into their classrooms. Alternatively, some lecturers might have deliberately determined not to employ instructional aids. The upshot appears that the sole methodology of the lecturers is to give lectures by lecturing, interspersed by bouts at the whiteboard. Regrettably, this is a steadfastly stultifying staple of the UAE tertiary education. This researcher-writer’s life as a student authenticates that, indeed, almost all tertiary courses are taught by lecturing.
The conversation course questionnaire data, item (8), illustrates that 65% of students concurred that auxiliary instructional aids were employed in the class. 13% disavowed this statement. In item (6), a pronounced percentage of students (75%) asserted that auditory and visual aids were made use of in class. 5% dissented from this assertion (see Table 5.7). The data decidedly dictates that the conversation course fared much better than the two prior courses. Student responses substantiate that the teacher did put diverse instructional aids into practice. During the interview exchange, the lecturer showed that she often availed herself of overhead projectors and realia. Dr Nuha punctuated her viewpoint on supplementary instructional resources according to the following:

*I mainly use overhead projectors and reality, bringing real objects inside the classrooms. I like to bring different teaching aids with me to class; I can see how these aids attract my students.*

Departing from the results above, there are a panoply of possible explanations about the failure of lecturers to employ diverse supplementary instructional resources. One explanation might be that the lecturers are simply not trained. Most probably, English lecturers were graduates of sundry English departments, in various colleges of arts, not necessarily teaching or technology departments or colleges. Another reason may be that the lecturers undervalue auxiliary instructional resources. Also, an absence of frequent professional development could deter those exchanges of experience which prove necessary for updating one’s knowledge and technological foundation. It is the sentiment of this researcher-writer that lecturers not rely on a sole set of supplementary instructional resources. It is incumbent that lecturers variegate their auxiliary instructional resources in accord with those most appropriate for their current student body.
5.3.4 Assessment & Feedback

This section examines an examination on both evaluative and feedback techniques at an innovative educational institute in the UAE. It constitutes the fourth focus of this finding and analysis study. Section one will exhibit the results corresponding to the formative and the summative evaluative techniques in the BELC, and student opinions with respect to them. Section two will elaborate participant points of view with respect to the feedback practices.

Evaluation is a vital component that does not transpire independently from other phases of the pedagogic process. Assessment fulfils an immeasurable part in the pedagogic process by providing feedback regarding a lecturer’s classroom techniques. An analysis of this study’s data divulges two principal evaluative approaches that have been availed of in the BELC, specifically formative and summative practices.

5.3.4.1 Formative and Summative Assessment Practices

Data solicited directly from the lecturers pertaining to the most routinely employed formative evaluative approaches, and data from interviews and citations registered in journal-diaries demonstrate that each of the three courses has a distinct practice of formative evaluation. The writing course invokes interviews, homework and a midterm examination as its ‘tools’ of formative evaluation. In this regard, Mr Ahmad asserted:

I interviewed the students. Also, when they do homework assignments, sometimes they write essays, each and every one of them. Only a portion of that is discussed. The next portion is discussed later on, so we keep them on alert all the time. This is more effective than quizzes and tests. They also have mid-term exam.
In the preceding commentary, the lecturer made reference to conducting student interviews. This researcher-writer wonders to what degree student interviews might prove useful for a writing course. Further data disclosed that the lecturer claimed to have requested that students complete homework tasks. Yet, as one will be able to perceive in the coming section, students disallowed that this claim. Such discrepancy might be accounted for by several factors. To this researcher-writer, perhaps the lecturer was desirous of presenting an optimal image of himself, and simply preferred to retain prestige by understating shortcomings.

Numerous formative evaluative practices were ascribed to the reading course. These evaluative practices encompass critiques of books, charts that attest speed-reading velocity and accuracy of comprehension, debating, pair and small team-group public speaking, warm-up quizzes, rapid-retention tests, and midterm examinations. Mr. Samir described this below:

> They [students] have to choose any two books. They should be books according to their choice. They have to write and be critical about the author, what did they like and what they didn’t like about the characters. They have to submit it before the midterm, and before the final too.

Judging from the preceding quotation, the reading course lecturer provides students with a myriad of formative evaluative procedures so that students may avail themselves of a broad expanse of opportunities to enhance their final outcomes. It is desired that said efforts effectuate marks which are more fairly reflective of student accomplishments and objectives-mastery.

The conversation course lecturer, Mrs. Nuha, affirmed that she evaluated her students formatively by employing small team-group tasks and a midterm examination. With reference to small team-group tasks, she attested:
When it’s a whole class activity, there is no assessment. I just keep them talking. When we start a group, pair or individual activity, then the assessment is based on voice pitch, pronunciation and their grammar. Do they make any grammar mistakes?

Mrs Nuha accentuated her employment of the midterm examination, directing added focus on the individual public speaking assignment, through which the lecturer evaluates students’ syntactic competence, pitch of voice, nonverbal and body language, as well as lexical sophistication:

For the midterm, I ask them at the beginning of the class to come up with an educational game, their own creation and creativity. Individually, each student talks for 15 to 20 minutes. Then based on the mistakes that she’s making or not making, I have to assess her. This is another type of assessment. It’s based on the grammar points, how many grammar mistakes she makes as she’s talking, and the pronunciation of words. The voice pitch and body language are together. Also, creativity: did she come up with something new? Was it interesting and entertaining? Who is this one for? Is this enjoyable for the children? She might say this is a game for the second grade, but is it good for the second grade? Would second graders love to play this game? What kind of vocabulary is she using? These are the things that I use.

That Mrs Nuha is introducing creativity by unleashing student imagination as regards course evaluation procedures is refreshing for this researcher-writer to note. Although the devolvement of responsibility onto students is an attractive concept, there is extant the possible handicap that many Emirati students are unaccustomed to such novel methodologies. Even though the lecturer is undertaking that which arguably should be done, in the current Emirati milieu, it might negatively impact on Emirati student academic performance. As a consequence, this researcher-writer advises that the lecturer must gradually prepare students for such novel responsibilities well beforehand in order to ensure that the students completely comprehend the requirements and expectations placed upon them.
The summative evaluative techniques of the three courses were substantiated to be nearly identical. The evaluative practices and systems in the English Language Programme, and throughout Emirati pre-tertiary education generally, are solely preoccupied with the raw amount of knowledge, facts and data which students are capable of recalling at the conclusion of a course. Within the Emirati circumstance, the measure of a student’s scholastic achievement is the information directly received from either the textbook or the teacher. Interpretive skills and the erudite manipulation of data to draw novel conclusions are disregarded. In the writing course, the lecturer indicated that students had to sit a final, written examination in order to pass the course. Mr Ahmad declared:

“They [students] have to answer some questions in writing in the final exam”.

The reading course lecturer declared that she employs the written-answer format in final examinations in order to assess students summatively. Mr Samir remarked:

“...they [students] write throughout their assessments, which is the midterm, quizzes, and also the final”.

The reading course lecturer, Mr Samir, elucidated that his instruction during the course liaises with her summative assessment at the conclusion of the course:

I think it reflects. For example, in the assessment part, the final covers all these items: predicting, scanning, skimming and guessing. It’s not just one skill that I’m going to check. For the reading comprehension, it’s out of five. For example, the skimming or identifying or vocabulary building or structure, this is also another part that should be covered. I think it’s covered more than once, besides when I’m talking about critique. When they critique or argue or do a group presentation, they present themselves.

The former commentary connotes that this lecturer is well versed in the course subject matter. The preceding excerpt is indicative that the lecturer engages in lesson planning, instructs and evaluates her students based upon the learning objectives which they have studied. In reference to the
conversation course, the setting and circumstances were different: ‘The teacher told me that it is the final oral examination by which students are assessed at the end of the course’. Mrs Nuha remarked the following:

Yes, for the final, I have a large bag. Inside this large bag are small plastic bags. Inside each small plastic bag, I have six or seven items. I have five students every day for the final exam. They come in and pick their own small bag from this large bag. Then they put the items in front of them, and they have to come up with a narrative. They have to tell me a story using these items. It’s based again on these criteria. Does she make grammar mistakes? What type of vocabulary is she using? Sometimes there are items she doesn’t know the meaning of, or the vocabulary or word for. Let’s see her use her imagination, how she does it. That’s how it goes.

In accordance with the foundational techniques observed beforehand in this course, the lecturer’s instructional style exudes creativity and imagination in the spheres of objectives-mastery and evaluation. Despite these attributes, numerous students commentated pejoratively when queried about the evaluation. We shall view these commentaries and opinions in the upcoming section.

5.3.4.2 Students’ Views of Assessment

Much of the student body was critical of the evaluations and feedback with which they encountered at the BELC. Students demonstrated that the BELC and institute evaluative methods constituted one of their worst experiences throughout the entire programme. Despite the benign depiction earlier described by the faculty pertaining to the evaluative techniques, a contrary interpretation became show once the student body began to suggest through open-ended responses, journal-diaries and interview sessions. In the succeeding sections, viewpoints on each of the three courses will be evaluated.
The writing course questionnaire data generally illustrates that students were discontent with their evaluation(s). Item (9) evinces that 19% of students agreed that the examination outcomes render an honest depiction of their genuine English language capabilities, whilst 53% were in disagreement with this assertion. This might be demonstrative of a flaw in the examinations or the scoring rubric. Another intriguing result is illumined by item (10). 15% of student opinion coincided that their final marks were just and accurate. A ample number of students, 64%, disallowed the veracity of their final marks. It suggests that a considerable portion of the students concur that the lecturer was unfair as regards their final marks (see Table 5.11).

Table 5.11 Students’ views of writing course assessment & feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Feedback is understandable</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feedback is constructive</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Written feedback was given on my progress</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The most common mistakes are discussed in class</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I was informed about the assessment criteria</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>We were assessed on the topics that we learned in the lessons</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The tests questions were easy to answer</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The instructions for the tests were clear</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The exams results demonstrate my actual ability/proficiency</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am happy with the final grade, it was fair</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correspondingly, the qualitative data analysis illustrates that students voiced their disenchantment about the writing course formative assessment. One significant complaint was that the lecturer did not possess a formative assessment. When she was interviewed, Sarah said:

*There were no quizzes, only midterm and final exams. The teacher said that we would have spot quizzes every week, but this did not happen.*

The testimony above belies the lecturer’s previous remarks. The lecturer may promise that which he does not honour. This might be the result of an over-large workload. It might also be due to his limited available time for assessment and marking, given the number of students enrolled in the course. Despite these contingencies, a lecturer should not undervalue the essentiality of varied, continuous evaluative formats throughout a course.

Further data analysis also verified that student assignments were seldom corrected. Three students recalled that their lecturers did not edit their (the students’) writing. Fatima referenced this during her interview:

*The teacher told us to write a composition on any topic of our choice. Consequently, we all wrote as requested, but he marked the first two lines of three students only. After that, he started complaining about our writing performance. This is unfair, as he did not read all the written essays.*

Asma, another student, responded in greater detail during her interview session:

*All the teacher does during the course is to ask for homework that he collects, and he never marks or returns it to us. The only time we write essays and they are marked is in our final exams. Unfortunately, we don’t get them back, as we only get a score without any kind of report detailing the good and bad points in our writing. We really need help. I think the teacher is forced to mark the written essays this time because the head of the department will ask him about the mark. Other than that, he would never think of marking them. I think teachers need a higher authority to supervise them.*
The preceding observations are severe. When students complete homework assignments, they suppose that their lecturers will review them and return them so that they might improve themselves based upon their errors. The writing course lecturer does not do this. The student feedback attests that students do not receive their homework assignments and essays returned to them.

Item (6) of the questionnaire analysis substantiates that 53% of students conceded that they were evaluated on the subject matter studied in class. Yet, this manner of evaluation fomented negative judgement on the part of some students. In the interview data analysis, students reproved their lecturer’s evaluation, which relied on memorisation and rote learning. They insisted that they require a writing course which shows them how to write by utilising a set of writing skills. As a student named Hessa punctuated:

*I don’t like the way our writing teacher assesses us. He gives us some handouts to memorise in the last lecture, from which all the exercises came in the exam. This helps us to pass the exam, but not to acquire a lifelong learning skill as undergraduate students and as future teachers. Since you are critical of the memorisation and rote learning that we did at school, why do you encourage us to memorise the answers to your exam questions?*

The preceding excerpt clarifies that students are fatigued of the memorisation and rote learning practices to which they were obliged to be accustomed at their pre-tertiary educational stages. They desire a writing lecturer who will concretely empower them to write coherently and cohesively. Their plea holds special urgency given that they will become successful engineers and business people at the end of their preparation programme.
Despite that the lecturer explained the distribution of course grades to the students, explicit scoring rubrics for every examination remained absent. This controversy was emphasised by Hessa’s response which touched on the student desire to know the manner in which written essays will be scored:

*I really do not know how our teacher assesses our pieces of writing at the end of the semester.*

The lack of clarity and specificity in scoring essays has provoked anxiety over the possible use of double standards in the marking of student writing. Asma admonished:

*The teacher lacks clear criteria for distributing the marks in the exam. He has double standards, as he gives me one mark and then gives my friend a higher mark for the same answer.*

The preceding quotations vividly sustain that the lecturer has developed no detailed marking scheme. Students have a right to be informed the manner in which grades are set and apportioned on every examination. The lecturer must elucidate the marking rubric.

With reference to the summative assessment and their final marks, students attested in their interviews that the lecturer was unjust in his evaluation. This point was taken up by five interviewees, one of whom, Rashid, declared:

*He was unfair in our assessment. I think that he doesn’t mark our exam papers. He might have given us a random mark based on his subjectivity. He has given us the same exam questions before the final; therefore, it is expected that all of us will get (A), but this was an unfulfilled dream.*

The quotation above bears out that many students were discontent with their final course mark. It appears that the lecturer’s grading rubric was pointlessly severe. This perception compelled students to conclude that their final marks were unjust. The preceding revelation calls attention to
the essentiality of frequent and varied evaluations throughout a course. Such practice might permit a truer and more honest determination of student abilities throughout a semester, instead of ascertaining student knowledge based upon a solitary examination.

Students also elaborated upon numerous opinions regarding their reading course evaluation. Despite expressing approval of the instructional techniques utilised in the reading course, as well as recognising that the bulk of the course learning objectives were achieved, item (10) of Table 5.12 discloses that only 27% of students were pleased with the final mark which they received in the reading course. Additionally, item (9) displays that 25% of students accepted that their examination outcomes accurately measured their true English language level, whilst 58% diverged from that point of view. These results indicate that the students are not satisfied with their final course marks. The analyses of the interview sessions and student journal-diary entries permit us to investigate this discrepancy further.
Table 5.12 Students’ views of reading course assessment & feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Feedback is understandable</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feedback is constructive</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Written feedback was given on my progress</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The most common mistakes were discussed in class</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I was informed about the assessment criteria</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>We were assessed on the topics that we learned in the lessons</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The tests questions were easy to answer.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The instructions for the tests were clear.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The exams results demonstrate my actual ability/proficiency</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am happy with the final grade. It was fair</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the qualitative data permits the possibility of deeper insight into the above concern.

The lecturer spotlighted that student demeanour and in-class, academic participation were affirmative before their formative evaluations commence. After students were evaluated, their disheartening scores altered their attitudes toward learning. They became more sullen and morose.

Mr Samir remarked on the impact that evaluations may have on learning:

*They enjoy it, but when they reach the level of their assessment, they get frustrated. Either they overcome their weakness in this part of the skill or not. So, they are doing fine until the midterm, and then their attitudes shift.*

The testimony above verifies that the lecturer is attuned of the student dilemma as regards the marks which they receive. Yet by her own admission, she holds no suggestion by which the
quandary might be resolved. He further exudes the impression that she is not exercising great effort in order to discover a resolution, either.

Students offered some reasoning for which they earned low marks. Bedoor, as well as five more students, declared in their interview exchanges that the final examination was not an accurate evaluative tool because it presupposed a knowledge of the English language which was beyond their ability. Hamda’s view was articulated below:

Although we have been tested on the topics that we studied, the majority of us found the final exam questions very difficult to answer.

The sentiment above was corroborated in the analysis of the questionnaire data of item (7). Therein a low percentage (15%) of students found the examination questions to be facile to answer, whilst 69% found them difficult. One possible suggestion for this discrepancy may be that the examination instructions were not lucidly explained in a fashion suited to second language learners. Another reason might be that the lecturer did not prepare her students well for the genre of questions which were posed on the final examination.

Another question which was raised in the process of data analysis was that the overall institute evaluative system was arcane and obsolete. In the succeeding interview testimony, Nawal suggested:

There is no proper assessment in this institute. They only judge us on our final exam result and forget all the achievements that we have done during the whole semester. This is unfair!
The preceding quotation underscores that the institute evaluative system is constituted by just one final examination. Students are calling for varied, continuous, evaluative opportunities, administered throughout a course, to be averaged into the determination of a final grade. The following declaration was stated by Hana, who took advantage of her interview dialogue to voice the following anger:

*I just want to ask my teacher one question: “On what basis have you given me this low grade?”*

An additional motive for disgruntlement with grades owes itself to the time apportioned for the final examination. It was less than 90 minutes, which students consider to be too short. The lecturer may not have trained her students to read under the anxiety of timed examinations. This begs the question of whether knowledge was being tested, or velocity, or composure-under-pressure.

