CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

5.1 Discussion of the Interview Findings and Results:

Having analyzed the interviews by means of grouping the responses to categories, the next step was to discuss the findings and results obtained from this analysis. In fact, the analysis of the interview has revealed that English is a necessary tool for the students in the General Nursing Department, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Hodeidah University, Yemen. This has been revealed in their use of English in nearly all their academic studies and professional Commitments. The findings of the interviews will be discussed under the following headings:

1. The macro-skills of language.

2. Vocabulary

3. Grammar

4. Attitudes towards English

5. Other needs

5.1.1 The Macro-Skills of Language

a. Listening

Listening is one of the most important English skills that was expressed by most of the informants. They need listening in their study as in ‘listening to lectures’
or in their professional commitment as in ‘listening to medical discussions’. Listening can be considered as an integral in-class activity in many university levels as well as one way of learning and comprehending the subject matter as shown in the interview. In the Faculty of Medical Sciences, General Nursing Department, it could be claimed that listening to lectures has a secondary role in the teaching learning process. This is reflected in the teacher informants’ responses in the interview which gave the impression to the researcher that not all lectures are in English. In addition, the majority of the respondents in the questionnaires claimed that English and Arabic are used when lecturing. Lecturing, as it is a tradition in many Arab universities, is in Arabic and only the technical terms are in English (Zoghoul 1985). In all cases it could be agreed that the students need, to a certain extent, to listen to medical discussions, seminars, etc.

b. Speaking

Responses of the student and graduate informants to the interview questions revealed a pressing need for speaking. The need for speaking figured often in their responses. Avery important issue that was raised by most of the student and graduate informants was a need for an interaction approach to language learning and that would allow them, as they expressed in their responses to question 1 of the interview, to participate in medical discussion with doctors, present medical topics in English, etc. This indicates that the students emphasize the need for more fluency in speaking.

The learner’s need for oral interaction was also supported by some of the teacher informants’ responses to question 4 of their interview.
c. Reading

The interview analyses have shown that reading is along term most required, academic need. In addition to reading their handouts and textbooks, the medical students need to read other medical references so as to keep abreast of the new developments in medical stream e.g. research articles, journals, abstracts etc. It is also a long term academic need because even if the medical literature and the medium of instruction is in Arabic, there would still be a need (as affirmed by the subject teachers in their responses to question 6 of their interview, response categories 1 and 3) for reading to keep pace with the new developments and for higher studies in English medical institutions.

d. Writing

Like reading, writing is of crucial importance to the students especially for promotion purposes (all the students’ examination questions and answers are in English). It was figured prominently in the students’ responses to the interview questions. Although writing has been considered as an important need by the students themselves, the subject teachers reported that these students have difficulties in this skill in terms of construction sentences and making spelling mistakes in their written examinations, which could be interpreted as a student’s lack of interest in this skill.

5.1.2 Vocabulary

The concern with language related issues revolved primarily around vocabulary expansion and grammar accuracy.
The informants have pleaded to be exposed to more non-medical related lexis and collocations so as to enable them to function more efficiently in their academic studies. This plea comes from the fact that vocabulary knowledge is the single most important area of second language competence. The teacher informants have reported that the students prefer written examinations to oral ones, which interprets the students inability to retrieve the correct word when speaking. This has been said to be the main problem in linguistic breakdown in speaking. This supposition seems to support what Dillert (1975) had said,

.... In order to correctly express his thoughts... a literate adult will have to know a great deal of foreign words in a foreign language.

(Cited in Bin-Tyeh, 1996, p.52)

5.1.3 Grammar

The issue of grammar is one of the needs figured often in the students' responses of the difficulties the informants face in language use. The informants have expressed a need to tackle grammar in their medical studies. There is also a need for grammar accuracy because the students and graduates feel at a disadvantage that they could not use language correctly even after having studied English for six consecutive years in school.

