Exploring the English Language Needs of Translation Studies Students at the University of Gujrat

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the English language needs of Translation Studies students at the University of Gujrat based on Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) needs analysis model. Target needs are divided into two main areas: language needs, which refer to basic skills, language tasks, and vocabulary that students may lack; and learning needs, which include students' perceptions of their proficiency, self-confidence, and preferred learning styles. This research employs a quantitative approach, involving the administration of structured questionnaires to 200 students studying Translation Studies. The results indicate that students consider reading, writing, and speaking the most essential skills for their learning and future careers. However, certain difficulties were identified in areas such as grammar, vocabulary, and listening comprehension. Additionally, many students rate their writing skills as intermediate and report limited confidence in writing English accurately. The study suggests that English language training within Translation Studies programs requires updates and reaccreditation to meet the demands of translation work and better accommodate students' preferred learning styles.

Keywords*:* Needs analysis, Translation Studies, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Hutchinson and Waters, Language Proficiency, Learner Perceptions.

Introduction

English has now become a world language, or more accurately, an international language, and occupies an important place in different academic, occupational, and social fields (Crystal, 2003). English is an official language of Pakistan and also a widely used medium of instruction in most of the universities and colleges of higher learning (Qadir & Yasmin, 2024; Yasmin et al. 2020). Nevertheless, the teaching and learning of English in the Pakistani context, particularly in university settings, have been criticized for lacking communicative and contextual relevance, especially in the field of Translation Studies (Yasmin et al. 2016; Akram & Mehmood, 2011). In general, the field of Translation Studies requires a great command of two languages – the source language and the target language. To complete the given tasks, students are required to read various texts and navigate both language and cultural barriers. This aligns with prior research showing how literary discourse constructs and negotiates Muslim female subjectivity in socio-religious contexts (Safdar & Yasmin, 2021). Since English serves as a source and target language in many translation contexts, students of translation need to master English to excel academically and professionally in their studies in Translation Studies (Wenjie, 2009). Nevertheless, a large portion of Pakistani university students fail to achieve the desired goal in the language due to factors such as outdated curriculum implementation, teacher-centered approach, and lack of emphasis on language as used in real-life situations (Jilani, 2004). Analysis of need is an important aspect in language education, especially in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), to determine the linguistic needs of the learners and provide designed language materials. According to Hutchinson and

Waters (1987), needs analysis is the process of identifying the gap between what learners already know and the skills they need to possess. The current concept of target needs, which includes necessities, lacks, and wants, alongside learning needs, provides a complete understanding of the language demands of Translation Studies students. This research, therefore, seeks to determine the various English language needs of Translation Studies students at the University of Gujrat. The study also aims to review students' attitudes toward their language proficiency and the difficulties they face during the process of acquiring language skills for academic and professional purposes. The study deals with the following question specifically:

- What are the English language target and learning needs of Translation Studies students at the University of Gujrat?
- Which English language skills do students consider most important for their academic success and future translation careers?
- What challenges do students face in learning English, and how can instruction be improved to address these needs?

Literature Review

ESP stands for English for Specific Purposes, a branch of language education focused on teaching English tailored to the specific needs and contexts in which learners will use the language. Hence, ESP becomes more applicable in disciplines like Translation Studies, as students are required to read source texts, translate materials, and write academic reports. In this regard, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) posit that ESP is concerned with what learners need to do with language as opposed to general language proficiency. This highlights the importance of this criterion, particularly for students enrolled in specialized programs. The effectiveness of ESP instruction is also tied to the cultural appropriateness of pedagogical approaches. Ellis (1996) argues that communicative methods must be adapted to local socio-cultural norms to achieve meaningful outcomes. Cultural and ideological contexts have likewise been shown to influence meaning construction, further underscoring the importance of culturally responsive teaching in translation studies (Irshad & Yasmin, 2023; Irshad & Yasmin, 2025). To increase the effectiveness of ESP instruction, it is important to conduct a needs analysis. Needs analysis involves a set of procedures aimed at identifying the language demands and the learner's profile, including their strengths and weaknesses, interests, and goals. According to Long (2005), a well-designed needs analysis determines curriculum development and enhances learners' motivation by providing clear targets. This is important for the Translation Studies course because students' performance substantially depends on exact skills regarding improved reading, understanding of difficult texts, as well as the specific vocabulary necessary for a particular scholarly field, and writing in the English language. Studies have shown that integrating information and communication technologies into ESP courses enhances learning outcomes by furnishing authentic, discipline-specific materials coupled with interactive platforms conducive to language practice (Nooruddin & Yasmin, 2019). As for the models of needs analysis, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) have developed one of the most effective schemes. It is two-part, namely, target needs and learning needs. It refers to what the learners are expected to do with English in either the academic or professional realm. They are categorized as necessary (those that are requisite in the target setting), desirable (absence of knowledge that might be present in the learner but could be absent in the target setting), and emergent (those that the learner perceives as necessary). Whereas learning needs are more associated with how the learner engages in the process of acquiring the L2, including preferred strategies, activity types, and teaching styles that best support individual learning. In Pakistan's educational context, however, the teaching and learning of the English language remains constrained by old pedagogical practices. Currently, the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) prevails, emphasizing memorization of grammar rather than meaningful use of language in various