Students rendered varied critiques and observations of the conversation course. They also provided diverse analyses of the question types and formats employed on the distinct formative and summative conversation course examinations. Jameel committed the manner in which students were evaluated to his journal-diary:

*Our midterm exam was acting a play called Cinderella in the form of a group of students on the stage. Later on, we made an individual presentation, which was more difficult, but it increased and encouraged our self-confidence. It helped us to use more new vocabulary as we studied and prepared well for these presentations.*

A complete description of the conversation lecturer’s evaluative techniques, throughout the course, was recounted in Laila’s interview henceforth:

*We had three exams during the course plus the final one. Here was a play as the first exam, followed by some random questions as the second exam and finally another play. She assessed the three exams and gave us the highest mark, which was great. This was good preparation for the final exam. The teacher gave us the*
chance to think and wait. I like her testing techniques, but the final was a bit challenging and different. In the final exam, four girls were examined per day. The teacher was recording what we were saying, which increased our anxiety. There was a small bag and you have to find relations between the items in this bag and maybe tell a story if you can.

Mrs Nuha reiterated that evaluations affect student dispositions. Evaluation has an impact which ‘awakens’ the student’s mind, obliging the student to examine in manners unthought of before. Mrs Nuha highlighted this opinion further:

*With certain activities, when they know that they are going to be graded based on these activities and these assignments; then they take it really seriously.*

The revelation above bespeaks the academic truth of the UAE, in which elevated marks are the principal goal of students instead of the acquisition and creative use of knowledge. The nexus of the Emirati pedagogic process is founded upon memorisation for the sole purpose of attaining a passing mark. This is the reason for which Emirati students become more emboldened and inspired in any scholastic pursuit, if they are first made aware of the manner in which they will be marked. This mindset has long years of societal reinforcement. Parents are inclined to inquire if their children ‘have passed’ a course, rather than what they may have ‘learnt’ from a course. By extension, a Emirati student’s principal focus is always one of passing a course in order to please their parents.

On the conversation course student questionnaire data analysis (Table 5.13), students confirmed their disagreement with items 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10. The greatest dissension was found in those items related to examinations and final course marks. 78% of the student feedback for item (6) verified that students disavowed that they were evaluated on the subject matter which they had studied.
during the semester. 15% were in accord with that assertion. This may be demonstrative of the lecturer’s attempt to utilise more innovative examination techniques in order to measure the students’ deeper understanding, rather than their vacuous memorisation. Students may have been unaccustomed to the novel examination approach, and expectant of traditional evaluative methods.

Students responded antagonistically to item (7): 56% denied that the examination questions were facile to answer. Students were also queried if they were cognizant of the evaluation grading rubric before sitting the examination. Item (5) documents that 26% of students were apprised of the examination marking criteria beforehand. 55% disagreed that they were informed beforehand.

Item (10) shows that 19% of students were content with their final mark, and considered that the mark was just, whilst 53% complained of being saddened with their final grade. The questionnaire data results disclose the degree to which the students derisively suggested about the course’s evaluative methods.
Table 5.13 Students’ views of conversation course assessment & feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Feedback is understandable</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feedback is constructive</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Oral feedback was given on my progress</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The most common mistakes were discussed in class</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I was informed about the assessment criteria</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>We were assessed on the topics that we learned in the lessons</td>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<td>40%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am happy with the final grade, it was fair</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students rendered greater in-depth opinion as regards their disgruntlement with the course’s evaluative practices in their interview sessions, journal-diaries and questionnaire answers. Student-participant, Nouf, during her interview, voiced dissension as regards the lecturer’s unjust evaluative methods:

*I think her assessment was unfair. If you do not attend, you lose ten marks. She did not give me the chance to discuss my mark with her - she said: “Who are you to discuss the mark that I gave you? This is final.” I think she is stubborn in her assessment.*

The citation above depicts a commonplace point of view of lecturers at the tertiary educational level in the UAE. Lecturers are not closely observed by a superior governing body with regard to their class management or assessment techniques. Such autonomy might engender unfair student assessment. This researcher-writer suggests that if lecturers were given to greater engagement with
their students, the subsequent lecturer-student rapport might prove conducive to discussions from which students could learn from their mistakes and comprehend the errors which they committed.

Some student-participants deplored the difficulty of the midterm examination, which was presented in the manner of a pedagogic game. An illustration of this opinion was articulated in Alia’s interview dialogue as follows:

*The educational game in the midterm was so difficult. We were just starting the course and the teacher wanted us to present and explain in detail. This is not fair, as we hadn’t done much in the course yet, we hadn’t learned much. How can we give a presentation? As expected, my grade was not good, similar to the grades given to most of my classmates.*

The preceding remark conveys that the lecturer has overly-high expectations for her students, and is not realistically taking into account the ability level of the students when she is evaluating their output. Students require added amounts of time to adapt to tertiary level work. The students in question herein are in their first semester on the tertiary level. Consequently, students may not yet be accustomed to tertiary evaluative practices, having been exclusively evaluated by conventional Emirati assessment techniques during their pre-tertiary education. In conformity with this, Mr Samir deems students as ‘traditionalists’ who are overly-accustomed to being overly-instructed in what to think and how to react. In tertiary education, students find themselves on their own, without the familiarity and teacher-guidance of their secondary educational years.

*May I add something? Most of our students come to class with the idea of receiving instructions through the old methods, the grammar translation method or teacher-centred approaches. Sometimes for a teacher like me who applies a technique of creative thinking and innovation, voices a point of view in class, and gives feedback and expresses views on certain topics, it doesn’t work at all, unfortunately.*
Although the conversation course lecturer did not delineate easily understood evaluative rubrics, she did reference several assessment and marking standards during her period of interview. Mrs Nuha averred her opinion in favour of a multiplicity of evaluations in the courses which she teaches:

*When we start a group, pair or individual activity, then the assessment is based on voice pitch, pronunciation and their grammar. Do they make any grammar mistakes?*

She further emphasised that she was observant of one’s eye contact with the interlocutor(s), the use of appropriate body language, the deft selection of lexicon, lucid enunciation and competent syntax:

*I always check the following: are they making eye contact? Are their eyes always on the floor because they are shy, or do they look at every individual when they are talking because they are more confident? Even their body language: are they nervous? Do you feel like she can’t stand, like she’s going to fall? It’s also on the subject matter and their enjoyment. All of these go into it ... I look at the choice of words she’s using. Maybe she’s not using the right words because she doesn’t know the meaning of them ... Sometimes, even though they are fluent, they might speak, but they still make a lot of pronunciation mistakes. Even the structure or syntax is wrong. These things have to do with how they speak.*

That the teacher is evaluating the students on a broad array of language skills is rendered evident by the commentary above. This researcher-writer considers this to be a arduous and exacting manner of evaluation, especially taking into consideration that the students are not native speakers of English, and only recently graduated from secondary school. Such exigent evaluative standards may account for the mediocre final marks which the students earned at the semester’s end; marks which were, in turn, roundly disparaged by a great number of students, as will be seen proximately.
Five of six students bemoaned the low marks which they earned at the end of this course. During her interview session, Shamsa suggested:

The final grade does not at all reflect my personal performance during the whole semester in this course. This is not my level: I should have got a higher grade. I'm not sure why, but it is well known to all the students in the institute that this teacher does not give high grades. Many students warned us not to take this course with this teacher.

A similar open-ended answer was presented by the succeeding remark:

My final grade was not fair. I deserved a much better grade.

Student-participants addressed, in writing, the same concern of mediocre marks. Ali, in his journal-diary, penned:

The teacher was a miser when giving us marks. Honestly, we were so shocked when we saw our final grade. The other teachers were generous with their students. Now, I feel that I have been let down and I am even seriously thinking of withdrawing from the summer course.

Based on the preceding commentaries, the students were noticeably discontented with their final marks, and lamented that the lecturer had been unjust. Mrs Nuha explained student grades in accordance with the following:

When I think of what I did with the students from the beginning of the course to the end and how I evaluated each one of them, they deserved the grades that they got. That’s their level – no more and no less.

The lecturer professes that she has laboured mightily to augment her students’ conversational level. It is on account of those efforts that she expects them to exhibit accomplished results in their final evaluation. This researcher-writer considers the lecturer to hold a quite demanding set of evaluative standards, which well exceed the realistic competency of the majority of students. This
researcher-writer concludes that the lecturer will better serve her students by being less onerous as regards student final marks, recalling that the students in question emerged from a less dynamic academic background, and still remain in their first year of tertiary studies.

An additional explanation for the students’ poor marks might pertain to their teachers’ stringent classroom management and interpersonal rapport. Three student-interviewees expounded on their teacher’s stern, exacting manner in class. Relating to this preoccupation, Nouf’s opinion serves well as a prototype for her peers:

“My teacher makes me study in a scary atmosphere, as if I’m in a military school.”

Another student-participant offered the succeeding opinion to the open-ended query:

She is a very severe teacher in her marking and corrections. She asks difficult questions that we can’t answer. The teacher is very frightening; to the extent that I could not ask her any questions for fear that she would shout at me as she did to my classmates.

It merits mention that one issue was redundantly accentuated by students, and might have impacted on their execution of the final examination. It was the students’ preoccupation regarding the presence of an external examiner at the final oral examination. In her interview exchange, Amina reiterates:

The final exam was okay for me, but I was frightened of her colleague, who was just watching and listening to what I was saying. They agreed the mark for each of us before calling on the next student. How can the other teacher judge my level in such a short time? I was working hard all semester and he simply judged me in minutes!

The preceding consideration may have repercussions by decreasing student outcomes on the examination, and thence, their final marks. It is, in future, suggested that the lecturer remain
cognizant that some students are timid, whilst others may become distressed when they come upon an ‘unexpected’ examiner or testing observer.

Observed from the vantage point of this researcher-writer’s personal didactic background, the student depictions of the evaluative techniques which they have confronted are quintessential. This may be attributed to a variety of explanations. The first explanation recognises that teachers utilise a manner of evaluation that focuses on the cognitive attributes of a subject. Many instructors are unfamiliar with alternative, holistic, formative and summative evaluative methods; their tendency is to rely on traditional tests, such as timed, written, final examinations. Newer evaluative approaches such as warm-up quizzes, practical quizzes, open-book tests, take-home tests, public speaking, long-term research assignments, and self-assessment are not applied. This researcher-writer considers that this is because instructors do not renovate their didactic knowledge on a regular basis through professional development. A second reason may be that the administrative tasks for which tertiary lecturers and professors are responsible could result too onerous and consumptive of their time. This, in turn, might prove to be an obstacle to their professional development. Finally, many lecturers have not made it a custom of gathering on a regular basis to augment and to rejuvenate their knowledge by sharing with colleagues. If the ideas posited above prove valid, they bring the BELC evaluative methodologies into question. In sum, it can be concluded that in this English Language Programme, the overall evaluative procedures are conventional, exclusively emphasising a course’s sole final examination that measures rote-memorised and recitational knowledge.
5.3.4.3 Feedback-Response

Feedback-response represented an essential component of the three BELCs. Questionnaire data feedback analysis illumined the succeeding evidence. Item (1) demonstrates that 35% of the writing course student-respondents concurred that the feedback is understandable, whilst 37% dissented from this assertion. In item (2), 65% corroborated that feedback is productive, whilst only 8% disavowed this. Item (3) confirms that 60% acceded to the statement that written feedback is provided about their assignments, whilst 13% rejected that comment (see Table 5.11).

Item (1) of the reading course illustrates that 66% of the reading course student-respondents concurred that the feedback-response is understandable, whilst only 6% departed from that remark. Item (2) unveils that a large percentage (91%) verified that the feedback-response was productive and enhancing, whereas in item (3), 79% affirmed that written feedback is rendered on their assignments. Item (4), puts into relief that 83% averred that the most commonplace errors are taken up and reviewed in class (see Table 5.12).

The conversation course questionnaire data, item (1), portrays that 72% of the student-respondents conceded that the feedback-response is comprehensible, whilst 6% found themselves at variance with that statement. Item (2) underscored that 73% of student opinion agreed that it is productive and enhancing, whereas 4% disallowed that comment. Item (3) substantiated that the opinions of 87% of student-respondents coincided that oral feedback was imparted on their general course progress and advancement (see Table 5.13).
The qualitative data analysis attests that the writing lecturer prefers to avail himself of discovery-learning techniques when he offers feedback to his students. The reading lecturer most often utilises constructive feedback, whilst the conversation lecturer puts into practice a mixture of constructive and corrective feedback-responses. Students articulated a myriad of viewpoints regarding the variety of feedback rendered, as will be brought to the fore in the succeeding sections.

Mr Ahmad, the writing lecturer, purveyed an overall answer pertaining to his constructive feedback. Commenting on this topic, he stated:

*No, we shouldn’t say it’s wrong or not. There is a better way of doing that. You know what I mean? We should say, “There is a better way of doing this. You are doing it okay, but if you had done it this way it would be more acceptable for the reader.”*

The writing lecturer desires to prescribe instruction regarding the content which other lecturers must, or must not, state, but otherwise the writing lecturer possesses nothing more to contribute. The aforecited suggests that the writing lecturer permits, or obliges, the students to determine the response without his assistance. This lecturer employs discovery-learning as a method of rendering feedback-responses. Although this method of feedback-response can prove advantageous in some settings, it remains vital to recollect that first year tertiary students require concrete, lecturer-directed input as regards their writing, especially if they have not mastered English language writing techniques in their primary and secondary educational stages.

Despite the largely affirmative student opinions expressed in the quantitative data analysis, student viewpoints about the feedback which was reported about the writing course lecturer in the
qualitative data analysis were, for the most part, unfavourable. Wafa scribed in her journal-diary that the lecturer was vacillating and incompetent in the instruction of writing:

_When the teacher doesn’t know the right answer, he says, “This is wrong”, without telling us exactly what is wrong with the sentence._

Regarding tardy or postponed lecturer feedback, a student answered one of the open-ended queries as follows:

_I need timely feedback from the teacher on what I write; I’ve never experienced this in the writing class._

Another student commentated the lecturer’s written feedback as being limited solely to grammar and punctuation. The succeeding reply implores that students delve into other aspects of writing which will enable them to be accomplished writers.

_I think that the teacher gives us constructive feedback as far as grammar and punctuation marks are concerned. We don’t write; therefore, there is no feedback on our writing performance._

The reading course lecturer, Mr Samir, replied that he makes use of constructive feedback in class. When queried on this, he rejoined:

_I won’t say, “That’s wrong.” I never do it this way. It’s more constructive. I’m always constructive because otherwise it really underestimates the students and their ability to help each other. It builds a block between you and her. I hate saying that. In the teaching process, you have to build a relationship, not blocks._

This excerpt reinforces that the lecturer’s feedback style is productive and beneficial. The lecturer attempts to remain aware of student feelings and sentiments during the feedback-learning process. She is aware that feedback, wrongly administered, can bring true the adage, ‘It [feedback] builds a block between you and them [students]’. Consequently, the lecturer admonishes that the saying be
recalled whilst offering feedback to students. Yet, she did not explain the manner in which she conveys productive and beneficial feedback to students. In other words, the lecturer never clearly and concretely specified her feedback techniques. For the purposes of this study, as well as learning, explicit examples would have proven useful.

The succeeding citation, taken from an interview with student Abrar, voices student contentment with the goals that the lecturer was attempting to accomplish during the course:

*I think the teacher’s comments and feedback are very important to me; they encourage me and tell me what my mistakes are and how to correct them.*

Contrarily, the conversation teacher, Mrs Nuha, corroborated that she utilises a synthesis of corrective and constructive feedback in her classes. In this regard, she elaborated:

*I do both. You need to show them the mistakes that they have made. That’s what I do. After each presentation, I have some comments. Then I talk to each student by herself and I’ll tell her exactly. She knows that she made this mistake. I tell her what she did and how to avoid the same mistakes next time.*

Contrary to the other faculty staff members, the conversation lecturer is the most well versed in, and adept at, the implementation of corrective and constructive feedback. She proves competent of tactfully informing students of their errors, as well as instructing them in the correct techniques so that they avoid the same errors anew.

Opinions differed regarding each of the diverse feedback-responses. These feedback-responses included varied types such as constructive, discovery-based and a synthesis of corrective and constructive feedback. This research-writer has concluded that lecturers must upgrade their knowledge repositories about diverse instructional techniques such as verbal feedback, written
feedback, peer review feedback, student-centred feedback, as well as lecturer-centred feedback. When lecturers are enabled to better administer competent feedback-responses, students will more readily identify their own errors, institute their own corrections, and avoid error redundancy in the future.

The preceding section attempted to ascertain answers for the third research question of the current study. There were varied viewpoints revealed regarding the four areas of the current study. These areas consisted of (1) course learning objectives; (2) content and materials; (3) teaching and learning; and, (4) assessment and feedback of the basic language skills courses. The different viewpoints provided may prove attributable to the gap between theory and practice. This uncertainty, among other factors, will be spotlighted and investigated in the ‘discussion’ chapter.

5.4 Suggestions for Improving the Basic Language Skills Courses

What suggestions are made by students and lecturers for the improvement of Basic English Language Courses (BELC) in the General Requirement (FP), at the Educational Institute?

This section of the analysis will report students’ and lecturers’ recommendations for improving the three BELC courses: writing, reading and conversation. To inform upon this research query, data was acquired from (1) investigatory questionnaire items; (2) probing, semi-structured interview sessions with students and lecturers; as well as, (3) student journal-diaries. This section of the analysis is submitted under distinct themes, encompassing proposals for: (1) course learning objectives; (2) content and instructional materials; (3) teaching and learning; (4) evaluation and
feedback-response; (5) the necessity of more numerous language skills courses; and (6) the English language as a medium of instruction.

It merits mention that several recommendations have already been referenced under prior topics and themes; and that these point up attributes in which BELC programme is deficient. It is the pronounced sentiment of this researcher-writer that those deficiencies must be rectified in order for the programmes above to be efficacious and gratifying.