Grammar has been said to affect the speaking and writing skills especially when writing under pressure or face to face conversation. On the other hand, the informants' ignorance of grammar in the examination answers does not mean that they do not strive for grammar accuracy in writing. But it might be interpreted that
they are worried about the time fixed for the examination, an issue which has been
never mentioned in the interview.

Difficulty in grammar may include difficulties in the use of correct verbs,
logical connectives, articles etc. which have been a problem to many foreign learners
and these difficulties are said to increase if the two systems of the languages are
different. Palmer (1966, as cited in Tarantino, 1988, p.47) says that,

For almost any language the part that concerns the verb is
the most difficult. Learning a language is to a very large degree
learning how to operate the verbal forms of the language.... the
pattern and structure of the verb in each language seem to differ... from those in every other language.

5.1.4 Attitudes Towards English

The informants' preference of English indicates that there is a positive attitude
towards the English language. Therefore, it is expected that the students' motivation
towards English is high and this is said to help in the learning process. In the case of
the situation here this motivation is geared to their instrumental needs (as expressed in
the informants' responses) - the need to read medical literature, the need to keep pace
with the new medical development.

Some informants linked their preference of English with the integrative
motivation, which is wanting to earn language in order to communicate with the
people of another culture who speak it. This indicates that the informants need the
kind of language that would help them in their academic studies i.e. English for
Academic purposes (EAP).
5.1.5 Other Needs

It is interesting to notice that in their responses to the interview questions the informants (students, graduates and subject teachers) provided suggestions on the needs to be included in the English programme. Some subject teacher informants suggested that English programme should have related to the medical studies of students. There were also suggestions from the teacher informants that the Faculty should have an English entrance examination for the new students who are to be admitted to the Faculty. Also that the English programme needs to be introduced to the students at least once every year and not only twice in their whole study.

5.2 Discussion of the Questionnaire Findings and Results:

This section of chapter five discusses and conflates the results drawn from the research questionnaires used in this study. It will also elucidate and clarify the findings of this discussion. The discussion of the results of questionnaires attempted in this section will answer the research questions of the study by drawing on, synthesizing and comparing results from all the relevant sources of data. In order to answer these questions, the discussion will be carried out under the following headlines:

- Importance of English Language in terms of the four main skills
- Students' difficulties and deficiencies.
- 1st year English programme.
- Evaluation of ESP coursers.
- Methodology of teaching.
- Future needs.
5.2.1 Importance of English Language Skills.

The findings of the questionnaires of the first three groups of informants, namely, the students, subject teachers and graduates have revealed that English language skills are very important for the students’ academic studies and future careers (sections 2, 3 and 2 of each questionnaire respectively).

In order to present the perceptions of the three groups of informant mentioned above, regarding the importance of language skills, mean values will be compared so that explanation and interpretation can be made. Table 1 below compares the average means of importance of the four main language skills perceived by students (table 25), subject teachers (table 26) and graduates (table 36).

**Table 1: The average means of the four main language skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 above reveals that the most important skill for both students and subject teachers is reading. As to the graduates, the most important skill is speaking. Both teachers and students agree that writing is the next important skill, whereas listening is the least important skill. Writing, on the other hand, comes next to speaking for the graduates.
The average mean for the four main skills have revealed that, reading is the most important language skill for the students of the General Nursing Department, as perceived by both students and subject teachers. This result corresponds with the interview result and also with the study carried out by Naruenatwatana (2001). On the other hand, it reveals a divergence with the studies carried out by Zoghoul (1985) and Bin-Tyeh (1996), which both showed that listening was the most important academic need.

As to the graduates, the most important skill is speaking. This result also corresponds with the results of the interview, which is considered as a strong support to what the students and graduates mentioned in the interview- the need for interaction approach, the need to participate in medical discussion with doctors, the need to present medical topics in English, etc.

Writing is considered the next important skill as perceived by the subject teachers and students, a point which was expressed about in the interviews in terms of a 'need to form correct sentences in English' and a 'need for writing without spelling mistakes'.