practical contexts (Akram & Mehmood, 2011). Thus, the situation is deleterious even among university learners as they cannot use English appropriately in academic or workplace settings. This is true for programs such as Translation Studies, in which students should be able to read and write complex texts in English with great ease. Mastoi, Shah, and Lohar (2019) presented similar concerns in engineering departments and concluded that students preferred comprehensive communication strategies for tasks. The study highlighted that learners in specialized fields placed greater emphasis on functional, cooperative, and positive forms of English instruction. Nevertheless, this is true for Engineering only; however, it is also applicable to Translation Studies, as students studying Translation also need English for certain academic and, more so, for career-related purposes. Similarly, Wenjie (2009) and Jilani (2004) argued that learners in non-native English contexts are denied communicative competence if instruction methods are traditional and grammar-based. Despite growing interest in ESP in the academic context, there is still a limited amount of research available regarding Translation Studies students in Pakistan. A vast majority of existing works are either focused on the English language in general or belong to other fields of study, such as engineering, business, or medicine, etc. This gap underscores the need for further needs analysis in the recognized but still under-investigated field to promote the English language teaching for Translation Studies and to provide insights for professionals such as curriculum developers, instructors, and institutions.

Methodology
This research uses a quantitative data collection method to determine the English language requirements of translation studies students at Gujrat University. The present study adopts Hutchinson and Waters's (1987) needs analysis model, which distinguishes between target needs (such as needs, desires, and deficiencies they consider important and want to receive) and learning needs (which address how learners prefer to learn languages). Thus, the study not only reveals the most important language skills but also examines students' self-perception regarding foreign languages. The proposed framework seems to be the best fit for research in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Participants
The participants in the study were 200 students enrolled in the Translation Studies program at the University of Gujrat. The random sampling technique was adopted. So, the student population is distributed randomly across different semesters and levels of study within the department.

Data Collection Tool
To address the research questions generated from Hutchinson and Waters' model, a structured questionnaire suitable for the current study was developed. This questionnaire included 12 questions which were divided into two main categories: target needs (including questions concerning the need of the learner in terms of the language skills required, tasks they need to accomplish, the type of texts they are expected to handle and difficulties that they encounter); and learning needs (focusing on the learner's feelings about themselves, their learning styles, classroom activities, and their goals or objectives). The majority of the questions were closed-ended using multiple-choice items. To establish content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed and refined by two language teachers. Face and internal reliability were assessed through a pilot administration of the questionnaire to a small group of students, and the completion rate was quite impressive.

Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed to the participants during class sessions after consultation with the course instructors. Students were given ample time to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed anonymously, and respondents were assured that the information they provided would be used for research purposes.

Data Analysis

This section elaborates on the results of the questionnaire, analyzing data collected from 200 undergraduate Translation Studies students at the University of Gujrat.