5.4.1 Suggestions for Course Learning Objectives

When lecturers were asked if there should have been other course learning objectives, a gamut of diverse points of view and proposals came to the fore, according to which particular course was in question. The writing course teacher, Mr Ahmad, initially proposed that the grammar objectives be broached in the writing course:

*I think they should be taught grammar that is related to writing specifically, what we call biological grammar. They are not taught that either there, in area schooling, or here.*

Mr Ahmad’s opinion may be attributable to his students’ grammatical deficiencies. He additionally propounded a distinct course devoted exclusively to grammar, as well as a separate writing course:

*The next thing is that they will actually get involved in grammar class. That compels those basic writers into engaging into good writing, to understand what they write and maintain the accuracy that writing insists on.*

Mr Samir gave the impression of being more accepting of proposals for the reading course, and avowed her openness to any ideas that may aid the enhancement of the course. He responded:
I think they [objectives] are adequate. If there is something that comes up in this content or this skill, why not? Yes, I would accept it.

Even though he did not propound that a particular skill or learning objective to be appended to the course, Mr Samir demonstrated a tolerant frame of mind toward possible future proposals.

As regards the conversation course, Mrs Nuha stated her belief that the actual course objectives were satisfactory:

I think the aims and objectives of this course are more than enough. They have covered the entire aspect of this language.

It resulted surprising to this researcher-writer that the lecturer did not recommend additional course learning objectives pertaining to the skill of listening, since this is a conversation course (including both the listening and speaking skills), and not exclusively a speaking course.

Although all three lecturers responded differently, all concurred that augmenting the curriculum with new course learning objectives, or properly consummating the current objectives, is encumbered by already limited time. This was plainly punctuated by Mr Ahmad:

The time is so tight. It's only an hour and a half on Mondays and Tuesdays. Therefore, if we would like to add more, we might not have sufficient time to cover it.

The preceding results criticise that the time frames apportioned for English language courses is constrained. Lecturers are obligated to instruct within these confined time periods. Limited time allotments handicap those endeavours made in favour of creativity or supplementary exercises.
5.4.3 Suggestions for Course Content and Instructional Materials

A variety of proposals were broached by students and lecturers pertaining to the content of the BELC courses and the kinds of resources that might facilitate improvement in student learning.

A majority of students in all three courses recommended that they be afforded the liberty to select their own titles of study. During her interview Rashid addressed this opinion:

*I would really like the teacher to give us the opportunity to choose topics that interest us when we have a reading task. Unfortunately, many topics that the teacher chooses are not of interest to me.*

Student-interviewee, Fatima, propounded that the selection of topics be determined collaboratively between students and lecturer:

*A mix between teachers’ suggested topic and students’ chosen topics would be a good idea.*

She also proposed her own subjects of interest, declaring:

*I myself like to write about literary and scientific topics*

Several themes were advanced by students, encompassing poetry writing, the composition of official letters, and summary drafting of a title that has been read.

Several recommendations were proffered regarding preferred instructional materials. Many students frankly stated their preference for these updated instructional aids, implying that the use of these would foment greater student interest. Khalid, during his interview session, markedly dwelt on this point:
I would really like to learn by using new learning aids, other than the typical standard ones such as our textbook. For example, reading from a PC [personal computer] or a video on a huge screen would attract me to read more. I would also like our teacher to use PowerPoint presentations to show us what he is talking about. This would help to generate discussion in class.

Correspondingly, in his journal-diary, Salem expressed his disenchantment at the absence of more advanced instructional resources in the reading course:

*I wish we could have used DVDs [digital versatile disc] or videos in this course; I’m really fed up with the traditional way of reading. Using electronic devices attracts me very much. For example, at home, I always use my iPad to read stories and books; since I bought this interesting device, I haven’t opened any regular book at all!*

Lecturers, too, buttressed this point of view, regretting that they did not have convenient access to such instructional materials. Mrs Nuha lamented thus:

*I would love to have a video so I could bring some movies. This would be really nice. They could listen or see perhaps half an hour of a movie. They could listen to it and then come up with their own comments, like what’s going to happen in the rest of the movie, if they haven’t seen it before. I have to make sure that they haven’t seen it. This is one thing we can ask for.*

Because the data analysis demonstrates that students find modern instructional technology more appealing, it behooves the institute to make this technology accessible to the lecturers, and it is equally essential to educate the lecturers about it, in order that they take complete advantage of it.
5.4.4 Suggestions for Course Teaching and Learning

Students of the BELC propounded various instructional practices which they would prefer to see utilised by their lecturers. Data analysis verified that students usually concurred on some of the instructional techniques. A majority of the student body punctuated the necessity of greater practice time. Badir, in his interview, exemplified the desire for more time ‘set-asides’ dedicated to practice:

*We didn’t practise much; I think we need more training in reading different passages. For example, I still cannot understand the meaning of a word from the context when reading something; I think the more we practise, the easier this will be.*

Another writing course student, Rashid, recommended the practice of writing in every lecture. It is his belief that such consistency will assist students in improving their English writing. Upon being interviewed, she suggested:

*We need to practice writing more often, and unfortunately this is not happening in this course. We study writing three times a week; therefore, if we write three times a week, I’m sure our writing skills will improve by the end of the course.*

In addition to writing practice, it was also communicated that discussion was a necessity. The bulk of students asserted the necessity for in-class discussion. Currently, their class does not undertake any discussion at all. As Farah pinpointed in her journal-diary:

*Despite having a good teacher who explains his syllabus in class, I really need to discuss my work or ideas with either the teacher or my classmates. I think discussion will help us learn from each other and exchange ideas. Sitting silent in class may kill my ideas and views and this will consequently affect my willingness to participate and take part in class in a small circle and in society at large. Classroom discussion is something that I really need because it helps me to think critically about others’ views.*
The BELC suffers from an absence of clearly allocated, built-in practice time, which has been proven essential in the enhancement of student English fluency. This shortcoming might be ascribable to the predominate method of instruction wherein lecturing or lecturer-centric practices are favoured.

Plentiful numbers of students advocated the desire for more frequent in-class presentations. In her interview session, Laila expressed this yearning as follows:

\[ I \text{ wish in each lecture we could do a presentation about a specific topic of our choice and then discuss it in general with its advantages and disadvantages. } \]

It may be surmised that some students are too timid to public-speak in front of others; therefore, they solicit remedies and alternatives from their lecturers. Nouf advanced the succeeding argument in her interview session:

\[ I \text{ hope that the teacher will explore the hidden skills and abilities of her/his students, and encourage them to participate in class, specially shy students, like myself, by allowing some time, ten minutes, to make individual discussion with each student in class, instead of the general discussion with the whole class. } \]

An added resolution for this dilemma was proffered by Wa’ad, who underscored during her interview session the succeeding:

\[ \text{Reading aloud during class in front of other students will help break the ice of shyness and fear; I think this will give me more confidence when I become a teacher later on. } \]

It is intriguing to locate students who are self-aware of their difficulties, and who solicit, directly or indirectly, those didactic approaches which may succor them to surmount these debilities. This shows the import of heeding student voice and views.
Small-team/group learning was a variant methodology proposed by a large number of students. In her interview exchange, Hanan depicted small-team/group work in the reading course as follows:

*I find it interesting if the teacher divides us into groups and asks each group to choose a page or two on a topic of our own choice and come and read it in front of the class and then ask the whole class to discuss these topics.*

Another reply to the open-ended questionnaire proposed the use of a cooperative technique in the writing course. This pedagogic practice is known as ‘joint construction’:

*I suggest that the teacher should divide us into groups and ask each group to write about a book they have read. In other words, each member of the group will be involved in writing about the book that they have read to come up with a general idea about the book.*

In addition to the methodologies proposed above, the data analysis demonstrates that students are desirous of studying in a setting that is distinct from the one they now know. One student who answered the open-ended questions advocated the succeeding idea:

*I really enjoy it when we study outside our classroom, like for example going to the computer room and surfing the internet as an aid to improve our reading - it is more fun and very encouraging.*

Another student, Sheikha, disclosed in her journal-diary the reason for which she detested the course:

*I love games ... this class was boring because we did not learn by playing games. The teacher was in a serious mood most of the time, and I hate that and I got bored quickly.*

This result implies that some courses were ‘tough’ and monotonous. This pejorative ambience does not embolden students to assimilate material profoundly, or to participate vivaciously in class.
Most essentially, such a sterile pedagogic setting will render a deleterious effect on students, which they may carry with them, as they become future teachers.

A final, possible instructional practice was provided by Khalifa, who in her interview exchange, commended the practice that previous student-written essays be made public. In that manner, the actual student body might learn from others’ mistakes. He expounded:

*I need to see examples of other students’ written essays and the mistakes they committed to learn from them. This will make me pay attention to these mistakes and never repeat them in my writing.*

There exists a host of proposals appertaining to those teaching methods that could possibly be employed in the BELC, but which still must be taken up by the lecturing staff. Vitally, the instructional methodology must be altered from one of conventional lecturing to one that promotes greater student-centric discussion.

### 5.4.5 Suggestions for Course Evaluation and Feedback-Response

Data analysis unearthed a myriad of proposals which were pertinent to course evaluation and feedback-response. A majority of participants were reproachful of the evaluative and testing methods utilised by the three English language courses and the overall programme. Students and lecturers indicated that it was their belief that the programme’s evaluative practices were one of the explanations for low student English competence and inferior proficiency.

The first rebuke pertained to the entrance examination which students were required to write prior to being admitted into the programme. Lecturers reprimanded this examination for not rightly
portraying student competencies, and by extension, granting inadequately performing students access to the English language programme. Mr Ahmad spotlighted the succeeding preoccupations:

*The negative dimension here is the quality of students we receive, which needs a sort of polishing. It needs to be more closely scrutinized and checked and rechecked before they are accepted. Writing should be more emphasized on proficiency tests.*

*I’ll tell you something that is really amazing. There are a number of students that are positively and clearly fluent in English, but when it comes to writing, they don’t know the alphabet. This is really a catastrophe. You can’t judge a learner just because he or she speaks fluent English. If you’d like to check his education, ask him to write something for you.*

Evidence suggests that the students hold a low level of proficiency in writing skills, to which Mrs Nuha offered an additionally negative image pertaining to the general quality of students admitted into the programme. She elaborated:

*Most of the time, I try to speak in English. Then, they try to speak. It is like the first time they have been exposed to something like this, even though they have studied English for twelve years. This is really weird. It looked like they just listened to something called English for the first time. That’s the problem we had.*

This discovery bears out that lecturers prefer a more challenging entrance examination in which there is included a greater emphasis on student writing skills. Such examination would augment the quality of students inducted into the programme. Consequently, the competency of the English language teacher graduates would commence to ascend in future.

Some participants disparaged the distribution of grades and advised that the distribution method be altered. Relatedly, Mr Ahmad declared that he was dissatisfied with the apportionment of grades that the institute evaluative framework entails:

*For writing, it’s really unfair to have 50 for the final. Effort should take quite a big portion of that because it’s a portfolio. When we talk about writing, we talk about their portfolio, the whole work. It’s all the hard work they’ve done throughout the
semester. It should go into their marks, actually. I suggest that we should actually take 30 marks off the whole thing.

In their interview data, Aysha, among five additional students, showed a predilection for written examinations in the reading course. Aysha’s opinion, representative, of the others, follows:

*I think exams are the best way, but written ones, not oral, because it is the fairest way. If I write something correct, the teacher will give me what I deserve: s/he cannot give me a lower grade.*

Emirati students approach their tertiary education after having been assessed in writing throughout their primary and secondary educational formation. One may construe that their preference for written examinations is based on the level of comfort which students have already acquired for the written test. Vitally, students do not confide in their lecturers’ evaluations of their [the students’] verbal capabilities. Put simply, students feel more assured with a tactile, concretised written page in their fore, as opposed to the vagaries of oral interpretation.

Other student-interviewees commended evaluations of student ‘developmental advancement’ within the course, from the commencement to the termination of the course, as a honest basis of student assessment. In other words, what did the students know when they began the course, and what did the students know when they finished the course? An archetype of these points of view was represented by the remarks of Mariam who emphasised the following during her interview exchange:

*I believe that the best way to assess me is according to my level: that is, to compare my level at the beginning of the course and see how I am improving gradually in English by the end of the course.*
This preceding excerpt suggests that students endorse being evaluated on the holistic basis of their overall advancement throughout an entire course. It is theorised that that might prove achievable by carrying out a pre-test at the commencement of the course, a formative evaluation during the course, and a summative examination at the close of the course. At that point, student grades might more readily exhibit an accurate, overall level of development.

Khalid, a student, penned in his journal-diary about the essentiality of including class participation in students’ formative evaluations:

_I think participation is very important; the teacher should give more grades to those who participate more in class. In the near future, we will be teachers of English, we need to break the ice and get used to speaking in front of people._

In reference to the feedback-response which students receive from their lecturers, student Norah, during her interview session, disapproved of receiving ineffective feedback-responses. She admonished that lecturers take greater care in the feedback-response endeavour:

_I need a caring teacher who is committed to his duties as a writing lecturer. I think it is only through writing practice that I can develop my writing skills. What should happen is that the writing teacher assigns some topics to us and then corrects them, not neglects them till the end of the course as usual, and then sets aside a lecture in which he highlights the most common mistakes that we have made. I am saying this because I want to learn from my mistakes._

In Nawal’s journal-diary, she offered a provocative possibility as regards feedback-response. She expounded:

_The teacher should assign a tutorial for each student once he corrects her essay. In this tutorial, the teacher could discuss what the student has written. We have different needs and I need to know what my points of weakness and my points of strength are. Thank God we are not like other developing countries in which there are many students in class with whom the teacher cannot cope. I think it just needs some organisation and effort on the part of the teacher on one hand and some_
follow-up from the administration before it is too late and we graduate as unqualified teachers of English.

This outcome illustrates that students should partake of ‘individual conferences’ wherein lecturers examine each student’s errors and directly recommend immediate and concrete corrective methods of constructive improvement.

In reference to the assessment of the institute lecturers’ performance, Mrs Nuha expressed a refreshingly forthright opinion:

_We lack a serious element in this programme. There is no follow up or real evaluation of the teachers’ performance. I know that there is an evaluation form that students fill in at the end of each semester; however, I don’t know what the administration does with the results. I don’t think anyone takes this form seriously. I am sure that there are many weak teachers who receive negative evaluation; however, no action has been taken towards them._

Attested by this researcher-writer’s personal involvement in the Emirati colleges and universities setting, the normative belief, which is held by the average Emirati student, is that no one is permitted to question a university lecturer regarding his/her academic presentation or classroom management style. Lecturers at this level of academia are averse to welcoming critique. They very well realise that there is no consequential evaluative authority over them. For this reason, it may be concluded that the UAE tertiary education is sorely longing for a meaningful evaluative mechanism for its professors and lecturers. Without such, we cannot rest assured that each professor or lecturer is sincerely performing to the best of his/her capabilities, and that the deepest learning, and most efficacious teaching, are routinely transpiring.
In summation, the evaluation and feedback-response mechanisms in the BELC, and entire English programme, garnered significant rebuke from the majority of student-participants in this study. Consequently, it is essential to scrutinise these criticisms, and to propose recommendations, in order to surmount the various programme debilities.

5.4.6 The Need for More Language Skills Courses

Data analysis substantiates that the current amount of BELC is insufficient, and that there is a considerable necessity for more courses. This recommendation was reiterated by nearly all participants. Yet, the participants’ proposals, regarding the manner in which the increase of courses might be achieved, varied significantly. There was no consensus. All three lecturer-interviewees recommended the addition of more than one course for each basic English language skill. Mr Samir highlighted:

> No, I don’t think the current courses are enough. I was one of the biggest callers for adding more conversation. We have only one conversation course. I asked for two conversation courses as well as two reading courses.

In response to another open-ended question, it was suggested that there be more than two courses. The reasoning was presented by the succeeding remark:

> I suggest having more classes for these skills courses. For example, Conversation 1, 2, 3; Reading 1, 2, 3 and so on. The current courses are not enough at all. That’s why a huge number of my friends attend special private afternoon courses to improve their English in writing, reading and conversation.

This result is demonstrative of the degree to which students are deficient in the foundational English skill sets. It may be concluded that an increment in the number of foundation courses
offered might prove beneficial. When queried about the reason for which there were so few such
courses, Mr Ahmad cautioned:

They are not enough, but the rules and regulations might not allow for more; as
there is no space or time to include more courses.

Mrs Nuha further suggested that if the addition of more courses was not feasible, then an augment
of the instructional hours of the current courses was obligatory. She argued:

Of course they [current teaching hours] are not enough. There should be more
hours in writing. You see, we have fewer hours in writing. They give them only
three hours of basic writing, which I think needs to be five hours. These types of
students join the department and they don’t even know what a sentence is. They
haven’t learned these things in public school. They just teach them vocabulary: fill
in the spaces, no writing. I don’t think there is any type of writing. That’s why I
believe more teaching hours are needed.

Another recommendation which most of the student-participants suggested was the necessity of a
distinct and separate grammar course. As demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter, the EFL
programme does not offer a separate grammar course. Grammar is instructed within the writing
course. As discussed previously, participants acknowledged multiple frustrations with English
grammar; therefore, the necessity for a distinct grammar course was strongly articulated by, among
others, Mr Samir:

I really emphasize the need for a grammar course. Most of them [students] are
used to just memorisation. They don’t know the difference between an adjective
and an adverb. What’s the difference between adjectives themselves and indirect
and direct speech?