Listening has been considered the least needed skill by both subject teachers and students. Although this result conflicts with the results of the interview, where listening was a 'pressing' need for the majority of the students (see Q1 of students and graduates' interview), it may still be of great importance to what the students had mentioned in the interview- the need for listening to lectures and take notes in English.
5.2.2 Students' Difficulties

The results of question six in section one of both students and graduates' questionnaires have revealed that students of FMS, General Nursing Department as well as the medical graduates, encounter a lot of difficulties related to language study and use. The results of the question asked about students' difficulty in the interview also proved this. It was clear that students lack the basic strategies, which could have enabled them to learn and deal with the language. This lack of background causes a barrier between students and the situations which require the students to use English effectively. And this is a clear picture of the present situation where students find themselves studying the ESP courses. Students mainly lack the communicative and study skills and strategies.

Consequently, this issue should be taken into consideration whenever these learners are to be provided with an English course, so that they can start to rebuild and develop the basic skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing. This leads to emphasize the need of general English courses before the teaching stage of ESP. It is also crucial at this stage to raise, reinforce and sustain students' motivation and spirits by making them feel that they are studying and learning the language from the start.

The weak basic foundation or background in English can be found in all levels of study of the students especially 1st year students. This could be linked to the fact that:
1. The 1st year students (secondary graduates) are for the first time exposed to different scientific topics in English which they have to read, comprehend and be examined on them.

2. These students who are newly graduated from secondary schools are not aware of the reading skills.

3. Their knowledge of lexis is very limited.

Some of the factors (elicited by the researcher and students themselves) responsible for the failure of English teaching and learning at schools were as follows:

1. There is shortage of English teachers in schools in general and in the ones located in the countryside in particular where the situation is much worse. The majority of teachers teaching English are not well qualified. It was reported that in some cases, students were taught by teachers who were not specialized in English. They added to boot that in some years they were not taught English at all.

2. Big classes (approximately 70) in many cases, particularly in the cities, were also a major obstacle that affected the learning and teaching situation in general and the language teaching and learning in particular.

3. The shortage of textbooks in some cases partially affected the situation.

4. Many facilities used in teaching and learning, such as audio-visual aids, language laboratories, libraries etc. are not available.

5. Pupils were unaware of the role and importance of the English language at earlier stage. Therefore, they lack motivation and interest in the present situation.
5.2.3. 1st Year English Programme.

The 1st year English programme currently taught in the FMS is claimed to support and help students in their academic study. The first three sources of information, namely, the students, subject teachers and graduates responded favorably to the section in their questionnaires about their views on the current English programme. A massive majority of the respondents opt for an English programme that is based on language specific to medical studies. (See tables 31, 32 & 37).

The use of subject-specific language in ESP or EAP course has been a debate among many ESP writers. Those who are against the issue have defended their point of view by claiming that teaching will concentrates on explaining the subject matter, rather than tackling the language used. Dudley-Evans (1990) and other ESP writers support the issue that language should be subject-specific. They claim that the students should be introduced to the subject-specific language so that they could see their ‘actual difficulties’ in their different disciplines.

Subject-specific language enables students to practice those linguistic elements or activities relevant to specific Specialization.

(Hock and Chin, 1988 as cited in Bin-Tyeh, 1996, p.73)

It is very important here to mention that some of the student informants in the interview have claimed that ‘.... there is no link between what we are doing in English and what we are doing in our medical subjects’, a point which was also emphasized by the subject teachers. It is also necessary to mention that all the three sources of information were against the 1st year English programme that it did not meet and help students in their linguistic and academic needs.
Depending upon what has been said above, we can say that the need of English specific to medical studies could be interpreted as:

1- The students need to tackle their medical language and relate what they are doing in English with their medical studies.

2- The students are given no guidance as to the relevance of the current English material to specific tasks they have to carry out in English (in their medical studies). Therefore, they fail to make necessary transfer of what they have learnt in their English class to their medical studies.

3- There could be a possibility that the students have found the current texts in the English programme ‘too simple’. These texts are of the simplified type intended to meet the students’ linguistic level. Because of the simplicity of these texts the students, the researcher agrees, lost interest even though they could have benefited from the language practice.