Students' Current Academic Year in Translation Studies

Participants were asked to indicate their current year of study in Translation Studies to give context for their responses and to investigate variations in perspectives based on academic progression. Most of the respondents were from the 3rd year (30%), followed by equal proportions in the 1st and 4th years (25%). The second year has the lowest representation (20%). This suggests that 3rd year students had already been exposed to, and could better recognize, the significance of the English language in their academic journey.
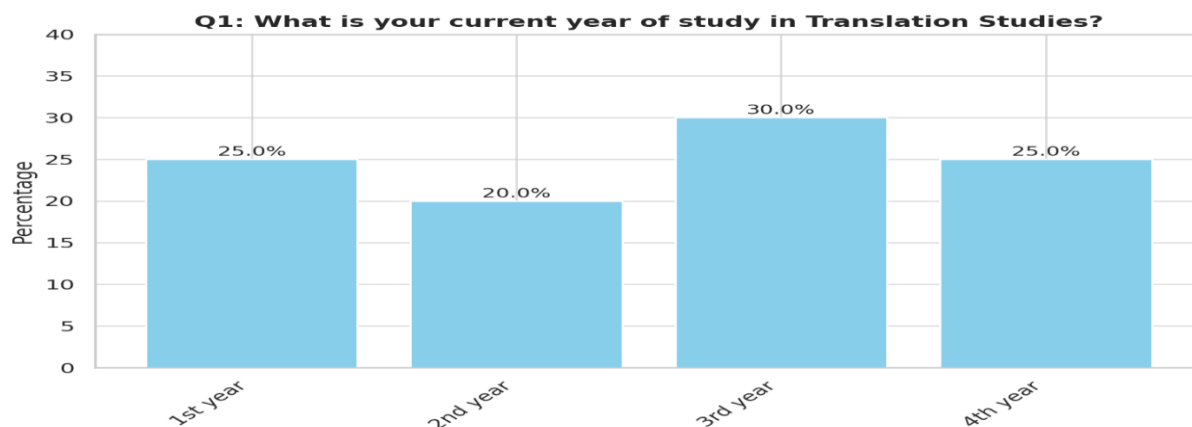

English Usage Frequency in Academic Work

The second question is related to the use of English in their academic work. The data suggest that a significant portion of students use English either very frequently or frequently in their academic work (60%), indicating a substantial reliance on English. Whereas, 30% use English occasionally, while a smaller proportion (10%) use it rarely or never.
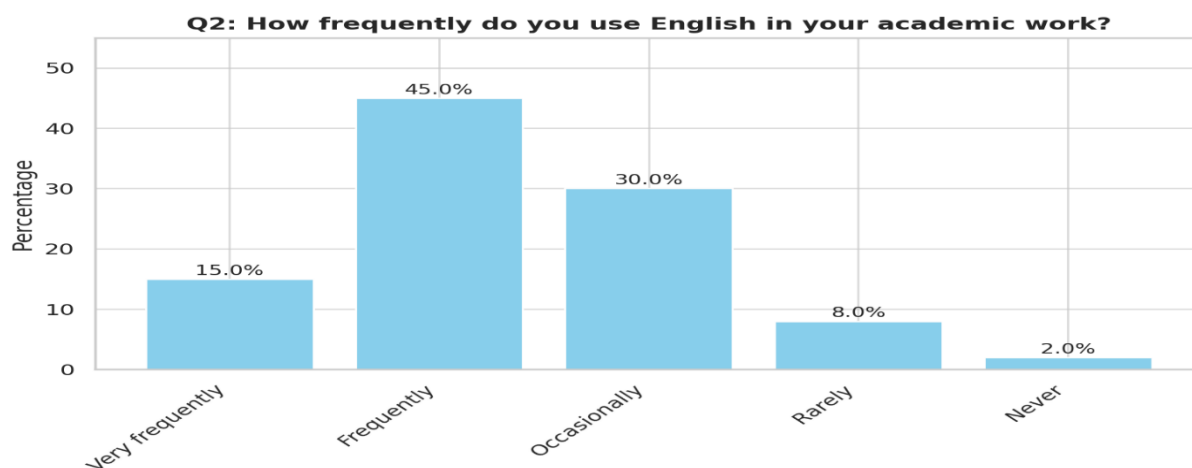
Students' Perception of Important English Language Skills

In response to question three, participants identified the English language skills they consider most important, highlighting the areas they perceive as most critical for their academic and professional success. Among the specific competencies, translation proficiency was viewed as the most relevant (19.4%), followed in order of priority by reading (17.2%), vocabulary (16.1%), and writing (15.1%). This underscores the practical role of language in the field of Translation Studies.