Many students further declared the necessity of a grammar course. From his interview data,
Salim’s explanation was presented as follows:
I really wish that we had a grammar course before attending the writing course. We really need a grammar course. I have a friend who will graduate soon and will be a teacher of English, and she keeps saying that she is still very weak in grammar in spite of all the English classes that she attended in the institute. When I see the Major Sheet Courses, I noticed that it is full of courses related to literature and linguistics, which are not as important to us as grammar.

The necessity of a grammar course was elucidated by the bulk of the student-participants. It is primordial that students are matriculated in a grammar course, in addition to those courses which treat of the other fundamental language skills. Grammar is a vital element in each of the four fundamental language skills.

5.4.7 English as a Medium of Instruction

Data analysis uncovered that one of the explanations for the students’ mediocre English competency owes itself to their absence of meaningful exposure to the English language at their primary and secondary stages of education. Some student-participants expounded that English instructors in the UAE impart the English language through the medium of the Arabic language. Numerous studies have attested that a language is best instructed in that language itself for optimal results. The English language is no different in this respect. This opinion was magnified by the interview data of five students. A prototypical point of view was rendered by Maitha:

Sometimes I forget that I am in an English class, the teacher was teaching us most of the time in Arabic. I remember when the teacher first talked in English, many students complained that they didn’t understand what she was saying, so she decided to speak in Arabic.

Data analysis of the three questionnaires validated that respondents concurred partially that English was the medium of instruction in the BELC. These percentages appear in the succeeding sequence: (1) Writing, 65% concurred; (2) Reading, 62% concurred; (3) Conversation, 56% concurred.
Contrarily, in their interviews, the course lecturers underscored their ire with the paltry English exposure that students receive at the institute. The lecturers were also upset that English is not more often employed as a medium of instruction. Mrs Nuha declared:

_Here in the UAE, we don’t have remedial instruction. Everything is in Arabic. Even some of the teachers here speak Arabic, even though we are an English department. It isn’t effective for the students. I wish somebody would impose a rule that says, “As long as you are in this institute and this department, you should speak English”._

Mr Samir placed the responsibility on other lecturers who frequently speak to their students in the Arabic language, and who seldom engage the student body in the English language. He observed:

_All of the teachers have to speak in English with them [students]. If you speak to them for 45 or 50 minutes and they leave your class to go to the next class, e.g. ‘Introduction to Linguistics’ and the teacher of this class talks to them in Arabic, then it’s useless._

Some lecturers strictly prohibit the use of the Arabic language in class. Mrs Nuha elaborated on the method she practises in order to negotiate the speaking of Arabic in class:

_As long as they are inside the classroom, if anyone wants to talk to her friend or classmate, it has to be in English because otherwise she will be penalized and I’ll mark her down. They insist on speaking. Even if she cannot come up with the word, she uses her hands, with gestures, just to make sure that she can come up with something in English._

Students are not accustomed to hearing English. It is primordial to habituate them to speak, and thus to listen to, English when they are attending classes at, and present on, the institute campus. Lecturers, too, must be conscious of this goal so that they can participate in encouraging this endeavour. It is conceivable that lecturers of English are occasionally obliged to employ the Arabic language during English language classes, as they are at times confronted by student class populations with minimal English ability. Yet, lecturers need only to utilise Arabic when purveying instructions, and then solely if instructions in English are not comprehended after several
attempts. By lecturers exposing their students to more English, ultimately students’ English abilities will progress. The UAE Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education should additionally assume the responsibility of possibly imposing guidelines in order to inspire, and to oblige, lecturers of English to make exclusive use of the English language in classes. It may be necessary to be adamant with those lecturers who are remiss, and do not institute the English-only, at institute, guideline.

5.4.8 Teachers’ Professional Development

Professional development composes an essential component in the life of a lecturer. Upon being queried whether they were supplied with professional development opportunities, every lecturer retorted negatively. Some assigned the blame to the UAE Ministry of Education. Some lecturers declared that they had requested such opportunities. Mrs Nuha remarked:

*No, we don’t have training, nothing of this kind. I wish there was, but there isn’t. It depends on what your connections are. Sometimes the American embassy has these things back in the States. If you do have a connection, you can find out. Otherwise, nobody tells you. You have to look for them and spend most of your time on the internet trying to find them.*

When queried if they had sought out this preparation, she rejoined:

*I was hoping to go to the Minister of Education and present the idea of a centre for training the institute’s lecturers. This centre could teach them how to teach the language through different forms rather than books, like aesthetic education, through music and writing. However, no one is listening. That’s the problem here in The UAE. They are all following the old-fashioned way, the book from cover to cover and that’s it.*

Other lecturers blamed the lecturers. Mr Samir considers that lecturers must be afforded the time to freshen and to rejuvenate their repositories of knowledge in instructing these courses:
If you get your Master degree and you stay where you are, there is no point in your certificate. If this is your specialist area and your PhD, that’s fine. Otherwise, you have to update yourself with your own workshops, going to conferences, trying to be part of the British Council. They have lots of activities at the American embassy. I’ve been invited to a hearing this week.

Mr Ahmad addressed this issue, too:

*Teachers have to rely on themselves and train themselves because now the world is a small village. If you can get on the internet, you can access conferences and research findings. It depends. Like a student, a teacher is actually responsible for updating himself or herself.*

Attested by the analysis of this study’s data, some BELC lecturers suffer from a deficit of the skills required in order to instruct that programme’s courses. Surmounting lecturer debilities, whilst persuading them to invoke modern instructional practices, will demand further training and preparation.

**5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter synthesised data which had been collected from sources of diverse perspectives, based on the study’s research questions. Afterwards, descriptive and interpretive analyses of that data were realised. In areas wherein it was deemed appropriate, study results from the qualitative thematic content analysis were combined with the outcomes of the quantitative analysis. This was undertaken in order to exhibit the study findings in an integrated fashion and to eliminate redundancy.
Several circumstances were discovered to have impeded students from deriving the maximum advantage from the BELC program. These consisted of systemic debilities in the courses, as well as hardships confronted by Emirati students in their first year of tertiary education. Some of these hardships were described by the students, whilst others were pinpointed by the course lecturers. Students ascribed these handicaps to a particular group of causes, whilst lecturers assigned the same handicaps to other causes. These difficulties, and their explanations, will be addressed and evaluated with greater profundity in the succeeding ‘discussion’ section.
Chapter VI

Discussion of the Research Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the principal outcomes which resulted from the quantitative and qualitative analytic findings of this study. By utilising social constructivism as a theoretical point of departure, the succeeding investigation will be based on the premise that those who participate in learning acknowledge that ambient, social and emotive factors underpin learning. Enhancements to learning experiences and outcomes can be undertaken by assessing and analysing the quality of each factor.

The chapter is divided in two subsections. Subsection one treats of those results derived directly from this study-analysis, encompassing the physical condition of the study setting, results regarding the four focus-areas of the study. Subsection two will elaborate a broader examination of topics which emerged from this study-analysis.
SECTION ONE: Discussion of the Results of the Assessment

6.2 Physical Condition of the Study Setting

The surroundings and physical setting within which a language is studied effectuate a fundamental role in productive teaching and quality learning. Addressing the same matter, Brown (2001) argues that pedagogy and place are intrinsically linked. As reinforced by Hymes (1972), ‘the key to understanding language in context is to start not with language, but with context’ (cited in Kramsch, 1993, p.34). As a result, it proved vital for this study to look into the concrete ambience of this study site. Attention was given to describing the study setting, and to an assessment of the site’s quality. Many researchers have also illustrated the surroundings within which their programme assessment studies transpired. They, too, emphasised that a programme assessment study must always investigate, and deliberate upon, its social and institutional milieu (Yildiz, 2004; Cabatoff, 1996; Dulay et al., 1982).

Al-Enezi (2016) undertook a study seeking to find the relationship between building condition and student achievement in Kuwait. He argued that ethics, accountability, leadership style, power and knowledge influenced perceptions of the school building. These perceptions affected how maintenance staff carried out their duties. Kuwaiti Ministry of Education funding decisions played a critical role in facility maintenance. He found a positive relationship between performance and school building condition.
The data evaluated within this study have demonstrated that the edifices which compose the institute campus possessed of a limited amount of classrooms. Such dilapidated physical plant, with limited space, is deemed unsuitable for the copious number of students admitted to the institute every academic year. It has been given to understand that as a result of the location, the quantity of students whom the institute receives markedly exceeds its capacity to assimilate those students. The outcome of this decision is injurious to the quality of student experience whilst at the institute. It becomes obligatory to arrange student desks in martial-like rows because of restricted space. In turn, this impinges on the teaching approaches available to a lecturer. Carrier (2006) affirms that the introduction of novel instructional techniques, innovative ideas, and modern theories all require an amenable arrangement of physical space. In their monograph, Jago and Tanner (1999) assert that the ‘spaces and places’ of an academic setting will influence a student’s educational and affective frame of mind. The same was substantiated by a report published by Chan (1996) which pertained to the influence of the physical context on student mastery. His analysis lucidly accentuated that the orientation of an edifice can bring to bear a powerful impact on student learning. Chan underscored that instruction, too, can be significantly modified by the arrangement of the physical space.

Initially, it may seem unusual to remark upon physical conditions in a country such as the UAE, which is renowned for its opulent architecture and generalised affluence in all facets of life. This begets one to ruminate over the shallow sincerity of the UAE national leadership in areas of tertiary educational funding. It is timely to clarify that there exists few government-financed universities in the UAE. The upshot of the preceding observations advance the possibility that tertiary education is not a principal political concern in the UAE. This researcher-writer contends that the UAE
national leadership must invest more, in terms of public monies and personal interest, in founding a secure, healthy, nurturing, and meaningful educative environment for Emirati tertiary students.

Together with insufficient educative space for its student body, the dilemma of minimal funding is again made salient by other conditions at the institute. The results of this study make show that classrooms, too, are ill-equipped with instructional resources, such as electronic screens, overhead projectors, computers, auditory recorder tapes or televisions. These teaching aids, if available, must be reserved by lecturers beforehand. They are not consistently available for every lecturer, each class. It was additionally observed, based on the study findings, that there is a necessity of an auditory-lingual laboratory which will be utilised solely by the BELC. The incorporation of technology such as this will greatly augment the viability of the benefits to the classroom setting (Christie et al., 1996). Utilisation of, and exposure to, these instructional technologies will assist students in their language programme. Students will also become empowered to make use of the same technologies in their own professional careers upon graduation. This revelation further corroborates another analysis which was carried out in the neighbouring country of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 20 years ago, by Al-Dkheel (1992), who, whilst assessing a foundation programme for of adult learners, discovered that the physical context was also ill-suited. It was revealed that the edifices were incompatible with adult learners, and that there was a dearth of visual and auditory instructional resources as well.

This analysis further informed that institute library is not sufficiently well provisioned in order to furnish thorough academic services to all lecturers and students. Owing to numerous students, reading niches and carrels are too few. Book supplies are evaluated and renewed only on one
occasion each year. A further significant criticism of the institute library is that its hours of operation amount to fewer than six hours each day. This is considered inadequate for tertiary student usage. Plentiful scholarly research has demonstrated that meagre investment, scant and antiquated instructional technologies, as well as constrained library resources count amongst the multiple causations of mediocre student achievement. These realities encumber student learning possibilities (Legotlo et al., 2002; Manjunath & Mallinath, 2007; Oyewusi & Oyeboade, 2009).

A further disquieting testimony of the physical surroundings discovered that students are obliged to repose on the corridor floors, or in vacant classrooms, whilst awaiting their succeeding lecture. Provision of a voluminous, communal room, such as a student union, or multi-purpose refuge, coupled with an array of sport and cultural activities, will augment a feeling of community amongst the student body. It is instrumental to the educative process to develop affective qualities such as scholastic group identity, collegiate communality, and a simple sense of community belongingness amongst the student body. The affective experience which students live is as essential as the formal preparation which they receive. UAE national and college leaderships must be mindful to provide a productive ambience for students to derive maximum advantage from their tertiary educative encounter.

In sum, a consummate professional preparation of tertiary students must be accompanied by the provision of an ideal physical setting which encompasses relevant instructional resources, a well maintained physical plant, modern library materials and timely library services, as well as a comfortable, tranquil reading area. Each of these arenas is fundamental for refining student cognitive, cultural, and technical improvement (Ainley, 1987). It is advocated that UAE national
leaders and educational decision-makers remain cognizant that the physical setting, in which learning transpires, is of vital relevance. Copious academic research has soundly established that a well-cared for, tangible environment heightens student performance, inspiration, and academically meaningful, student-lecturer rapport (Loukas et al., 2006; Lackney, 1999).

It is recommended that the planners and decision makers at the Ministry of Education strive to cooperate with the Ministry of Finance to provide financial support to teacher education programmes. This may include building a new campus or renewing the current one, as well as providing the necessary resources and facilities for students and teachers of the institute.

6.3 Findings on the Four Focus-Areas of the Study

This section will consider the outcomes of the four principal focus-areas of the BELC. These consist of the following: goals and course learning objectives, content and materials, teaching and learning, and assessment and feedback.

6.3.1 Goals and Objectives

In accordance with Stake (2010), an assessment of educational programmes must embrace an investigation of their goals and course learning objectives. The analysis findings of the goals and course learning objectives divulged integral concerns and deficiencies. First, the objectives in the three focus-courses were decided upon by programme planners, devoid of lecturer input and student necessities. This policy stands in opposition to what educationalists and academic
researchers recommend. Expectedly, this exclusionary policy has provoked a series of consequences.

A principal consequence, and criticism, finds that the objectives over-emphasise skills already mastered at the pre-tertiary levels. A vast majority of the objectives dwell on the mechanics of writing, such as grammatical rules. In turn, the emphasis on grammar neglects other components of writing. As students have been previously drilled in grammar at the primary and secondary stages, a renewed emphasis on grammatical rules at college consumes student time, and results in great monotony. It is concluded, based on the revelations of this report, that the current ‘grammar-time’ will be better utilised to instruct students in new writing skills. This result is almost identical to Kamil’s (2011), who carried out an investigation at Kuwait University which addressed the outlooks of Kuwaiti English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students toward EFL writing. She informs that ‘it is clear that the descriptions and the objectives of the two EFL writing courses of the participants emphasise teaching EFL grammatical characteristics’ (Kamil, 2011, p.232). One explanation for a renewed grammar focus at college will be noticed in the feedback of a writing course lecturer. This lecturer declared that college students still remain grossly deficient in grammar and sentence structure. Re-accentuating grammar may prove beneficial and necessary for students to possess a modicum of ability to compose coherent English sentences.

In accordance with Nunan (1992, p.192), one of the obligations of an assessor is to detect the ‘objectives that appear to be misguided or unrealistic (for example, the objective in a writing program of having foreign students attain the same proficiency level as native speakers)’. These outcomes evince that programme planners are unrealistic when determining the course learning
objectives. They demand that too many objectives be realised in too little time. This oversight was especially salient in the conversation course. Perhaps it formed one of the reasons for which the lecturer roundly neglected those objectives which appertained to listening skills.

It has been additionally revealed that some objectives contravene the overall intent of the course. The general thrust of the writing course is to ‘help students – not only to communicate in writing – but also to learn’ (English [Language] Programme Handbook, 2010: 20). It has been questioned whether this aspiration can be consummated because the objectives so wholly emphasise grammar and mechanics.

The conclusions also expose an incongruence between the writing course lecturer’s opinions, and his students’ points of view, as regards the realisation of the course objectives. The lecturer believes that he has accomplished the goals and objectives of the course. However, students confirmed a contrary point of view. They declare that solely writing mechanics were instructed in the writing course. There could exist multiple explanations for such incongruence. Perhaps some objectives were not plainly explained. Ediger (2000) admonishes that it is incumbent to proclaim every objective distinctly, so that lecturers and students specifically comprehend the skills to be mastered.

One reading course lecturer achieved the bulk of the objectives. Yet it was discovered that two other lecturers either disregarded some objectives, or were not able to realise them. This also proved to be the situation in the writing course, in which the lecturer did not address some objectives such as ‘writing different forms of letters’. To reiterate, in the conversation course, the ‘listening skills’ objectives were not heeded.
This calls into question the relevance of programme course learning objectives which are not adhered to. It also bespeaks an absence of responsibility on the part of course lecturers. It would seem that they are neither responsible for their classroom presentation, nor accomplishing the requisite objectives. This quandary has been recognised in international research monographs, and has provoked the demand of the greater responsibility for tertiary lecturers as regards their classroom performances (Ramsden, 1991; Wilson et al., 1997; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1998; Ballantyne et al., 2000).

Many evaluation studies have been carried out to investigate the goals and objectives of a particular programme. For instance, Erozan (2015) conducted an evaluation of the language improvement courses in the pre-service English teacher education programme in a Turkish university. In her evaluation, the adapted version of Bellon & Handler’s (1982) curriculum evaluation model was employed. The participants in the study were six lecturers teaching the language improvement courses and students enrolled in these courses. The data, both qualitative and quantitative, were collected through course evaluation questionnaires for students, interviews with students and their teachers, classroom observations, and examination of relevant written documents. The study looked into different aspects of the courses, including the goals and objectives. The results revealed that the language improvement courses were generally effective. Although some of the courses’ objectives were achieved, students and teachers expressed negative views towards others, branding them as unrealistic and not addressing students’ needs. One of the strongest elements of Erozan’s (2015) study was the variety of methods used, which helped in increasing the reliability of the findin
In total, the BELC learning objectives necessitate a re-editing. Some objectives are not understood by the lecturers, who are then uncertain as regards the manner of satisfying those objectives. Other objectives do not advance student knowledge. The engagement of lecturers and students when determining course objectives is considered essential. As underscored by Scriven (1972), ‘the predetermined goals might be inappropriate or insufficient for the students [and teachers]’ (cited in Gredler, 1996, p.53). Moreover, the classroom experience, as attested by lecturers and students, divulged a different outcome from that which was published in the BELC course learning objectives. The dilemma can be found in the application of the objectives. Some lecturers are not applying, in praxis, those course learning objectives which, in theory, are mandated.