Apart from the need for subject-specific language, a quite big number of the informants expressed a need for General English (see item 3 in tables 31, 32 & 37). The students and graduates had in the interview expressed a desire for an English programme that is based on General English. This preference of General English to Medical English arises from the need to communicate (see response category No 3, 6 & 8, Q2 of students’ interview).

5.2.4 Students’ Future Needs

The findings of sections 3 in both students and graduates’ questionnaires and section 4 in the subject teachers’ questionnaire (items 5-7) have revealed that all the
informants will need English in the future to go on their higher studies in English speaking medical institutions, participate in medical conferences/seminars and work with foreign colleagues. This means that the respondents are aware of the importance of English even after they finish their academic studies.

The matching of some items (section 2 & 3) in the questionnaires between the students' needs and the subject teachers' perception of these needs are a very strong inclination towards specification of an ESP course that would cater for the students' needs. The matching of these needs have shown that the receptive skill of reading and the productive skills of writing and speaking are very important in both academic and professional work. These skills mentioned above have been also needed by the graduates as illustrated in their respective questionnaire (section 2).

Therefore, it could be inferred that the matching in ranking and priority of language needs in the findings of section 2, 3 and 2 of the students, teachers and graduates' questionnaires respectively constitute evidence of a strong instrumental motivation to learn English. The findings have also revealed that in their academic studies and professional commitments the students/graduates need to read, write, listen and speak. This might be interpreted as an endorsement of the integrated skills approach to ESP, hence including both the target and learning needs.

What has been finally revealed in the findings of the questionnaires and interviews is that English is required at the functional and notional level to carry out different communicative activities at all stages of the students' academic studies and their future professional commitments.
5.2.5 Evaluation of ESP Courses

In chapter 1 we reviewed the existing English courses at the Faculty of Medical Sciences, so as to highlight their strengths and weaknesses. In fact, the shortcomings of these courses outnumbered their merits and advantages. To further verify and support the conclusions arrived at by the critical review, it was decided to include some items in the students and ESP teachers’ questionnaires that seek the views of the two groups mentioned above on this aspect.

The findings of the analysis of the section of material evaluation in the students and ESP teachers’ questionnaires revealed that the teaching material, by all means, is not appropriate and does not meet students’ current or future needs. This is revealed by the absence of the needs mentioned in the students and graduates’ questionnaires in the current English courses and which were perceived as ‘very important’ for students’ academic studies and graduates’ professional commitments.

This inappropriateness of the current English courses is also proved by the responses of the informants to the section in their questionnaires regarding their views on the 1st year English programme (see table 31, 32 & 37). An overwhelming majority of the informants believed that the currently taught English courses did not tally with their needs (though some informants were in favor of these two courses). They believed that the courses did not show them how to use English in certain situations related to their academic studies and future profession.

The materials seem to follow, to some extent, the earlier approach in a way that they are based on a collection of specialized texts, followed by comprehension
questions, and exercises on grammar. However, such approach does not attempt in any way to help students develop strategies for using language skills neither for study nor for communication. Because of this, it can be said that the approach of the materials is inadequate in the present study.

It follows from these accounts that it is necessary to prepare a suitable course, or at least to make changes in the current one in order to bridge the gap between what is being taught and what is actually needed or required by the students as well as the graduates. It should be emphasized here that making the teaching materials relevant and responsive to the learners’ needs would help them develop a continuous and persistent extrinsic motivation to learn the desired language (Shuja’a, 2004, p.226).

5.2.6 Methodology of Teaching

This section deals with the issue of teaching methods, medium of instruction and evaluation system that are followed in the teaching of ESP courses at the Faculty of Medical Sciences, General Nursing Department. It discusses information obtained from the ESP teacher questionnaire (sections 2, 3 & 5) and student questionnaire (section 5).