Q3: Most Important English Language Skills (Multiple responses allowed)
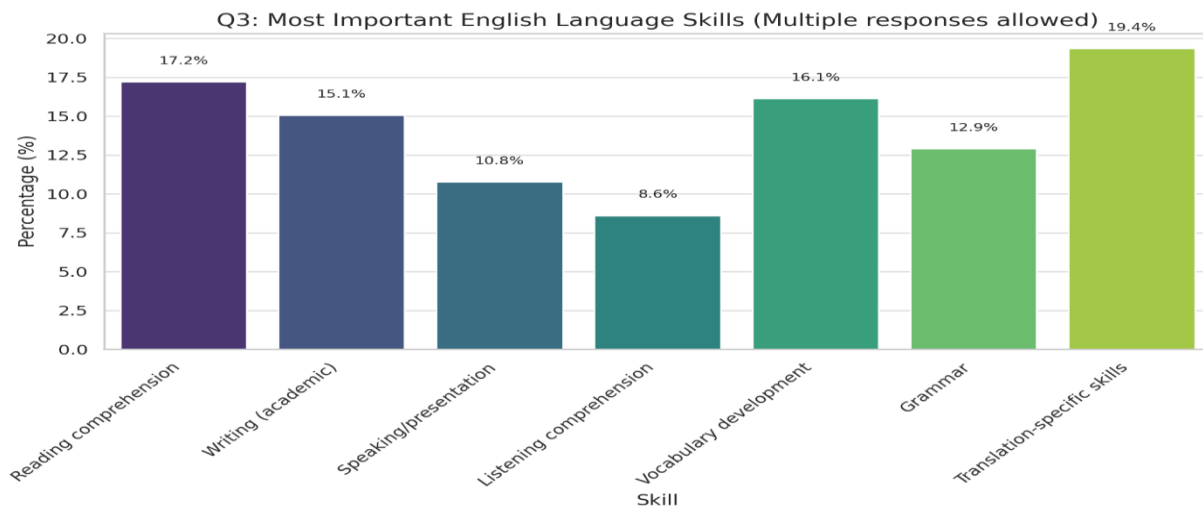
Students' views of English Proficiency in Academic and Professional Achievement

In response to question four, participants were asked to evaluate the significance of English proficiency for their professional and academic success. Thus, 90% of the respondents considered English as "extremely" or "very" important. This highlights the importance of English skills in translation education and the actual practice of translation.

Overall English Proficiency Rating of Students

Participants were asked to rate their overall English proficiency to assess their self-perceived language competence. The majority of respondents rated their English proficiency as either good

Q4: Importance of English Proficiency
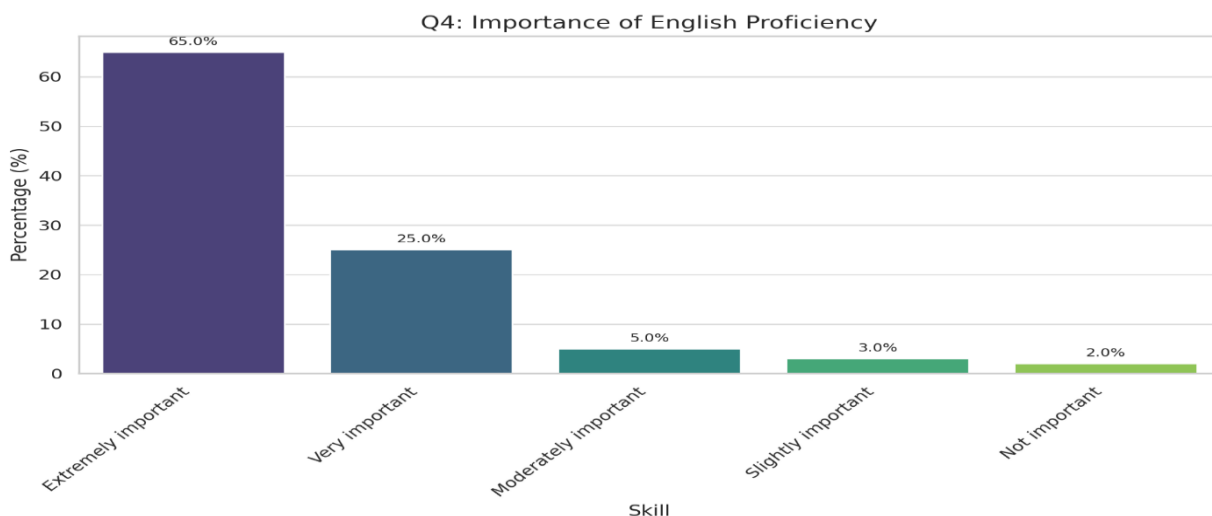
or average (75.0%), indicating a relatively high level of self-assessed proficiency. A significant proportion of respondents rated their English proficiency as either below average or poor (15.0%),

suggesting a need for improvement. It highlights the importance of enhancing students' confidence in their English language abilities.