It is recommended that teachers should be given more authority in planning and designing their courses. Besides that it is important to set the goals and objectives, select content and materials, and decide on specific teaching methods and assessment procedures based on the needs and expectations of the students and the teachers in the English Department.

6.3.2 Content and Materials

The findings regarding the content and materials utilised by BELC lecturers highlighted several crucial topics in need of attention. The literature review connotes that course content is a determining factor in student learning. Whilst conversation course students testified that the themes which they broached were intriguing, students in the reading and writing courses informed that their titles were monotonous and disengaging. The latter observation might insinuate that the titles
of the reading and writing courses either do not coincide with student preferences, or they are ill-suited for student ability levels. This researcher-writer holds that an explanation for the latter dilemma owes itself to not soliciting student input as regards the selection of course instructional materials. This shortcoming points up the usefulness of a needs analysis. When Kikuchi & Apple (2006) carried out needs analysis research, the research validated that requesting student opinions permitted lecturers to ascertain student preferences. This data then allowed a determination of whether lecturer and student opinions coincided. The research discovered that students acknowledged greater contentment, and were inclined to engage more attentively, when their desires and necessities were solicited and debated, with the purpose of having those desires and necessities met by the faculty.

Unlike the reading and writing courses, the conversation course topics, selected by the lecturer were relevant to the students, such as Emirati weddings and general traditions. Such titles proved fruitful in cultivating student attention. This might corroborate that a lecturer’s adroitness in the selection of course material animates students to partake of their courses more affirmatively. Most students surveyed in this study desired to select their own themed-materials for all four basic language skills courses.

The writing course students assured that their paragraph and essay composition would enjoy much increased quality if they possessed the possibility of selecting their own themes. A majority of students voiced a desire for ownership over their learning process. They expounded a preference to compose and to converse about their prior life events, to articulate their sentiments, and to explain their hobbies. Although the writing course lecturer blamed the students for being
lackadaisical and inert when bestowed the availability to select their own themes, more than fifty percent of the writing course students intimated that their lecturer(s) determined course activities almost entirely. This evinces that the lecturer is a dominator rather than an arbitrator. This outcome affirms the results of Kamil’s (2011) study, referenced previously. She discovered that EFL students did not possess any decision as regards the themes which they would study. Hyland propounds that ‘L2 writing teachers base their writing courses on topics students select themselves’ (2011, p.15).

In spite of the discrepancy between the questionnaire outcomes and the interview results, the conversation course lecturer was more receptive and tolerant of student needs and preferences. The reader is requested to recognise that the principal asset of affording students the opportunity of selecting their own themes to compose on, or to converse about, is that it grants a heightened sense of ownership which, in turn, augments effort and creativity, foments greater assimilation of long-term knowledge, and enhances the quality of the four language skills.

6.3.2.1 Inappropriate Selection of Textbooks

Textbooks are an essential component of EFL programmes (McGrath, 2006). Upon selecting a course textbook, a lecturer must be cognizant that the textbook ‘generally serve[s] as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom’ (Richards, 2001: 251). Thus, a studied selection of the best available textbook and materials is obligatory for achieving a curriculum’s goals and objectives (ibidem [ibid.]). This study’s findings unearthed grave shortcomings in the entire BELC textbook selection process. The writing course
is dependent on an antiquated, 1983 textbook edition. For this reason, there is a pronounced incongruence between the textbook objectives and the course learning objectives. The out-dated textbook institutes the problem-solving approach to writing, yet this methodology does not constitute a goal or current course learning objective. It is surmised that the lecturer’s textbook decision does not rest on any systemic analysis. In accordance with Brewster et al. (2002), the goals and objectives of a course textbook should complement the goals and objectives of the course. Lecturers are required to bear in mind that all the components in a course should liaise and not contravene each other. McGrath (2002, p.217) declares that ‘in a carefully designed approach to language teaching we might expect a high degree of consistency between aims, objectives, syllabus, materials and method’.

The writing course lecturer exhibits confidence that his textbook selection proved correct. He is equally self-assured of his acumen to adapt the textbook to his students’ proficiency level and concerns. Contrarily, the reading course lecturer intimated that she is disgruntled with her textbook selection, and regards the reading textbook as inadequate. Perhaps this unveils that the reading course lecturer is forthright in confessing her misgivings, and is opened to a new textbook selection in future. Perhaps the writing course lecturer does not have this disposition.

The essentiality of the reading course textbook gave rise to another BELC dispute. Although the reading course students bemoaned the textbook as monotonous and beneath their ability level, the lecturer showed decided desire to the textbook, although it contained a markedly reduced number of topics. It may be construed that the reading course lecturer discounts other reading materials, such as Internet-based reading resources. The reader is requested to be apprised that the application
of technology as an instructional aid is proven efficacious in attracting student attention and motivating their participation (Dokur, 2008).

The BELC content and materials harbour crucial debilities which demand attention. One of the most consistent student recommendations was that they be permitted to select topics and titles. It may be thus discerned that lecturers do not grant students sufficient liberty of choice in this area. Scholarly literature theorises that as lecturers decide upon course content, they frequently over-confide in their own judgments, rather than on studied surveys of learner necessities (Barkhuizen 1998; Spratt 1999). It is hence propounded that as lecturers determine course content, they undertake assessments to guarantee ‘that careful selection is made and that the materials selected closely reflect the aims, methods, and values of the teaching program’ (Cunningsworth, 1995, p.7).

It is recommended that a grammar course be established which could then be included in the BELC. Teachers of the writing course were hugely critical of students’ weakness in grammar which, in turn, obliges them to focus on improving this aspect in their writing course. Therefore, a dedicated grammar course would be beneficial for both students and teachers.

6.3.3 Teaching and Learning

BELC teaching and learning procedures lay bare several crucial revelations. Excluding the conversation course, in which students were decidedly content with the lecturer’s instructional style, one broadly lamented trait in the remaining courses was that lecturers usurped absolute course control, and devolved no liberty onto students so that the latter could more fully participate
in class. The great bulk of class sessions were instructor-centric, wherein the lecturer thoroughly prevailed throughout all classroom speech. This is a routine occurrence in the traditional UAE educational setting. In a study administered by Al-Nouh (2008, p.172), she concludes that:

*The general impression one gets from EFL classrooms in the UAE, based on classroom observation as well as the examination of textbook/materials and assessment, is that they are teacher-centred and form-focused.*

The extensive domination that some lecturers exert over their courses has also been observed in neighbouring countries. Al-Khwaiter (2001) encountered nearly identical outcomes in his analysis of 18 Qatari classrooms. He discovered that teachers wholly dominated their respective classroom, albeit indirectly, through incessant and persistent questioning throughout entire classroom exercises and tasks. His conclusions unmasked that the routine method of EFL interaction in the EFL Qatari classroom was pronouncedly teacher-centric.

In spite of their assertions that they are opposed to instructor-centricity, the classroom behaviours of lecturers often attest the contrary. Al-Mutawa (1997: 39) provides a logical reason: ‘Teachers tend to be eclectic, employing an approach which is more influenced by their personal experience than by the established methods of Foreign Language (FL) teaching’. This elucidates the manner in which EFL students may be swayed by the instructional techniques that their lecturers employ. Students then assimilate those instructional techniques, and carry those techniques with themselves to their future teaching assignments.
It currently remains, however, unrealistic to implement a learner-centric model of teaching in the UAE because the traditional, instructor-centric model has been employed so pervasively during so many years. It is proposed that BELC lecturers attempt to achieve an equilibrium in their instructional techniques between the instructor-centric and learner-centric teaching styles. Lecturers are entreated to remain cognizant that though the instructor-centric method forges a more organised class, it is unlikely to render the students more fluent interlocutors in their second language (L2). As Brewster et al. recommended, ‘teachers need to create a balance in their classrooms between providing support and providing a challenge. If all language work is over-guided then it becomes too easy, safe or repetitive’ (2004, p.40). When counterbalancing instructor-centric and learner-centric approaches, students will ‘have a chance to work on tasks in order to engage in organized talk with each other, that is, to use language in a less controlled, more creative way’ (ibid., p.41).

6.3.3.1 Teaching Grammar as Writing

An additional concern of significant import arose in the writing course. The writing course lecturer instructs writing in terms of syntax, punctuation, and orthography. Such methodology affects his instructional focus. Although mechanics and grammar are essential components of writing, a writing course must target other skills of composition. The instruction of EFL writing should not be confined to formal linguistic knowledge. Harmer (2001) proposes that writing students engage in more than syntax and lexicon: the argumentation of opinions, the organisation of ideas in comprehensible sentences, the layout and arrangement of coherently sequenced paragraphs, are equally essential to effective writing. Harmer proposes an array of instructional writing techniques:
the genre-based method, creative composition such as poetry, stories, and plays; cooperative-group writing, and computer-assisted writing which utilises computer programmes. Truscott (1996, 1999, 2004) also advocates against dwelling on grammatical errors. He holds that excessive grammatical revision is unproductive in the development of student writing, and should be expunged from curricula and methodologies. The outcomes of this study also corroborated Truscott’s (1996, 1999, 2004) contention that grammar instruction does not promote student writing fluency. It was demonstrated that students lacked the confidence to write fluently in English, as well as the skills to compose sentences or paragraphs well. In this study, it was concluded that the writing course lecturer’s excessive emphasis on grammar jeopardised the implementation of other well-founded instructional writing techniques.

The principal obstacle can be found in a misunderstanding that BELC lecturers suffer. Lecturers obfuscate the practical development of English with the theoretical development of English. Lecturers are perplexed between the concrete, daily use of English in order to live one’s life, and academic knowledge about English as a school subject. There exists a dichotomy between knowing English, and knowing about English (Luchini, 2004; Bartles, 1999). Such confusion encapsulates the student observation of their writing course lecturer. This lecturer instructs on the manner in which an English sentence is structured. Yet the student body yearns to use and to practise English as native-speakers use it; that is, in order to live their lives, not to sit examinations. It is this latter point which constitutes the principal writing course learning objective. This quandary re-validates Cullen’s theory that too often English language courses comprise the study of grammatical and phonological structure, and focus on student comprehension of how English works, but not how English is made use of in real-life circumstances (1994). This reasoning does
not contend that other language programme components, such as scholarly linguistics, are without merit, and should be eliminated from EFL programmes. In fact, Halliday (1982, p.13) propounds: ‘A linguistics course for is fundamental. But I don’t think it should be a sort of watered down academic linguistic course. It should be something new, designed and worked out by linguists and teachers together’ (cited in Van Lier 1995, p.108).

A scholarly linguistics component can prove beneficial for language acquisition when directed at developing one’s prowess at utilising English in real-life communicative circumstances. For some learners, comprehending how language works may fortify their proficiency (Wright & Bolitho, 1993).

6.3.3.2 Genre Writing Approach

This study’s findings demonstrated that the writing course lecturer is not well versed as regards the genre-approach of instructing writing. Although it is one of the writing course learning objectives, the lecturer does not solicit that his students compose in varied styles of writing. This may suggest that the lecturer does not possess the knowledge to teach the genre-approach. Genre writing is ‘[a] socially recognised way of using language’ (Hyland, 2007, p.149). The genre-approach is correctly employed by studying, analysing, summarising, and combining a variety of writing styles (Silva & Matsuda, 2002). Such instructional approach affords an immeasurable source to assist students in composing effective, practical English texts.
Another criticism that merits mention is that the writing course lecturer belabours grammatical rules out-of-context. Students attested that the writing course lecturer instructed on grammatical activities without placing them in a meaningful, learnable setting. This has prompted students to memorise grammatical rules without comprehending the manner in which to apply them correctly. The excessive targeting of grammatical mistakes constitutes a missed opportunity in forging student awareness of different English writing genres. Students become more preoccupied about grammatical errors than the communicative process of committing their ideas to paper. Higher order cerebral processes such as brainstorming to foment novel ideas, and organising argumentation, are lost. Weigle (2002) spotlights that students must be tangibly instructed in the methods of holistically working with language because writing is not an isolated, individual endeavour, but a sociological and cultural act. This researcher-writer believes that grammatical rules are best instructed slowly, and liaised with an exploration of real-life writing genres.

Hyland remarks that ‘in genre teaching, grammar is integrated into exploration of texts and contexts rather than taught as a discrete component’ (2007, p.153). Hyland holds that student classroom writing must be conjoined to the native-speakers’ real world outside school. He elucidates that the writing genre- approach ‘is largely a response to changing views of discourse, and of learning to write in ways which incorporate better understandings of how language is structured in order to achieve social purposes in particular contexts of use’ (Hyland, 2007, p.148). Lecturers are implored to recognise that writing is socially derived, and the instruction of grammatical rules isolatedly will not inspire or impel EFL students to communicate better through writing.
It has again been posited that a teacher’s future teaching practice is enormously influenced by that teacher’s earlier, adverse, educative experiences. In a cyclical process, future teachers later employ the content and methods to which they have been exposed. What today’s teachers-to-be have acquired, favourable or unfavourable, they inherit, and later bestow onto new EFL students. Negative experiences, stultifying practices, and outmoded, disproven approaches are reiterated, and again passed on to future EFL students.

6.3.3.3 Lack of Practice and Limited Use of Technological Teaching Aids

Students commented that the opportunity to practise and to rehearse language skills was absent from their classrooms. The writing course data evinced the same critique. Students affirmed that the lecturer consumed class-time profligately by elaborating on topics that were not germane to the course. In contrast, the conversation course data verified that the practice of skills via a variety of exercises and tasks is a proven component in augmenting student language ability. This viewpoint is substantiated by Harmer (1991, p.39), who signals the essentiality of drilling exercises and tasks:

It certainly seems that the use of tasks and the provision of a lot of comprehensible input will help our students in a lot of ways. The former will allow students to activate their knowledge and the latter will help to provide them with a rich language store.

The study outcomes also exposed that neither students nor lecturers used any technological instructional aids. The whiteboard was relied upon almost exclusively. English language lecturers neglect the utilisation of technological instructional aids despite the relevance and vitality of
educational technology. The literature review illustrates the advantageousness of technological instructional aids. Devlin & Samarawickrema (2010) propose that productive instruction in tertiary education is liaised to technological advances. It is expected that lecturers in language preparation programmes incorporate technology and be vigilant for technological advances. Due to the complexity and rapid modernisation of technological instructional aids, lecturers require plentiful training in the effective use of such aids so that technology can meaningfully augment the classroom (Milton, 2002). The latter advice is not implemented in the UAE. Tertiary institutions purchase and install technological instructional aids, yet many lecturers confront difficulties in assimilating them into the pedagogic programme. This was verified by Alharbi (2012), whose study sought to discover the utility of Information Communication Technology (ICT) within the Saudi classroom. Her study revealed that teachers were deficient in ICT training, and thus, employed ICT only marginally. It can be described that the authorities deem that the physical presence of such aids will automatically ameliorate student learning. Yet, technological instructional aids do not magically register a favourable effect. Their impact on pedagogic outcomes rests on the manner in which they are consistently well employed. Emirati teachers often apply technological instructional aids in order to impart the same content, in the same manner, as before. Teaching methods and learning outcomes do not necessarily progress (Ehrmann, 1995). In corroboration of this point of view, Christie et al. (1996) assert that a technological resource does not append an improved outcome to teacher productivity, unless the teacher’s knowledge base is fused with the technology. Only through this fusion is the technology permitted to enhance the teacher and students.

Teachers need to realise that students have different learning styles and should be encouraged to differentiate their teaching methods to meet students’ needs. Furthermore, teachers should make
use of technological teaching aids, as these can help attract students’ attention and increase their understanding of the subject.

6.3.4 Evaluative Assessment and Feedback-Response

Though the student body is not allowed input regarding course measurement standards and evaluation, students highlighted pressing problems with the evaluative approaches of the English Language Programme. The greater part of the student body articulated acerbic criticisms appertaining to BELC evaluative assessment and feedback-response. These were roundly critiqued to be amongst most undesirable features confronted at the college. This study’s outcomes illustrate that the overall evaluative mindset of the lecturers is traditional. This mindset concentrates on a final examination that measures information recalled from memory. Resting on this researcher-writer’s intimate, long-term familiarity with the UAE education, the measurement of rotely-memorised material composes a regrettably accurate portrait of the UAE evaluative approaches. This revelation was confirmed by Kamil (2011) in her monograph of Kuwaiti EFL foundation student opinions of EFL writing courses. Her data unveiled that all EFL writing course lecturers evaluate student writing via traditional marking and examinations. Reflecting the results of this study, Kamil (2011) also related that students were discontent regarding the practices used to evaluate their written composition. The student body would have preferred to enjoy a greater variety of assessment. Hyland accentuates:

*Writing assessment is not simply a matter of setting exams and giving grades. Scores and evaluative feedback contribute enormously to the learning of individual students and to the development of an effective and responsive writing course ...*
understanding of assessment procedures is necessary to ensure that teaching is having the desired impact and that students are being judged fairly (2003, p.212).