At present students of Medical Sciences are tested on the basis of one objective test at the end of each semester. From the ESP teachers’ responses to item B. section 5, of their questionnaire (table 45), it can be inferred that one aspect of methodology (testing) does not help the learners in achieving any kind of language progress. All the ESP teachers agreed that one test conducted at the end of each
semester is not enough. This indeed is what actually happens. This has been a practice for several years, due to large numbers of students taking the English course and to a limited number of teaching hours.

Referring to table 45 regarding evaluation system (testing), it can be observed that all the ESP teachers agreed that the best method to evaluate students is by a test including class work assessment, attendance, home assignments, mid semester test and final test. Only one teacher suggested that the students should be evaluated on the basis of one objective test at the end of each semester.

The kind of test advocated by all the ESP teachers has the advantage of, the researcher thinks, being frequent in evaluating students' progress and achievement in English language. It has been emphasized that frequent test plays an important role in both teaching and learning process (Bloom et al., 1971). The usefulness of such a kind of test has a great impact on the formation process of the student learning. Outcomes of this type of test will certainly point to students, weaknesses and will suggest the type of remedy in the course, or a change in the teaching method (Shuja'a 2004, p.230).

It is time now to move on to the actual teaching methods used in the context of the present study. As it has been observed from table 51, all the ESP teacher indicated that the medium of instruction they used most of the time was 'teaching English through English and Arabic'. This implies the use of grammar-translation method. It is known that this method does not pay any attention to oral skills, communicative writing and to classroom interactions, either teacher-teacher or student-student-interaction. No role in this method is given to the student. That is student's role is
passive in this method. In this method the teacher is the authority in the class, whereas the student is not given the chance to practice and use the target language in the classroom.

In the last section of the ESP teachers’ questionnaire regarding the difficulties faced by these teachers in teaching and learning English, it was mentioned (see table 47) that one of these problems is the large number of learners. It may be because of this big number of learners that the teachers resort to such teaching methods. Locastro (2001) points out that large classes make monitoring class work and giving feedback difficult. Large classes can be a very important and serious problem, because class size is an important variable in language teaching and learning (Palmer, 1999).

5.3 Overall Findings

This section sums up the findings of the study drawn from the analysis and discussion of data. The findings will be reported under the following headings:

1- Difficulties (linguistic and non-linguistic)

2- Target needs

3. Learning needs

4. The current Medical courses

5. Priorities among language skills and sub-skills
5.3.1 Linguistic Difficulties

The findings of the interviews and questionnaires of the informants of this present study have revealed agreement among these informants that the students of the Faculty of Medical Sciences have the following problems:

a) They had difficulty in understanding.

b) They had problem in identifying meanings of vocabulary items in different contexts.

c) They had difficulty in communicating orally.

d) They had problem in constructing meaningful sentences in English.

e) They had problem in the pronunciation of medical terminologies.

f) They are used to translating every word into their mother tongue.

5.3.2 Non-Linguistic Difficulties

Apart from the linguistic difficulties, the students expressed other factors that caused problems and difficulties for them in learning English and these factors can be termed as non-linguistic difficulties (hindrances). These are:

a) The two ESP courses (Medical English courses) do not provide and cater for the students' lacks and wants. They do not include basic skills that would help the students in their academic studies and prepare them for their future profession. Students and ESP teachers pointed to the insufficiency of these
two ESP courses to enable the students cope with the requirements of their academic studies and future career (see table 47 in material evaluation section).

b) The inappropriateness of the teaching method which does not encourage the students to learn the language.

c) The unavailability of teaching aids such as tape-recorder, video, flash cards, etc. may make the students' learning more uneasy. (See table 50)

d) Crowded classes have also an impact on the students' comprehension as well as participation in the class. For them, they cannot learn the language without practicing it with their classmates in the class, or without the teacher's guidance.

5.3.3 Target Needs

The findings of the analysis of data have revealed that the English language is needed to gain access to the medical literature (Nursing stream), which in the present context or situation is in English only. A vast majority of the respondents expressed a long-term need and that is of continuing their higher studies in English speaking medical institutions. English is also needed by graduates who expressed their need to carry out their professional commitments in English. Therefore, English is needed for their academic study (Medical Nursing), work and training modes.