Q5: Self-Rating of Overall English Proficiency
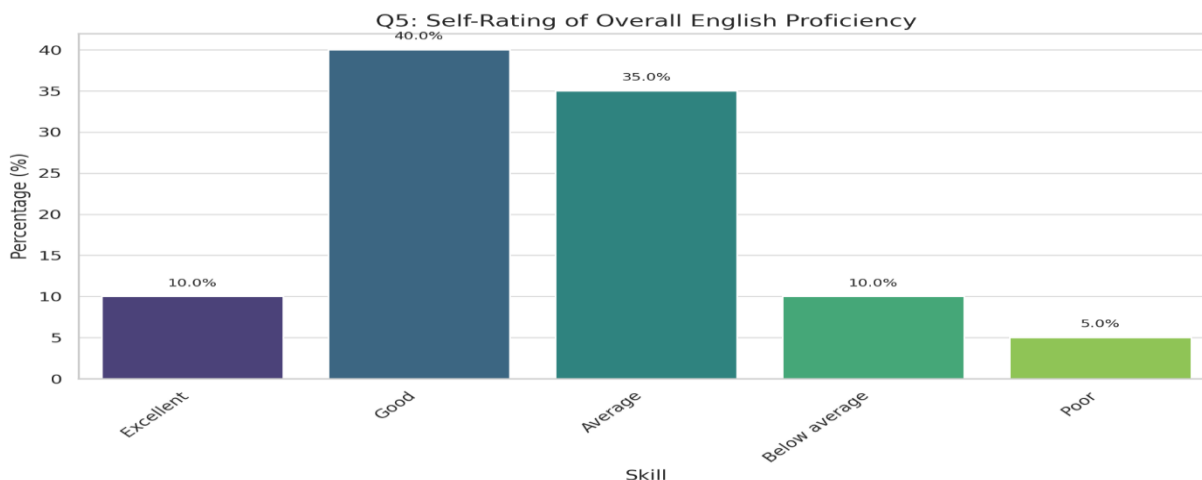
Students' Confidence in their Ability to Understand Academic English

Participants were asked to express their level of confidence in understanding English academic texts. A considerable portion of students reported neutral responses (25%) or a lack of confidence (18%), even though a majority of students reported feeling confident (58%). This indicates that, despite overall confidence, some students may still face underlying comprehension challenges.


Q6: Confidence in Understanding Academic Texts
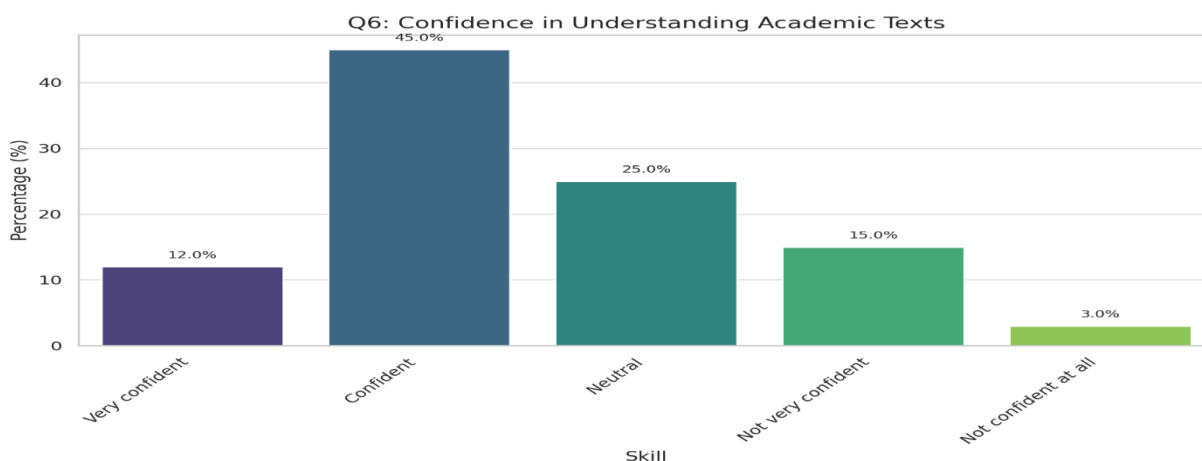
Students' Perceived Difficulties in Translation Skills

Participants were asked to identify the language skills that they found most difficult. The most challenging areas were reported as academic writing (22.6%), terminology (19.4%), followed by vocabulary (16.1%) and grammar (12.9%). This explains why linguistic tasks in translation can pose certain difficulties.