The literature review demonstrates that there exists a distinction between testing and assessment. Whilst traditional measurement methods remain of value in EFL, other evaluative approaches may perform an essential part. Students must not exclusively be measured at the ends of pedagogic cycles. Students must be evaluated on a steady, periodic schedule, throughout a course, via the utilisation of a variety of evaluative techniques.

Students must be granted more autonomy in their learning processes. Practices such as self-evaluation and archival portfolios are provenly well suited to measure student learning achievements in autonomous learning contexts (Benson, 2006; Morrison, 2005). Peer-evaluation also assists student development of life skills such as responsibility, metacognitive abilities, and self-evaluative attributes for future workplace environs (Mok, 2010). Lecturers must renovate their knowledge repositories of student evaluative practices, and put into play a myriad of measurement methodologies.

Fairness is a contentious BELC concern. This study’s findings establish that a majority of the student body reprimanded their lecturers due to an unjust final course mark. This outcome corresponds to prior EFL research pertaining to evaluation. A study of EFL students in College of Business by Al-Bazzaz (1994) exposed that the evaluative method utilised by the English Language Department was undependable. The same finding was corroborated by Al-Edwani (2005) who analysed the reasons for obstacles in the learning of EFL by foundation students. She revealed that students were again disgruntled with the evaluative methods that lecturers employed. Despite the
data and recommendations of the former monographs, no improvement has been effectuated. The belief of this researcher-writer holds that the national authorities and collegiate decision-makers share the responsibility for modernising tertiary evaluative methods. Multiple measurements of student achievement will assure that examination and final marks constitute a just and accurate indicator of student abilities.

Various feedback-response techniques were employed by the BELC lecturers. These encompassed corrective, constructive, and discovery-based feedback responses. Some students were critical of their feedback-responses because these were received tardy. In Chapter III, Scheeler & Lee (2002, p.232) declared that the punctuality of feedback-response is vital:

"Precise, immediate, and frequent feedback increases efficacy and efficiency of learning in school aged students. If feedback is delayed, it allows learners to practice errors, especially in the acquisition phase of learning and when learners are allowed to repeat errors, they learn to perform skills incorrectly."

L2 mastery is rendered excessively onerous if one is not meaningfully apprised of one’s accuracies and inaccuracies via timely feedback-response. In point of fact, ‘current thinking appears to favour the idea that in languages, correction and encouragement are crucial to success’ (Steinberg, in Milton, 2002, p.12). Lecturers must remain vigilant of the value of prompt feedback- response. They must also employ the feedback-response that best corresponds to student linguistic necessities and ability levels. Hyland (2003) propounds that lecturer feedback should not be disseminated solely for evaluation, but for, and throughout, the ungraded learning process. Nation supplements that ‘learners should receive helpful feedback which will allow them to improve the quality of their language use’ (1996, p.34).
It is recommended that various different assessment tools be considered, so the results reflect the actual ability or knowledge of the students. Many students complained about the unfair final grades they received. Using different assessment tools will help eliminate such disadvantage.
Chapter VII

Conclusions, Implications and Contributions

7.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the outcomes of the current research and proffers final remarks and conclusions. It also presents the ramifications which originate from the current study, and sets forth its theoretical and pedagogical contributions to knowledge. The chapter concludes by suggesting possible future research.

7.2 Summary of the Research Findings

The current study’s research was effectuated at the Foundation Programme (FP) in an educational institute in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The primary focus was to evaluate the Basic English Language Courses (BELC), which is comprised by reading, writing, and conversation courses, with the purpose of improving it. This was accomplished by eliciting students’ and teachers’ viewpoints on the BELC, and formally disclosing their recommendations of improvement. The quantitative and qualitative data analysis also exhibited insightful findings.

The current study’s findings of the institute site and learning ambiences expose significant shortcomings in the physical surroundings. These include antiquated buildings, a limited number of classrooms, shortages in learning and teaching resources and facilities, insufficient library resources, and the lack of a communal space (student union) for student free time. These conditions
evince an inadequate physical environment at the institute. This adversely affects student learning experiences in the English Programme (Jago & Tanner, 1999; Brown, 2001).

With regard to the BELC goals and objectives, the current study’s findings also unearthed critical issues necessitous of revision. Some goals and objectives were not lucidly stated. This rendered them difficult for lecturers to comprehend. Others dwelt too heavily on skills which had already been taught at student primary and secondary school levels. Thus, they did not enhance the student knowledge. Finally, some course goals and objectives were not achieved by the lecturers, which may indicate that they were unreasonable or merely perfunctory.

The current study’s findings disclose student dissatisfaction with course content and instructional materials. Students reported that the course content topics were uninteresting or unchallenging. Students also related a preference for selecting course content topics of their own interest. Some of the textbooks employed by the lecturers possessed salient flaws. Some textbooks were obsolete and others were showly mismatched for the goals and objectives of the course.

BELC teaching and learning practices unmasked a variety of critical findings. One contention was the lecturer-centred approach which was overly applied by the staff. Solely lecturers commanded within classrooms. Such diktat left no opportunity for students to have their say. Teaching in the writing course was heavily concentrated on the mechanics of writing, such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Other useful writing forms, such as the genre-writing approach, were ignored. Students readily rued their dearth of authentic writing practice, as well as the absence of technological learning devices.
The current study’s findings also pointed up salient concerns appertaining to feedback and evaluation. Students bewailed the arcane assessment methodology adhered to by their lecturers. These relied on a single, final examination of rote-learnt content. Such evaluative philosophy, students believe, conduces to an increase in test-taking anxiety. Consequently, students receive an unjust final mark, which does not reflect their actual skills. Some students were also discontent with the delayed feedback which they received on their academic work.

The current study’s data unearthed additional drawbacks which contribute to the previously mentioned shortcomings. These encompass criticisms of instructional methods of BELC lecturers. Irrelevant teaching qualifications, and a deficit of professional development, were discovered to be amongst the possible reasons for the unenergetic teaching methods of many BELC lecturers. Findings divulged that some lecturers held derogatory attitudes towards students, opining of them as academically stunted, passive, or unmotivated. Learning shortfalls, too, were unveiled to be affecting student experiences in the (FP).

7.3 Implications of the Study

The current study’s key findings hold ramifications for policy, as well as practice, with respect to the English preparation programme in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The specific BELC dilemmas, and the programme in general, necessitate due consideration. The proposals rendered by the current study derive from the actual programme users; that is, students and lecturers. Other advice originates from interpretations of the current study’s outcomes, as well as from scholarly literature. The implications of the current study are partitioned in two sections: 1) consequences
arising from the current evaluation; and 2) repercussions arising from broader concerns which pertain to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programmes.

7.3.1 Consequences arising from the current evaluation

This section lays out consequences which were raised directly by the current evaluation study. These are organised according to that study’s relation to different stakeholders as follows:

Implications for planners and decision makers:

• It was found that the physical environment of the institute site is in profound need of improvement. It is recommended that the planners and decision makers at the UAE Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education strive to cooperate with the Ministry of Finance in order to provide financial support for English preparation programmes in general and the BELC in FP at the educational institute in particular. This may call for the construction of a new campus, or the renovation of the current one, as well as provision for the necessary resources and facilities for students and lecturers of the institute.

• Lecturers in EFL programmes must be granted greater authority in planning and designing their courses. According to Troudi (2007, p.6), ‘Teachers are often excluded from educational policy and play an insignificant role in decision-making’. McKernan concurs, pointing out that ‘many crucial decision-makers demand the acknowledgment that the teacher, as a professional, at whatever level of the educational system, has a role to play in curriculum decisions, inquiry and improvement’ (2008: 6). As Carroll (2007: 6) attests, ‘If managers of top-down curriculum changes
recognize teachers’ crucial role in implementation, they must take responsibility for supporting teachers through implementation by listening to and acting on their concerns.

• It is proposed that the entrance test sat by students prior to admission be reviewed and revised. It was found that the test is inadequate. It is blamed for inaccurately portraying student proficiency levels, thus allowing weak students into the programme. It is advised that the admission assessment procedure incorporate oral interviews, a listening comprehension test, and other types of examinations which will ensure that only capable and enthusiastic students are matriculated in this field of study.

• Effectuating a needs analysis should compose the first stage in the design, or re-design, of all, and any, language enhancement courses (Brown, 1995; Graves, 2001). It is imperative to establish goals and objectives, to select course content and instructional materials, and to decide on particular teaching approaches and assessments, based on the necessities and expectations of the students and the lecturers in the FP.

• Lecturers in the UAE context do not approve of observing one another in the process of teaching, despite the proven value of peer observation (Sabuncuoğlu, 2006). It is incumbent on the FP administrators to augment team spirit amongst lecturers and to heighten their collaboration.

• The institute is in need of an efficacious evaluative mechanism for lecturers, without which it is impossible to ensure that lecturers are realising their best efforts, and that rigorous academics are taking place.
• It is strongly suggested that a mechanism for lecturer professional development be effectuated. In order to retain a high-quality lecturing staff so that teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and competencies, it behooves administrators to provide a coherent process of continuous, professional development, thus maintaining lecturers up-to-date with the required skills of a knowledge-based society (Menon et al., 2007).

• There is a dire need for more BELC language improvement component courses. Students, as well as lecturers, bemoaned the insufficient number of BELC language improvement component courses. The FP administrators insist that they cannot increase the number of these courses due to the limited time allotted to the overall English programme. However, this issue could be solved by reducing other courses, which are considered by many students as irrelevant and non-beneficial. This has been previously proposed by many educationalists (see Brickel & Paul, 1981; Morain, 1990).

• It is also propounded that a grammar course be incorporated in the BELC. Lecturers of the writing course were roundly critical of student weaknesses in grammar which, in turn, oblige faculty to focus on improving grammar at the expense of more advanced writing topics. Hence, a separate course, exclusively dedicated to grammar, would prove beneficial to both students and lecturers.

• The current study evinces that Emirati students are not academically well advised about what to expect in an English programme. Consequently, many of them were taken aback that the programme is very challenging. As a result, they wish that they had not joined it. Therefore, it is proposed that student transition to the university first be supported by higher colleges. This can be
augmented by hosting orientational workshops before university registration and admission for new, tertiary-bound, secondary school graduates; or by assigning academic advisers to newly arriving applicants.

• Another consideration for Emirati academia and policy makers is the suggested evaluation approach which was applied in the current study. Although many evaluation model and approaches are commonly employed in many institutions around the world, the Eclectic Approach that the researcher utilised has not been utilised in previous Emirati educational evaluative studies. Therefore, Emirati policy makers are encouraged to apply such an approach in their evaluative studies. It has proven useful in providing valuable data about different programme stakeholders, and their views about many aspects of those programmes. Such data can be beneficial when designing a new programme, or amending existing ones.

**Implications for teachers:**

• Classroom practices in the BELC demonstrated that there was a large chasm between theory and practice. For instance, the writing course lecturer focused on teaching the form of the English language and the writing product, whilst the skills and processes of English writing were afforded scant attention. In the conversation course, objectives related to listening skills were almost entirely neglected in classroom practice. Thus, a mechanism should be instituted in order to establish whether lecturers are achieving their goals and objectives.
• The current study pointed up difficulties which arise from the instruction methods employed by many lecturers. Lecturers tend to depend heavily on a lecturer-centred, didactic approach, and neglect other pedagogic methods. Lecturers must realise that students have different learning styles. Thus, lecturers should be encouraged to differentiate their instructional methods in order to meet varied student needs. Furthermore, lecturers should make use of technological teaching aids, as these can assist in capturing student attention, and augmenting their comprehension of the subject matter.

• More practice, and classroom activities, are recommended. BELC classes were determined to be lacking in the element of practice, which is crucial in helping students improve their English fluency. In addition, students repeatedly asked that they be given the opportunity to make presentations in the classroom in order to increase their self-confidence when speaking publicly and teaching in the future.

• It is urged that varied assessment tools be considered, so that testing results reflect the actual ability and knowledge levels of the students. Many students lamented the unfair final marks which they received. Using different assessment tools will help eliminate such unfairness and disadvantage by measuring students more holistically.
**Implications for students:**

- The current study informed that many Emirati students tend to blame other stakeholders in their study programme for their own low English proficiency level. However, it seems that some students are not exerting sufficient effort in improving their English proficiency. For example, the current study exposed that Emirati students rarely read in English in their free time. It is recommended, therefore, that students search out free-time, academic pursuits which are suitable to them. A wise, leisurely, academic use of their free time, may make students more proficient in English.

- One of the implications of the current study is that students need to re-think their mentality of being so completely dependent on their school and lecturers throughout their education. This researcher and writer believes that students should assume greater responsibility for improving their own learning, and that they should behave more independently by self-creating more opportunities for learning.

**Implications relevant to different EFL stakeholders:**

- The assessment of student performance in the FP is usually considered as the sole, end product of a process. Assessment should be treated as ‘the reflection of an ongoing process which, if carefully controlled, would assure a more reliable final product’ (Gimenéz, 1996, p.233). Because of this, Emirati students tend to believe that the only purpose of attending school is to pass examinations. They see examination success as their ultimate objective, and pay only slight attention to the love of learning and a sincere acquisition of knowledge. Administrators and
lecturers have the responsibility to modernise this mindset by applying a continuous, holistic assessment method throughout the entire semester. This may eliminate the focus and infatuation of a single examination, and return schooling to the love of profoundly acquiring, and creatively applying, knowledge.

- Course content should be scrutinised more thoroughly. The current study made evident that students found the course content uninteresting and irrelevant. Much course content also ignored local, Emirati culture. The majority of students pine to be given the opportunity to select course topics and language exercises which are relevant to their own interests. Hence, it is advised that course content be revised in accordance with student necessities and preferences.

- Instructional materials, such as textbooks, used by BELC lecturers, were much criticised. It is proposed that these materials be re-evaluated in order to ascertain whether they concur with student needs and preferences, as well as the goals and objectives of the BELCs (Khafaji, 2004, cited in Abu-Rizaizah, 2010, p.164).

### 7.4 Contributions of the Study:

The current study contributes to the knowledge of language programme evaluation from sundry perspectives. First, it fills a vacuum in the scholarly literature of language programme evaluation by specifically addressing the Emirati educational context. The current study is one of the important educational evaluation studies that effectuated in the UAE which evaluates the EFL programme. Hence, not only is the current study useful in assisting the Emirati educational authorities to
comprehend the manner in which such a programme is performing; it will also inform them of
Emirati student needs and preferences. Such insight can be significant when forging a new
programme or amending existing ones. It is hoped that the current study will trigger interest
amongst EFL researchers in the Emirati context, and those in the wider EFL community, by
encouraging them to pursue social constructivism modes of inquiry in their evaluation studies.
Such modes of inquiry are deemed to reflect valuable information about students.

Second, at the level of educational research, the current study contributes theoretically with regard
to the social constructivism mode of inquiry in the Emirati context. As mentioned in previous
chapters, most prior evaluation studies effectuated in the UAE took a positivistic, scientific posture
as the theoretical framework which underpinned those studies (e.g., Safi, 1986; Safi, 1995; Al-
Mutawa & Al-Dabbous, 1997; Al-Mutawa, 1997).

This is due to the assumption that the Emirati educational system is conservative as regards
evaluation. Many researchers demure from applying social constructivism theory in evaluations in
which students are requested to assess their teachers’ performances. Most Emirati evaluation is
carried out via questionnaire. This is distributed to students at the semester’s end with fixed, closed-
ended items. Consequently, student voices are barely audible in the Emirati educational system.
Emirati education is therefore out of step with education in much of the rest of the world, where
attention is increasingly afforded to student, teacher, lecturer and professor opinions. As Troudi
remarks:
The field of [Teaching English as a Second Language] TESOL has also seen in the last two decades an increasing number of research studies based on a social constructivist view of language learning that allows readers to hear teachers’ [and students’] voices and views on the nature of teaching and how they learn to teach in different social contexts (2005: 17).

Hence, the current study may serve as an example for future evaluation studies, since it demonstrates the manner in which social constructivism theory can be used in a conservative society such as the UAE.

Third, a sequential, mixed-methods research design, which combines both quantitative and qualitative research in the form of opened-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, diaries and journals, and document analysis, has not been extensively employed in the UAE. It is hoped that the current study will lay the groundwork for the future use of this type of research design.

Similarly, the current study offers a practical alternative of using interviews in a conservative society. One obstacle confronted during the process of gathering data for the current study was that some female students were very reluctant to speak face-to-face, in an interview, with a male interviewer, due to well-recognised traditional, cultural mores in the UAE. Yamani (2000, p.152) points up that due to societal precepts, ‘most women would not agree to meet and converse with men who were not family members’. In addition, Emirati students are not accustomed to speaking freely and to expressing their opinions about their lecturers to someone whom they do not know personally. This situation is typical, and can be predicted to occur in Emirati society or similar contexts. Thus, the current study suggests a telephone interview to surmount such an obstacle.
Telephone interviews are effective in such situations, as students are more relaxed and less intimidated about divulging their opinions.

Finally, the current study contributes to a generalised knowledge base by proposing an evaluation approach that can be applied, and modified, depending on the specifications of any given setting. It merits mention that one of the major preoccupations, which was borne in mind whilst planning this evaluation approach, was to make the current study’s model as simple and straightforward as possible. This was to make it facile, and more encouraging, for educationalists and evaluators in the Emirati context, and other settings, to undertake more evaluation studies. The succeeding figure (7.1) summarises the model:
The proposed model consists of six steps, as follows:

1. **Defining the evaluation’s purpose and scope**: step one defines the prime purpose(s) of the evaluation and limits the scope. This encompasses whether to evaluate a whole programme, or only one component, and specifying the study’s key participants.