As a consequence of the above situation, the medium in which language is used is in reading the academic texts related to their medical studies; reading/writing the questions/answers of examinations; writing research papers; listening to lectures
and participating in discussions, seminars. This means that language is needed at all mediums—reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Language is also needed by the students to listen to lectures, to talk with doctors/colleagues, to participate in medical discussions. The students also use language in the lecture hall, in the laboratory, in hospital in the practical classes and in the Faculty. As a future need language will be used abroad for study purpose and for survival.

Language is used concurrently with the English programme i.e. at the pre-medical stage (1st year Nursing). Nearly all the students have difficulties in the speaking skills, listening, reading and writing. Difficulties have also been reported on language issues particularly around vocabulary expansion and grammatical forms (as revealed by the analysis of interviews and questionnaires).

5.3.4 Learning Needs

This section summarizes what was perceived as students’ learning needs by different sources. They are called learning needs because meeting them will certainly facilitate students’ language learning. These learning needs covered the students’ ‘wants and expectation’ towards their needs and their attitude towards the English programme. The identification of these kinds of needs will also help overcome present deficiencies and difficulties, and will help in achieving the target situation needs mentioned above in (5.3.3). It is also appropriate to mention here that these learning needs do not refer only to the language itself, but also subsume methodological factors as well. These are presented in the following points:
1. Class management and organization: pair and group work during lessons to encourage class discussion and interactions.

2. Assignments, both class and take-home, help in the students’ learning process.

3. Frequent tests because these kinds of tests help in checking language development and in suggesting improvement.

4. Small classes: these will provide more learning opportunities for the students, as every student will be given time to participate in the class.

5. Use of teaching aids such as audio-visual aids and others will attract the students’ attention and increase their motivation to learn the language.

6. Relevant, authentic and interesting teaching/learning material will also help the students develop sustained motivation.

7. Applying teaching methods suitable to the purpose of the English course as well as to the learners’ needs will facilitate language learning and will enable the learners to become active and attentive learners.

8. Conducting specialized lectures in English by subject specialist teachers or by medical people from the field will enrich the students’ knowledge of academic and professional English.

5.3.5 The Current Medical English Courses

From the critical review of the current English courses and from the data analysis (the informants’ views on English programme and material evaluation sections) and discussion of the findings, it is found that Medical English courses, which are currently taught are not up to the mark, and that they do not respond to the
needs and requirements of the students’ academic study and future or professional career. The shortcomings of these courses can be reported as following:

1. They do not cater for the students’ academic needs and communicative activities mentioned in section two of their questionnaire.
2. They do not provide and encourage any class interaction.
3. They do not include speaking skills and listening comprehension.
4. Specialized vocabulary is presented in isolation instead of contextualizing it.
5. There is a little coverage of language skills that are needed in future workplace.
6. It contains a lot of isolated and decontextualised exercises.

5.3.6 Priorities among Language Skills and Sub-Skills

Based on the discussion of results obtained from different sources, the following order of the importance of the main skills was perceived: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Looking at the skills in detail, the following sub-skills have a priority over other sub-skills:

1. Reading to understand exam questions in English.
2. Reading to get all the information from an English medical text.
3. Reading to get the main information from an English medical text.
4. Reading books and academic references.
5. Reading the labels of medicine when buy them.

6. Writing test/exam answers in English.

7. Writing essays/research papers in English.

8. Writing medical reports in English.

9. Writing the history of patient.

10. Discussing in English medical cases with senior doctors.

11. Giving correct answers in English when asked.

12. Giving instruction to non-Arabic patient.

13. Following medical discussion/seminars in English.

14. Understanding questions asked by lecturers/colleagues in English.

Other skills shown in tables also receive considerable degree of importance. This implies that all these skills should be included in the medical courses because the students themselves, as revealed from the analysis of data, wished to have a good command of all those skills presented in the questionnaire.