Q7: Most Challenging Skills in Translation (Multiple responses allowed)
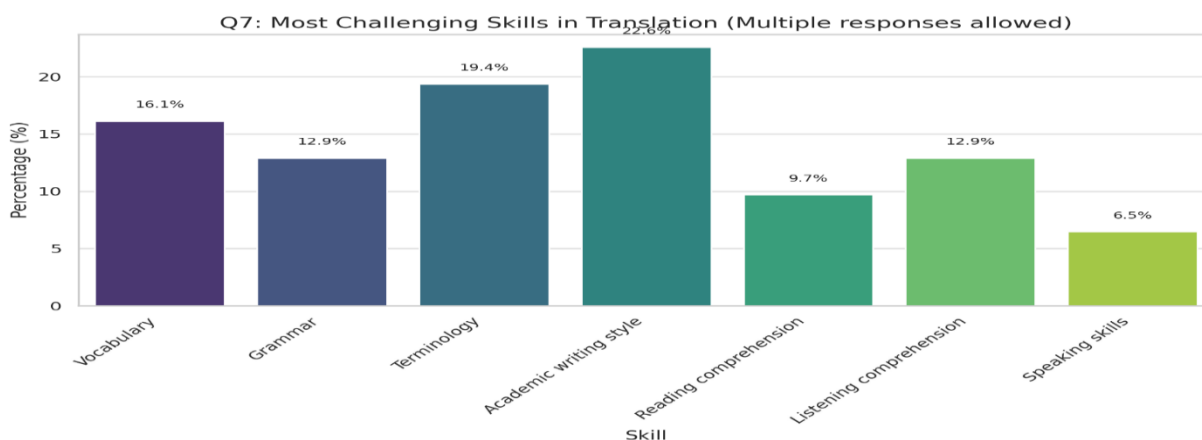
Students' Recommendations for Focus in English Instruction

In response to question eight, participants were asked to indicate which areas should be emphasized more in English courses. 25% of the students found that translation practice should be emphasized more in English courses. This also implies that the English courses need to be more specialized in terms of their task-oriented nature. 20.8% emphasized vocabulary and terminology, 16.7% preferred grammar and sentence structure, 12.5% focused on writing academic papers, and 14.6% focused on listening and comprehension skills.

Q8: Areas to Emphasize More in English Courses
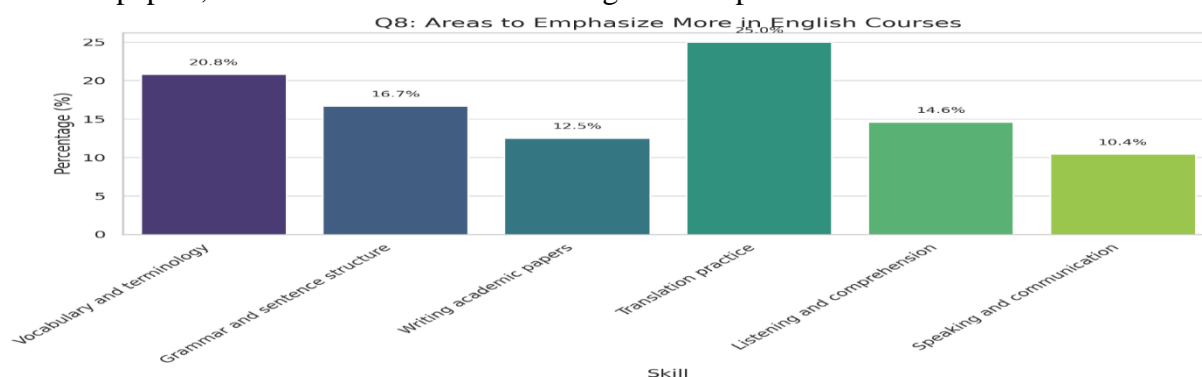
Students' Analysis of English Courses' Effectiveness

Participants were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the current English courses in meeting their academic and professional needs. The data suggest that the majority of the respondents (45%) found the current English courses to be effective, while a significant proportion (30%) were neutral. A smaller percentage (10%) found the course to be ineffective.


Q9: Effectiveness of Current English Courses
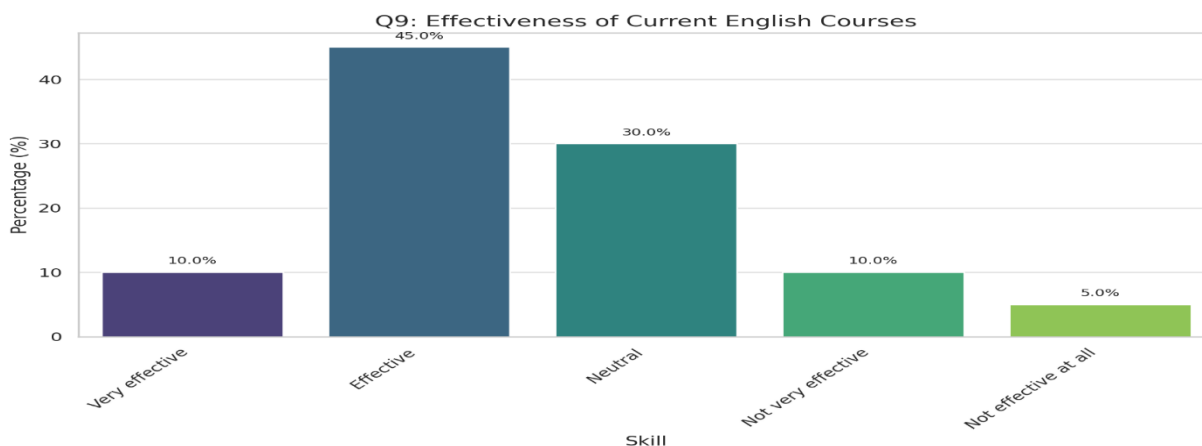
Students' Suggestions for Extra Assistance