2. **First contact with participants**: the evaluator goes to the study site, becomes familiar with the setting, puts participants at ease via an amiable first impression, holds informal interviews, and
converses with participants in order to investigate and to elicit the main problematic areas, as reported by them. This step may also embody the gathering of programme-related documents.

3. Specifying the evaluation questions: after consulting with the programme participants, and specifying the programme’s problematic areas, the evaluator formulates the key evaluation questions, based on the participants’ views, in order to investigate the problematic aspects of a programme, or component(s) thereof.

4. Collecting the data: preferably the data can be collected using a variety of quantitative and qualitative means.

5. Analysing the data: the collected data are analysed using sundry analytic methods, as outlined above in numbers three (3) and four (4).

6. Results, discussion and recommendations: an evaluator presents and discusses the study data’s results and findings; at the end of which, recommendations and suggestions are presented to the programme’s planners and decision makers.

In general, no salient problems were confronted whilst effectuating the evaluation approach of the current study. The multifaceted data sources comprised the primary strength of this model. Because these provided ample, detailed data, proposals for the improvement of the EFL programme were offered.

It is worthy of mention that the current study’s model is merely posited as a guideline, and does not imply a fixed procedure. Evaluators must be flexible whilst effectuating similar studies. What is unique about this model, though, is that evaluators can establish their evaluation questions, and then focus themselves, based on the views and concerns of their study participants. By pursuing
such a procedure, this researcher and writer believes that one can guarantee that an evaluation will address the problematic aspects of a programme.

This researcher-writer felt that by building on the work of others, extending the body of knowledge through adaptation, and applying common sense drawn from experience, he forged the next step in the generalised knowledge base, and articulated an inquiry method which mirrored his experience, context, and the values in which he believes. Consequently, this researcher-writer takes the stance that it is for others to ponder the transferability to their own circumstances of his research findings, suggestions, or proposed model.

7.5 Suggestions for Further Research

The current study’s results propound several areas which require investigation. For example, the current study focused on only four aspects of the BELC within the FP. It is proposed that other aspects of the programme, such as the admissions policy or needs analysis, as well as other components, such as literature or linguistics, be investigated, as they can also yield valuable information about programme effectiveness.

The current study produced contradictory results about which of the four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) is the most difficult for Emirati students. Hence, it is worth studying this topic further in order to ascertain which language skills are the most problematic, and the reasons for which students experience particular difficulty.
As it was not possible to conduct classroom observations during the current study, it is urged that future attempts be made to observe teaching and learning practices inside the classroom. Such a study can supply valuable insight about occurrences inside the UAE EFL classroom.

The current study’s participants were students and lecturers in the FP. Yet harvesting data from other concerned parties, such as decision makers, administrators and parents, may illumine a broad scope of viewpoints, heretofore unbeknownst. Such endeavour may cultivate novel ideas for programme enhancement, or buttress agreement on what already works well.

The relationship between students and their lecturers in the FP is significant. The current study’s research proved that lecturers are perceived as authority figures, more than as facilitators of their students’ learning. This has a deleterious impact on student motivation and learning. This area merits more research in order to fathom fully the relationship, and the mode in which it depends on both parties.

Research is also imperative in order to investigate the reasons which prevent lecturers from using technological teaching aids in their classrooms. The lecturers of the current study neglected such aids, which hint that there may exist challenges which encumber and dissuade lecturers from employing them.

An added area of query pertains to the discrepancy between pre-university (primary and secondary) education, and college and university (tertiary) studies. It may prove important to compare, and to evaluate, curricula in order to ascertain if pre-university education is adequately preparing Emirati
students for tertiary programmes. The current study unveiled that students felt that there was a disconnection between the EFL curriculum at their secondary schools and the curriculum of the college featured in the current study.

Finally, it behooves mention that the students who participated in the current study were enthusiastic, and eager to share their EFL experiences with this researcher and writer. They attested that this was the first time that anyone had sought their views and opinions. Student experiences illuminated the shortfalls from which the EFL programme oft-agonises, as well as underscored the impediments which students encounter, and identified obstacles which retard student improvement. It is thus advocated that future research spotlight student voices and experiences.

7.6 Final Remarks and Conclusions

The overall goal of the current study was to evaluate the BELC, in the FP, and to utilise the findings as a basis for proposing amendments and improvements. This was done by eliciting student and lecturer viewpoints about the programme’s three language courses, and by expounding student and lecturer recommendations for programme improvement.

The current study renders evident that the issues brought to light are interlinked, and thus affect one another. When course content and instructional materials are not designed and selected assiduously, it may conduce to students becoming demoralised and unmotivated (McGrath, 2006). Demoralised and unmotivated students sap the energy of their lecturers. In turn, lecturers feel disinclined to undertake professional development. Thus, their didactic methods will be adversely
impacted (Richards & Farrell, 2005). As a result, students become more demoralised and unmotivated. In such cases, attempting to solve one of the above issues, yet leaving the other(s) unresolved, is neither logical nor efficacious. Administrators in the FP tend to view each problem separately; that is, on an atomistic, disjointed and micro-level basis.

This researcher-writer contends that if decision makers and educational authorities wish to enhance the quality of their programmes, they cannot ignore conjoined and interlinking factors. The reality of the dilemma is too complex for the simplistic thoughts of improving mere single elements, such as only replacing a textbook. The alteration of only one element may not necessarily improve student learning experiences, and English language proficiency.

It is crucial to scan an entire programme panorama at a macro-level, in order to identify liaisons between multiple weaknesses, and to consider simultaneous solutions. The current study’s conclusions vividly reveal the importance of programme evaluation studies in EFL programmes. These can render a translucent image of an entire situation, signal multiple weaknesses, and diagnosticate holistic remedies.

Ruefully, language programme evaluation is still not bestowed the its well-merited recognition by the UAE educational authorities. However, as discussed in the scholarly literature review chapter, studies increasingly acknowledge the value of language programme evaluation. Yang accurately states that ‘language program evaluation is experiencing renewed recognition along with increasing demands in language education programs and in applied linguistics more broadly’ (2009, p.77). It
would be immeasurable, therefore, to realise more language programme evaluation studies in the UAE EFL programmes.

Evaluation studies can be designed to ensure that, during the course of one academic year, student grasp a satisfactory level of English competence, which will enable them to pursue their courses effectively, and to be successful future Engineers. Since this is the purpose of EFL programmes, it is primordial that these programmes be evaluated regularly so that their strengths and weaknesses can be flagged, and hence, their goals and objectives can be achieved.

This researcher-writer recognises, however, that in the real world, and in the history of language programme evaluation, making evaluation beneficial, and making use of it, have proven major challenges. This was asserted by Kiely and Rea-Dickins, who pointed out that ‘[e]valuation use has been a persistent problem’ (2005, p.39). What makes evaluation even more problematic in the UAE, and probably throughout the Arab world, is the common misconception held by some authorities as regards the term evaluation. This word is connoted with criticism or failure. In other words, evaluation is perceived as an attempt to seek out shortcomings, to criticise and to condemn publicly. This problem plagues evaluation, and renders authorities reluctant to accept any evaluation of their programmes (Ogle, 2002).

However, as Kinnaman writes, ‘program evaluation is not about criticism and failure; it’s about improving the quality of educational programs’ (1992, p.5). If the negative connotations can be avoided, this researcher-writer believes that evaluation might find its way onto the agendas of
educational authorities and decision makers, thus leading to evaluation undertakings, and results, which will benefit students, lecturers and the programme being evaluated.

The absence of efficacy in the language preparation programmes of Emirati EFL industry owes itself to its not being taken seriously. The language preparation programmes is treated as a warmup for students before they progress onto the more specialised courses of literature and linguistics. Some students consider language preparation programmes as trivial. Their ultimate goal is simply to gain a passing mark, rather than to benefit intellectually. As a response, this component must to be weighted more heavily in UAE EFL industry.

This researcher and writer feels that the language preparation programmes should form the nucleus of the UAE EFL industry, and that all other programme subject matter should orbit about it. This can be done, as Cullen (1994) proposes, by deriving the content of the literature and linguistics from the language course(s). The language preparation programmes must be the central educative nutrient by providing the content from which the other EFL programme courses draw sustenance. As Richards (1998: 13) comments, ‘Communication skills and proficiency in the teaching of language would seem to be prerequisites to the development of basic teaching skills’. Therefore, in order to produce trusted and well-qualified Engineers and business people, we must foremost provide students with the training to improve their English language proficiency.

Lecturers in the FP in this institute play a major role in student academic-life experiences. Unfortunately, most of the lecturers display a negative attitude towards their students. Indeed, most of the lecturers FP send their own children to private United Kingdom (UK) or United States (US)
schools, where they are taught by non-Arab teachers from the UK or the US, thus indicating the scant confidence these lecturers place in the teachers whom they have, themselves, trained. It is required that lecturers in the FP change their attitudes towards their students, demonstrate that they have faith in those students, and exert more effort in order to provision their students with a plentiful learning experience.

Overall, it is desired that the current study will make a worthwhile contribution to the enhancement of the language preparation programmes, and to the UAE EFL industry. Knowledge of the English language is the marrow of expertise for English teachers (Borg, 2011). Hence, it is incumbent to examine the efficacy of EFL education in order to improve the language skills of future engineers and business people. It merits mention that the current study is only one leap along the lane to more evaluation studies of this genre which pray ensure that student and lecturer voices are heard, highlighted and heeded. It is an attempt to comprehend, in order to illuminate, the hindrances and hurdles which students and lecturers confront in their programmes of study and instruction. It may also render an alternative approach to education programmes by lightening the weighty dependence on administrative evaluation, which has come to be deemed ineffective.
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Appendix (1)

Course Evaluation Questionnaire
Course: Writing

Dear Student,

This questionnaire has been designed to collect your opinions about this course for evaluation purposes. The course will be evaluated in terms of its features such as aims and objectives, content and materials, course conduct, and assessment.

It is essential that you express your views realistically. The data to be collected through your responses will be of great value to the improvement of the basic language skills courses in the Foundation Programme at your institute.

This is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers. Your opinion is the main consideration. Please, express your feelings freely.

Your identity and individual responses will be kept strictly confidential, and the results of the questionnaire will be used only for research purposes.

I thank you in advance for your participation and cooperation, and I wish you a successful

Bashar Abu Shunnar
PhD Student
The British University in Dubai
Email: besho4@gmail.com
General Information:

*Please circle one of the following choices as appropriate:*

1. My age group is:
   (a) 18 to 20  (b) 21 to 25 years old  (c) 26 years and above

2. I have graduated from:
   (a) Public (Governmental) School  (b) Private (or English) School

*Please read the following questions/statements and put (✓) as appropriate:*

3. To what degree do you have difficulties in the following language skills of English?

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I. COURSE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

*Please give your opinion about this course aims and objectives. Please mark (✓) as appropriate*

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4. I think this course is helping me to achieve the following aims.

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</table>
This course has helped me to improve in writing different forms of letters, invitations, and messages.

This course has helped me to improve in spelling English words correctly.

Increase knowledge of English language vocabulary

10. What other course objectives would like to have developed/improved in this course? Please explain.

II. COURSE CONTENT AND MATERIALS:

Please give your opinion about the content and materials of this course. Please mark (✓) as appropriate

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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11. Please express your opinion about the following issues in this course:

1. The course materials were appropriate to my own interests.
2. Course materials were chosen by the teacher and me.
3. This course had a variety of topics.
4. The materials used in this course were attractive.
5. It was easy to use and understand the course materials.
6. We have used modern audio-visual technological aids in class.
7. The course materials were appropriate to my proficiency level in English.
8. The teacher used supplementary materials in this course to improve my writing skills: notes, games, and stories.
12. Are there any other things (i.e. topics, tasks, etc.) you HAVE NOT done in this course but you would like to have done? Please explain.

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

13. What were the good (positive) and bad (negative) points about the materials (Textbook, handouts, etc.) you were working with in this course?
Good (positive) points:

____________________________________________________________________________

Bad (negative) points:

____________________________________________________________________________

III. COURSE CONDUCT / TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS:
Please give your opinion about the content and materials of this course. Please mark (√) as appropriate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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14. Please express your opinion about the following issues in this course:

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<td>A variety of activities were used in the course.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>There was a good student-teacher interaction in the course.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>The teacher was teaching in an interesting way.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The teacher was encouraging us to participate in the lessons.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The class environment motivates me to participate in class.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Course exercises/tasks are effective in improving my writing skills.</td>
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<td>The teacher uses only English in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The teacher talk is more than students talk.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. What could the teacher have done in order to help you more in this course? Please give
IV. ASSESSMENT AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE:
Please give your opinion about assessment and student performance of this course. Please mark (√) as appropriate

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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16. Please express your opinion about the following issues in this course:

1. The instructor gave me feedback that I can understand.
2. I received constructive feedback on my assignments.
3. Written feedback was given on my progress.
4. The most common mistakes are discussed in class.
5. I was informed about the assessment criteria.
6. I was assessed on the topics that I learned in the lessons.
7. The tests questions were easy to answer for me.
8. The instructions on the tests were clear.
9. The exams results demonstrate my actual ability/proficiency.
10. I am happy with the final grade, it was fair.

17. What do you think the best way to assess you in this course? Why?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
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V. OVERALL EVALUATION:
18. List 3 things in this course that helped you the most to improve your English language skills (3 POSITIVE aspects of the course).
1.___________________________________________________________________________
2.___________________________________________________________________________
3.___________________________________________________________________________

19. List 3 things in this course that DID NOT help you to improve your English language skills (3 NEGATIVE aspects of the course).
1. ________________________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________________________
3. ________________________________________________________________

20. List your SUGGESTIONS to make this course more useful and better adjusted to students’ needs:

________________________________________________________________________
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NB.
If you would like to participate in short interview related to this topic, please leave a phone/mobile number/email address to contact you to arrange for the interview at your convenience.
Name: ............................................................... 
Phone/Mobile No.............................................. 
E-mail address: .................................................
Appendix (2)

Course Evaluation Questionnaire

Course: Reading

Dear Student,

This questionnaire has been designed to collect your opinions about this course for evaluation purposes. The course will be evaluated in terms of its features such as aims and objectives, content and materials, course conduct, and assessment.

It is essential that you express your views realistically. The data to be collected through your responses will be of great value to the improvement of the basic language skills courses in the Foundation Programme at your institute.

This is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers. Your opinion is the main consideration. Please, express your feelings freely.

Your identity and individual responses will be kept strictly confidential, and the results of the questionnaire will be used only for research purposes.

I thank you in advance for your participation and cooperation, and I wish you a successful

Bashar Abu Shunnar
PhD Student
The British University in Dubai
Email: besho4@gmail.com
I. COURSE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Please give your opinion about this course aims and objectives. Please mark (✓) as appropriate

<table>
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<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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4. I think this course is helping me to achieve the following aims.

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10. What other course objectives would like to have developed/improved in this course?
Please explain.

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II. COURSE CONTENT AND MATERIALS:

Please give your opinion about the content and materials of this course. Please mark (✓) as appropriate.

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4. Are there any other things (i.e. topics, tasks, etc.) you HAVE NOT done in this course but you would like to have done? Please explain.

______________________________________________________________________________
5. What were the good (positive) and bad (negative) points about the materials (Textbook, handouts, etc.) you were working with in this course?
(positive) points:

________________________________________________________________________
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(negative) points:

________________________________________________________________________

III. COURSE CONDUCT / TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS:

*Please give your opinion about the teaching and learning experience in this course. Please mark (√) as appropriate*

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6. Please express your opinion about the following issues in this course:

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<td>The teacher talk is more than students talk.</td>
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7. What could the teacher have done in order to help you more in this course? Please give suggestions

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IV. ASSESSMENT AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE:

*Please give your opinion about the assessment in this course. Please mark (✓) as appropriate*

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16. Please express your opinion about the following issues in this course:

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The instructor gave me feedback that I can understand.
I received constructive feedback on my assignments.
Written feedback was given on my progress.
The most common mistakes are discussed in class.
I was informed about the assessment criteria.
I was assessed on the topics that I learned in the lessons.
The tests questions were easy to answer for me.
The instructions on the tests were clear.
The exams results demonstrate my actual ability/proficiency.
I am happy with the final grade, it was fair.
9. What do you think the best way to assess you in this course? Why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

V. OVERALL EVALUATION:

18. List 3 things in this course that helped you the most to improve your reading skills (3 POSITIVE aspects of the course).
   1.___________________________________________________________________________
   2.___________________________________________________________________________
   3.___________________________________________________________________________

19. List 3 things in this course that DID NOT help you to improve your reading skills (3 NEGATIVE aspects of the course).
   1.___________________________________________________________________________
   2.___________________________________________________________________________
   3.___________________________________________________________________________

20. List your SUGGESTIONS to make this course more useful and better adjusted to students’ needs:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
NB.

If you would like to participate in short interview related to this topic, please leave a phone/mobile number/email address to contact you to arrange for the interview at your convenience.

Name: ……………………………………………………………

Phone/Mobile No………………………………………………

E-mail address: …………………………………………………

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

HAVE A NICE DAY!
Appendix (3)

Course Evaluation Questionnaire
Course: Conversation

Dear Student,

This questionnaire has been designed to collect your opinions about this course for evaluation purposes. The course will be evaluated in terms of its features such as aims and objectives, content and materials, course conduct, and assessment.
It is essential that you express your views realistically. The data to be collected through your responses will be of great value to the improvement of the basic language skills courses in the Foundation Programme at your institute.
This is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers. Your opinion is the main consideration. Please, express your feelings freely.
Your identity and individual responses will be kept strictly confidential, and the results of the questionnaire will be used only for research purposes.
I thank you in advance for your participation and cooperation, and I wish you a successful

Bashar Abu Shunnar
PhD Student
The British University in Dubai
Email: besho4@gmail.com
I. COURSE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Please give your opinion about this course aims and objectives. Please mark (✓) as appropriate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>agree</th>
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4. I think this course is helping me to achieve the following aims.

