

KAU Undergraduate Student Body English Language Needs Assessment Project

Research for a Better Foundation Program

Project Proposal

PRIMARY GOALS OF THIS RESEARCH

1. Assess students' current use of the English language by
 - a. Language Skill (Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening).
 - b. Academic Department (e.g., Chemistry, Economics and Management, Medicine, etc.).
 - c. Academic Year (2nd, 3rd, and 4th Year Students).
 - d. Academic Purpose (e.g., report writing, note taking, examinations, classroom discussion, laboratory work)
 - e. Extra-curricular activities such as sports, language and drama clubs, and travel.
2. Assess students' post-Foundation Program English language studies
 - a. Formal university training (e.g., English Language Department)
 - b. Attendance at private language schools, such as the Wall Street Institute, and use of private tutors.
3. Assess KAU pre-matriculation English language background
 - a. Primary and secondary school training.
 - i. Public school training
 - ii. Private school training
 - b. Supplementary private school training
 - c. Overseas training
 - d. Daily interaction with native English language speakers, Arabic speakers of English, and non-Arabic speakers of English.
4. Assess student's perceived usefulness of the English Language Foundation Program in students' undergraduate studies.
5. Assess students' individual characteristics such as age and grade point average.

Research Design

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Obtain an anonymous list of 2nd, 3rd, and returning 4th year undergraduate students, draw a random sample from this population that is sufficiently large to provide an accurate and reliable assessment of undergraduate student needs and use of the English language, obtain contact information for these randomly selected individuals, and administer a survey upon their return to school in the fall of 2011.

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

During the course of the summer prepare a questionnaire in English that addresses the topics outlined under *Primary Goals of This Research* above. Translate this questionnaire into Arabic and administer it to a randomly selected group of students attending the 2011 summer session. Analyze the results of this preliminary survey, and interview a group of those surveyed in an effort to understand the effectiveness of the questionnaire in obtaining the desired information. Redesign the questionnaire accordingly.

Sampling

In order to perform a comprehensive analysis that would provide the information necessary to build a solid Foundation Year English Language Program it would be unwise to simply sample the entire undergraduate student body. The reasons for this are two:

1. As the English Language Foundation Program in its current form has only been in existence for two years 4th year undergraduate student needs and uses of the English language are likely to be different from those of 2nd and 3rd year students. With adequate sample sizes of each academic year we could compare students who have been through the foundation year with those who have not.
2. Students in different departments and faculties are likely to have different needs and uses for the English language. Thus, treating everyone the same would result in a program that would benefit some students more than others and would likely be burdensome to many. As the idea is to improve motivation, it would be unwise to ignore these differences. Thus, sufficient samples size from each department or faculty is recommended.

STRATIFIED RANDOM SAMPLING

In order to take into account the aforementioned differences in student needs a stratified random sample by academic year and area of study is proposed. In order to perform accurate and reliable comparisons between these groups a sampling larger than that required for only the undergraduate study body would be required.

Minimum Sample Sizes for Selected Small Populations

POPULATION SIZE	95% LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE			99% LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE		
	ACCURACY (PLUS OR MINUS)			ACCURACY (PLUS OR MINUS)		
	3%	5%	10%	3%	5%	10%
500	250	218	81	250	250	125
1,000	500	278	88	500	399	143
1,500	624	306	91	750	460	150
2,000	696	323	92	959	498	154
3,000	788	341	94	1,142	544	158
5,000	880	357	95	1,347	586	161

Pilot Study

PURPOSE

The purpose of the pilot study is two-fold: one, it would provide an opportunity to determine whether the questions asked in the survey instrument are able to evoke answers appropriate to the survey's assessment objectives; two, it would provide an opportunity to change the nature of the sample frame to account for additional research questions that might arise during the course of the pilot study.

REQUIREMENTS

As the pilot study would be conducted only on those students attending the summer session, a much smaller sample-size would be required.

SAMPLE FRAME

As students attending the summer session are mostly Foundation Program repeaters, many of the questions related to undergraduate needs and use could not be addressed properly. As a result, we could not rely on Foundation Program repeaters for the pilot study. For this reason it may be necessary to conduct the pilot study in the fall of 2011 and the full survey in the spring of 2012.

The Questionnaire

Depending on the length of the questionnaire a variety of question formats should be introduced including the use of videos and sound tracks in order to maintain student interest and attention. For, in this way we could secure a complete and thorough response to each question.