Participants were asked to suggest what additional support would be helpful for them in improving their English language skills. Among the preferred activities, workshops (20%), writing practice (18%), and practice of listening/speaking (20%) are frequently mentioned. It indicates that students have shown willingness to engage in practical learning, in addition to the classroom instructions.
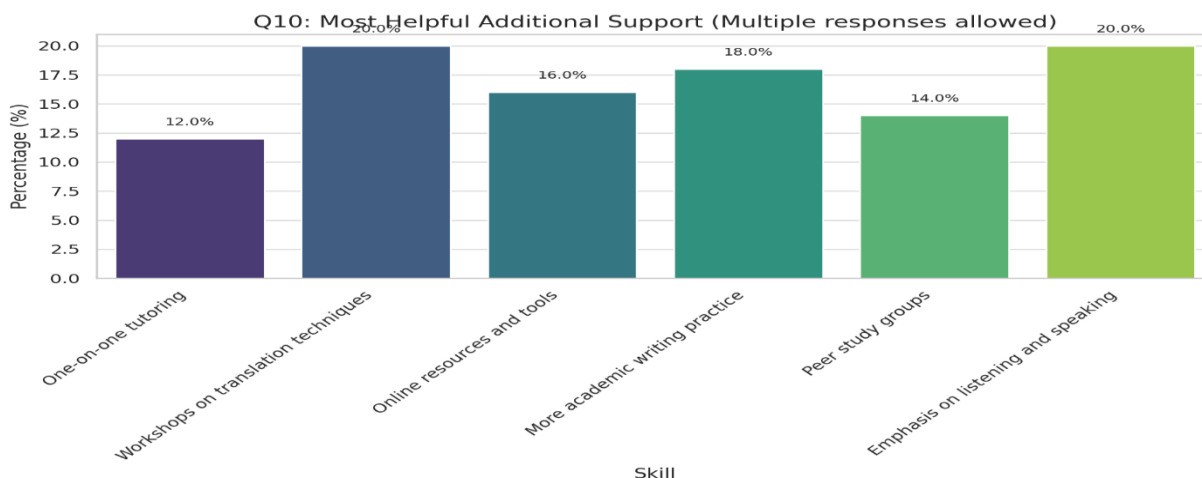
**Students' Perception of English Proficiency Enhancing Translation Ability**

Participants were asked whether they believe that improving their English proficiency would enhance their translation skills. The survey results suggest that a substantial majority of respondents believe that improving English proficiency will have a positive impact on translation performance, with 70% being certain and 20% being somewhat certain. This indicates a strong consensus on the importance of English language skills in translation.
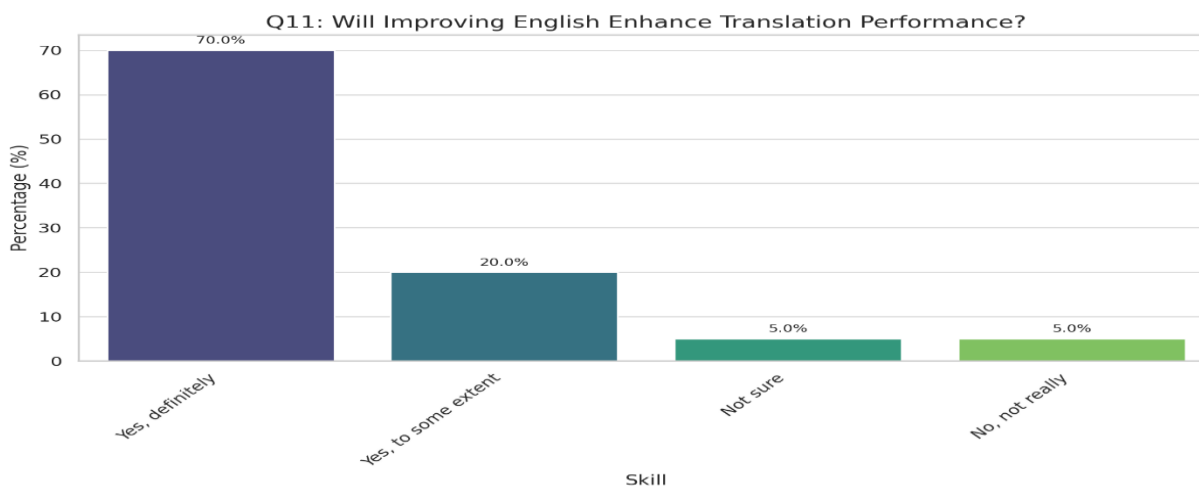
Students' Interest in Extra English Sessions