1. Develop production skills in sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation.
2. Identify and use common idiomatic expressions.
3. Gain experience and increase confidence in speaking English in public.
4. Develop listening strategies such as note taking.
5. Translate orally symbolic forms (Diagrams, charts, tables, etc).
6. Recognise formal and informal patterns of speech.
7. This course helped me to improve in pronouncing English sounds and words correctly.
8. This course helped me to express my ideas on a variety of topics in English clearly.
9. This course helped me to increase my English vocabulary.
10. This course helped me to be able to respond to questions concerning many aspects of daily life.
11. This course helped me to understand a variety of accents of spoken English language.
12. Recognize main ideas in short audio listening segments.
13. Develop my listening for details.
14. Guess the meaning of spoken words from context.

2. Which other listening skills you would like to have developed/improved in this course? Please explain.

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

3. Which other speaking skills you would like to have developed/improved in this course? Please explain.

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II. COURSE CONTENT AND MATERIALS:

Please give your opinion about the content and materials of this course. Please mark (√) as appropriate.

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<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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4. I think this course is helping me to achieve the following aims.

| 1 | The course materials were appropriate to my own interests. |
| 2 | Course materials were chosen by the teacher and me. |
| 3 | This course had a variety of topics. |
| 4 | The materials used in this course were attractive. |
| 5 | It was easy to use and understand the course materials. |
| 6 | We have used modern audio-visual technological aids in class. |
| 7 | The course materials were appropriate to my proficiency level in English. |
| 8 | The teacher used supplementary materials in this course e.g. videotapes, recorder, etc. |

4. Are there any other things (i.e. topics, tasks, etc.) you HAVE NOT done in this course but you would like to have done? Please explain.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

5. What were the good (positive) and bad (negative) points about the materials (Textbook, handouts, etc.) you were working with in this course?

(positive) points:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

(negative) points:
______________________________________________________________________________
III. COURSE CONDUCT / TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS:

Please give your opinion about the teaching and learning experience in this course. Please mark (√) as appropriate

<table>
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<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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6. Please express your opinion about the following issues in this course:

1. A variety of activities were used in the course.
2. There was a good student-teacher interaction in the course.
3. The teacher was teaching in an interesting way.
4. The teacher was encouraging us to participate in the lessons.
5. The class environment motivates me to participate in class.
6. Course exercises/tasks are effective in improving my speaking skills.
7. Course exercises/tasks are effective in improving my listening skills.
8. Group work is encouraged in class.
9. The teacher uses only English in class.
10. The teacher talk is more than students talk.

7. What could the teacher have done in order to help you more in this course? Please give suggestions

____________________________________________________________________________
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IV. ASSESSMENT AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE:

Please give your opinion about the assessment in this course. Please mark (✓) as appropriate

<table>
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16. Please express your opinion about the following issues in this course:

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1. The instructor gave me feedback that I can understand.
2. I received constructive feedback on my assignments.
3. Written feedback was given on my progress.
4. The most common mistakes are discussed in class.
5. I was informed about the assessment criteria.
6. I was assessed on the topics that I learned in the lessons.
7. The tests questions were easy to answer for me.
8. The instructions on the tests were clear.
9. The exams results demonstrate my actual ability/proficiency.
10. I am happy with the final grade, it was fair.

9. What do you think the best way to assess you in this course? Why?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

V. OVERALL EVALUATION:

18. List 3 things in this course that helped you the most to improve your reading skills
19. List 3 things in this course that DID NOT help you to improve your reading skills

(3 NEGATIVE aspects of the course).

1._______________________________________________________

2._______________________________________________________

3._______________________________________________________

20. List your SUGGESTIONS to make this course more useful and better adjusted to students’ needs:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

NB.

If you would like to participate in short interview related to this topic, please leave a phone/mobile number/email address to contact you to arrange for the interview at your convenience.

Name: …………………………………………………..

Phone/Mobile No……………………………………

E-mail address: ………………………………………..

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

HAVE A NICE DAY!
Appendix (4)

Teacher Course Evaluation Interview

This interview aims at getting the tutors’ spontaneous views and perceptions about this course.

Part I – Course Objectives
1. What were the objectives/aims of this course?
2. Do you believe that all these objectives have been achieved? Please explain.
3. Should there have been other objectives of this course? What do you suggest?
4. To what extent, do you think, this course met your students’ expectations and needs?
5. What do you think your students still need in terms of listening / speaking / writing / reading skills?

Part II – Course Content & Materials
1. Which topics/themes were covered in this course? Were they authentic? Were they Culture-centred? (Focuses only on the American and British contexts)
2. Which other topics/themes that you think are missing in this course?
3. What changes do you suggest in the course content?
4. What materials or teaching aids did you use in this course?
5. What was good and not so good about the materials used in this course?
6. Should some changes be made in the course materials? Please explain.
7. Have the students been encouraged to look at other books and materials? E.g. going to the library? Why or why not?
8. Did the students have the chance to choose a topic or bring their own materials to the class? Why or why not?

Part III – Course Conduct & Implementation
1. How was teaching-learning process in this course? How would you describe your teaching approach?
2. What kinds of activities/tasks were done in the lessons?
3. Do you believe that you provided variety in terms of activities/tasks?
4. Do you believe that the teaching-learning process was effective?
5. What were the student and teacher roles in this course? How should they have been?
6. Did the students have the chance to generate ideas and express themselves about specific topic freely in class? Why or why not? Do you think it’s important?

7. Have the students been given the chance to exchange and comment on each other’s ideas? Why or why not? Do you think it’s important?

8. Have the students been given the chance to critique? Why or why not? Do you think it’s important?

*Prompts: critique an article that they’ve read, critique each other’s written work, etc.*

**Part IV – Assessment in the Course**

1. Which assessment tools did you use in this course?
2. What do you think about these assessment tools? Were they effective?
3. To what extent do the assessment results (students’ grades) reflect your students’ actual performance/success?
4. Is the feedback you give corrective or constructive? How?
5. Are you satisfied with your students’ performance/success in this course?
6. Have their listening / speaking / writing / reading skills improved as you expected?

**Part VI – Overall Evaluation**

1. What was positive/good about this course? Which aspects should continue to exist (shouldn’t be changed) in this course?
2. What was negative/not so good about this course? Which aspects should NOT continue to exist in this course? What are the things that need to be changed?
3. What are your suggestions for making this course more effective and useful, better adjusted to students’ needs? What are your suggestions for improvement?
4. Do you think this course is enough to improve and prepare students to complete their programme and to be proficient teachers? Or more similar courses are needed?
5. Do the teachers in charge of these courses have any professional development activities? Do they get the chance to update their knowledge on the teaching of the language skills?
6. What support system is put in place for the teachers?
Appendix (5)

Student’s Interview Questions
This interview has been designed to explore some of the categories of enquiry from the questionnaire in more detail and depth. The interview aims at getting English major student teachers’ spontaneous views and perceptions about this course.

PART I – Course Aims or Objectives

1. What were the objectives/aims of this course? (If they do not remember, students will be provided some course objectives to remind them the rest)
2. Do you believe that you have achieved all these objectives? Please explain.
3. What should have been the objectives/aims of this course? What should this course aim to develop in students? What are your suggestions?
4. What are your needs in terms of (listening/speaking/writing/reading) skills that could have been met (but haven’t been met) in this course?
5. To what extent did this course meet your expectations/needs?
6. Which of your expectations/needs have been met, and which ones have NOT been met?

PART II – Course Content and Materials

1. What do you think about the topics/themes and skills covered in this course? (sufficient/insufficient, simple/OK/difficult/relevant/irrelevant to your interests, proficiency level, age, etc.)
2. What other topics/themes and skills that you think is missing in this course?
3. What do you think about the course materials (textbook(s), handouts, etc.)? What was good and not so good about the materials you were working with in this course?
4. What changes should be made in the course materials? What kinds of materials you would like to be used in this course?
5. What changes do you suggest in the course content (topics/themes, skills, etc.)
6. Did the teacher encourage you to look at other books and materials? E.g. going to the library?
7. Have you been given the chance to choose a topic or bring your own materials to the class?

**PART III – Course Conduct & Implementation**

1. What activities/tasks have you done in this course?
2. What do you think about these activities/tasks? (interesting/boring, simple/difficult/OK, useful/not useful for improving your listening/speaking/writing/reading skills, etc.)
3. What kinds of activities/tasks you would like to have been used in this course to help you learn more?
4. What are the student and teacher roles in this course? How should they have been?
5. Were there any class rules, routines and variety in the lessons? What do you think about these issues?
6. How was teaching-learning process in the course? How were the lessons conducted? How did the teacher teach? How did you (students) behave?
7. How should teaching-learning process have been in this course? How should the lessons be conducted? What should the teacher and other students do which would help you the most in this course? Please indicate your suggestions.
8. Have you been given the chance to generate ideas and express yourself freely in class?  
   **Prompts: about specific topic...etc**
9. Have you been given the chance to exchange and comment on each other’s ideas?
10. Have you been given the chance to critique?  
    **Prompts: critique an article that you’ve read, critique your colleagues’ written work, etc.**

**PART IV – Assessment in the Course**

1. How was the relationship between the classroom practice (what was done in the lessons) and the assessment (i.e. what was required in the tests or assignments)? parallel or different?
2. What do you think about the assessment tools (e.g. exams, quizzes, assignments, etc.) used in this course?
3. To what extent do the assessment results reflect your actual success/performance?
4. Have you been given the choice to choose the ways of how you will be assessed?
5. How should students’ performance/success in this course be measured? Which assessment methods should be used?
6. What kind of feedback do you receive?
   * Oral/Written - formal/Informal – Tutor’s Comments- Peer-Review- Dialogue Journals
   * Individual/Pairs/Group/Whole Class- Justified/Unjustified Feedback.
7. Is the feedback you receive corrective or constructive?
   * Correction focused or suggesting improvements, changes, rather than informing you of what is wrong.
8. How do you feel about the feedback given?
   * Satisfied- needs change – Unsatisfied.
9. Have your listening/speaking/writing/reading skills improved, as you expected?

**PART VI – Overall Evaluation**

1. What were the **positive/ good aspects** about this course? Aspects that should continue to exist in this course?
2. What were the **negative aspects** about this course? Aspects that should NOT continue to exist in this course?
3. What changes do you suggest to this course to make it better and more useful?
Appendix (6)

Student Diary Form

This form aims at getting your views, perceptions, and your daily experiences of this course. Please feel free to write whatever you wish and express your feelings (in English or Arabic) freely about the things and matters concerning this course. Some headings are included to help you.

1. Describe a typical class of this course (from the beginning until the end, e.g. what the teacher usually does, etc.)

2. Write about your observations, feelings, and attitudes that you experienced in this course (Describe and comment on any special events or situation that happened to you in class?)

3. Write about frustrating and successful experiences in this course; identifying good experiences and transactions or objectives you have achieved or not achieved...

4. Write about the things that you most liked or disliked in this course...

5. Anything else you would like to say about this course?

Thank you very much for your time!

شكرا جزيلا لك!
Appendix (7)

Preliminary Questionnaire

Please, write down the most four negative aspects in the BELC that needs to be the focus of this study:

1- ...........................................................................................................

2- ...........................................................................................................

3- ...........................................................................................................

4- ...........................................................................................................
Appendix (8)

Examples from the textbook /Writing

Learning Objectives:

- Distinguish the differences between short, informal reports and long, formal, researched reports
- Write different types of short reports including incident reports, investigative reports, trip reports, progress reports, lab reports, and feasibility/recommendation reports
- Choose the correct communication channel (e-mail, letter, or memo) for your short, informal report

What Is a Report?

- Reports come in different lengths and levels of formality, serve different and often overlapping purposes, and can be conveyed to an audience using different communication channels. Reports will satisfy one or all of the following needs:
  - Supply a record of work accomplished
  - Record and clarify complex information for future reference
  - Present information to a large number of people with different skill levels
  - Record problems encountered
  - Document schedules, timetables, and milestones
  - Recommend future action
  - Document current status
  - Record procedures

Unique Aspects of Reports

Reports differ in the following ways:

- Length and scope:
  - Short reports. Limited to one to five pages and is focused on topics with limited scope.
  - Long reports. More than five pages and focus on topics with large scope.

- Formality (tone):
  - Informal. Short reports, written as letters, memos, or e-mail.
- Formal. Long reports that contain standardized components, such as a title page, table of contents, list of illustrations, abstract, appendices, and works cited/references.

**Types of Reports**

Many reports fall into the following categories. Following are the most common types of short, informal reports:

- Incident reports
- Investigative reports
- Trip reports
- Progress reports
- Lab or test reports
- Feasibility/recommendation reports

**Criteria for Writing Reports**

Although there are many different types of reports and individual companies have unique requirements, organization, development, audience, and style are basic to all reports:

**Organization.** Every report should contain 5 organizational features:
- Identification lines. Identify the date on which your report is written, the names of the people to whom the report is written, the names of the people from whom the report is sent, and the subject of the report.
- Headings and talking headings. Improve page layout and make content accessible.
- Introduction. Provide an overview of the report, including a purpose statement, names of other personnel involved in the reporting activity, and dates.
- Discussion. Include detailed development.
- Conclusion/Recommendations. Sum up, relate what you have learned, or state what decisions you have made regarding the activities reported.

**Development.** To develop your ideas:
- Quantify your information. Do not be vague or imprecise.
- Audience. Your audience can be internal and external, high tech, low tech, lay, or read by multiple readers. Before you write your report, determine who will read your text and decide if terminology needs to be defined and what tone you should use.
- Style. Be concise and use highlighting techniques.

Lab Reports (Test Reports)
A lab or test report lets you document the status of and findings from a laboratory experiment, procedure, or study. Criteria for lab reports include:

- **Introduction.** Indicate the reason behind the test, the objectives hoped for, and who authorized it.
- **Discussion.** Discuss what apparatus were used and what procedures were undertaken.
- **Conclusion/recommendations.** Present your findings, indicate what you learned from the test, and recommend follow-up action.

**Practice**

*Write a lab report. The subject of this report can involve a test you’re running at work or in one of your classes. Use the criteria regarding la reports presented in this chapter to help your write the report.*
Appendix (9)

Examples from the textbook /Reading

Work with your partner to discuss the following.

1. What’s the difference between a tourist and a traveler?
2. How much of your own country have you visited?
3. Is it possible to travel without leaving home?

Read the article quickly and choose the most suitable heading for each paragraph. (There are two extra headings)

a) Virtual tourism
b) Tourist or traveler?
c) Most popular destinations
d) Holiday at home
e) Holiday problems

Read the article again and answer the questions.
1. How is a traveler different from a tourist? (Give three examples)
2. How did tourism start?
3. What does the text say about people who live in large countries?
4. What is an ‘armchair traveler’?
5. How has television affected attitudes to travel?
6. How could travel develop in the future?
Appendix (10)

Examples from the textbook /Listening & Speaking

- Do you text? If yes, why and how often? If not, why not?
- Listen to two friends at university, Howard and Fred, talking on the phone. What is the reason for the phone calls?
- Listen again and complete the sentences. Use the words in brackets to help you.

1. Fred is going to finish his essay _________. (when?)
2. Howard is going to finish his essay _________. (when?)
3. Fred is going to the cinema with_________. (who?)
4. Fred is going to the cinema on_________. (when?)
5. Howard’s presentation is on _________. (when?)
6. Howard and Fred will see each other at the lecture _________. (when?)

- Work with a partner to discuss the following.

1. Texting seriously affects young people’s ability to write good English.
2. Texting will be permitted in exams within five years.
3. Students will soon prefer to study British English rather than American English.
4. In twenty years’ time, nobody will write letters.
Appendix (11)

An Extract of a Coded Transcript

**Theme:** Assessment and Feedback

**Code:** AssessFeed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Data Chunks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AssessFeed 1a</td>
<td>I interviewed the students. Also, when they do homework assignments, sometimes they write essays, each and every one of them. Only a portion of that is discussed. The next portion is discussed later on, so we keep them on alert all the time. This is more effective than quizzes and tests. They also have mid-term exam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AssessFeed 1b</td>
<td>They [students] have to choose any two books. They should be books according to their choice. They have to write and be critical about the author; what did they like and what they didn’t like about the characters. They have to submit it before the mid-term, and before the final too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AssessFeed 2a</td>
<td>There were no quizzes, only midterm and final exams. The teacher said that we would have spot quizzes every week, but this did not happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AssessFeed 3a</td>
<td>I think that the teacher gives us constructive feedback as far as grammar and punctuation marks are concerned. We don’t write; therefore, there is no feedback on our writing performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Code ‘AssessFeed’:** describes student and teacher interviewees’ views about the assessment and feedback practices in the English Department.

**AssessFeed 1:** describes the findings of the actual assessment and feedback practices.

**AssessFeed 1a:** describes the first extract in the transcript relating to the assessment and feedback practices.

**AssessFeed 1b:** describes the second extract in the transcript relating to the assessment practices.

**AssessFeed 2:** describes students’ views about the assessment practices.

**AssessFeed 2a:** describes the first extract relating to views about the assessment practices.

**AssessFeed 3:** describes students’ views about the feedback practices.

**AssessFeed 3a:** describes the first extract that relates to views about the feedback practices.