Participants were asked whether they would be willing to attend extra workshops or training sessions in English. Additional training is welcomed by most students, with 60% responding "yes" or 25% responding maybe.

Q12: Willingness to Attend Extra Language Training
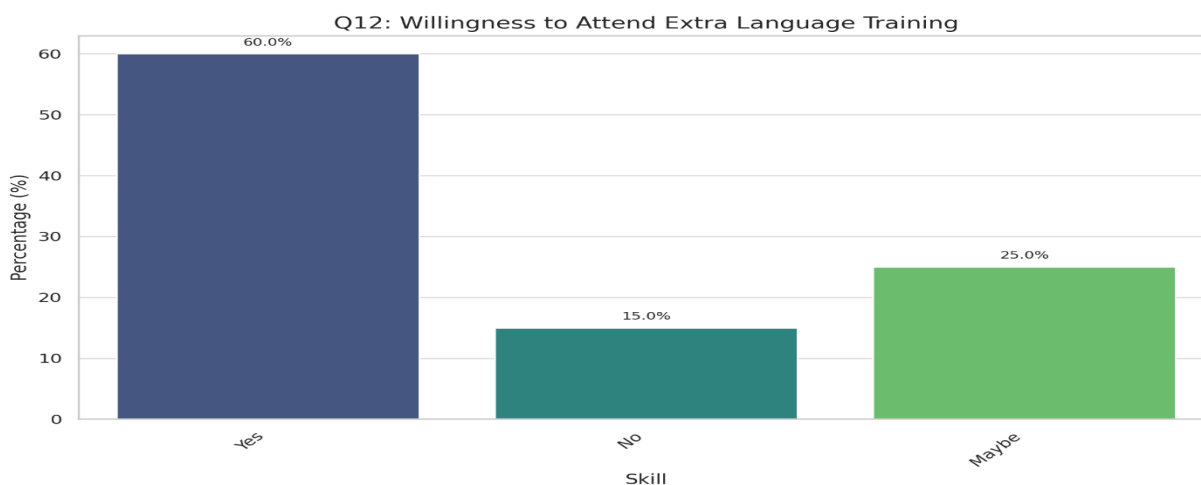
Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to examine the target and learning needs of students in the Translation Studies program at the University of Gujrat, as identified through Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) needs analysis model. The questionnaire results indicated that, despite recognizing the importance of English proficiency in areas such as reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and translation-specific skills, students continue to face challenges in applying their communicative skills in domains like academic writing, grammar, and terminology. Similar patterns of ideological mediation through translation have been observed in the reconstruction of feminist identities across cultural contexts (Irshad & Yasmin, 2023; 2022). This aligns with Robinson's (1991) view that ESP learners often struggle to transfer general language knowledge to domain-specific contexts, particularly in academic and professional communication. The findings demonstrate that students consider reading, writing, and speaking the most valuable skills for their learning and future careers. However, challenges persist in areas like grammar, vocabulary, and listening comprehension. Additionally, many students consider their writing skills to be at an intermediate level, but lack confidence in writing English appropriately. The study highlights the need to reassess English language instruction within Translation Studies programs to effectively meet the demands of translation work and students' learning preferences (Hyland, 2006). Consequently, a communication-focused, learner-centered approach to English courses within the department should be considered. Such a shift could significantly enhance students' academic performance and job readiness. This supports Flowerdew's (2013) recommendation that ESP course design should reflect the real-world communicative practices of the target profession to improve learning outcomes. In summary, aligning ESP instruction with students' identified needs and implementing a learner-centered approach can play a crucial role in boosting their academic success and professional development in translation studies.

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