General Requirements

Good surveys take good preparation and analysis to achieve their goals. Some of the more general requirements for this survey include:

- Direct or indirect access to the university's undergraduate student data base.
- Direct or indirect access to the external examination office in order to secure ample and appropriate space and materials for the administration of the questionnaire.
- Cooperation on the part of the university's IT department or English Language Institute for the purpose of preparing and scoring the answer sheets for the questionnaire and pilot study.
- Endorsement from the university at large in order to ensure good participation from the undergraduate student body and appropriate survey results.
- Access to the appropriate statistical software for the purpose of analysis.
- Ample space, personnel, and time to create, test, and administer the survey, as well as analyze and report the survey results.

USENUA Project

Undergraduate Student English Needs and Uses Assessment Project

BACKGROUND: The purpose of the USENUA Project is to provide the Kingdom, the University, and the English Language Institute with the information they need to develop academic programs that utilize undergraduate student knowledge of the English language in the best way possible. The project consists of a randomly administered survey and examination of the KAU undergraduate student body. A final report including an executive summary will be delivered to the relevant university faculty and department heads.

Requested Variables and Data

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION

Purpose of Request: In order to constitute focus groups and insure the integrity of data it may become necessary to contact a particular student during the course of the study. The student's registration number would provide us with a means of contact that would not comprise the student's right to privacy.

Requested Variable:

000101 Registration (Matriculation, Enrolment) Number

STUDENT'S CURRENT ACADEMIC STATUS

Purpose of Request: Student use of, and need for the English language is expected to vary across faculties, departments, and academic years. Further, it is important to know how a student's knowledge of the English language affects his overall academic and program performance. Finally, we would like to know the extent to which language acquisition and attrition take place after a student has completed his foundation year.

Requested Variables:

000102 Enrolment Status (Regular, External, Online)

000103 Faculty or College

000104 Department

000105 Total Credits

000106 Program Credits

000107 GPA

STUDENT'S PREVIOUS SCHOOLING

Purpose of Request: In order to assess the success or failure of the foundation program it is important to know the knowledge level of a student before he enters the program. Also, for the purpose of recruitment and placement it would be useful to know something about a student's previous educational background.

Requested Variables:

000108 University Entrance Examination Score

000109 English Placement Examination Score

000110 High School Type (Normal, Commercial, Industrial)

STUDENT'S PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Purpose of Request: Language acquisition and attrition depend on many factors. The following list of control variables will help us to determine better the relationship between student academic performance and his knowledge and use of the English language.

Requested Variables:

- 000111 Nationality**
- 000112 Date of Birth**
- 000113 Place of Birth: (Zipcode, If Possible)**
- 000114 Sex**
- 000115 Marital Status**
- 000116 Health Condition (Normal, Disabled)**

CURRENT GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND INTERNET USE

Purpose of Request: Like the above personal characteristics a student's geographical location and his use of the internet can reflect and/or influence his *use, knowledge, and need* for the English language.

Requested Variables:

- 000117 Zip Code (or Address)**
- 000118 eMail (Domain Name)**

GENERAL COMMENT AND REQUEST: Based on the above explanation and requests for variables and data please provide us with any additional variables that you might have that could help us better understand undergraduate student *use, knowledge, and need* of the English language as it relates to his/her undergraduate and aspired graduate studies at King Abdul-Aziz University.

If you are able to provide us with additional variables and data, please follow the above numbering scheme with its provision.

Thank you for your cooperation and timely response.
The USENUA Project Research Team

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PRIMARY GOALS OF THIS RESEARCH

Administered to all post-foundation year students included in the sample

1) **Undergraduate Need and Uses of the English Language** – The purpose of this section is to determine current needs and uses of the English language as applied to students' post-foundation year undergraduate studies. By discovering how the English language is used and whether students feel that they are adequately prepared for these uses we can better know on which aspects of the English language we should focus students' attention during the foundation year and how to restructure the program to assist students as they pass through their undergraduate studies. The assessment would be conducted by

- a. Language skill (reading, writing, speaking, and Listening)
- b. Academic year (all years except the foundation year)
- c. Academic department (chemistry, economics and management, medicine, etc.)
- d. Use and need as it applies to
 - i. Lecture
 - ii. Classroom
 - iii. Laboratory Work
 - iv. Examination
 - v. Assignments
 - vi. Field work

2) **Undergraduate Informal and Out-of-School Training and Exposure** – The purpose of this section is to identify in- and out-of-school sources of English language exposure and training that are available and used by students, but do not form a part of students' formal undergraduate training. By discovering these sources and their availability we can avoid redundancy and better tailor the foundation program and other language services offered by the English Language Institute to the true needs of our students.

- a. In school training and exposure would focus on activities such as
 - i. Drama and language clubs
 - ii. Reading Circles
 - iii. Sports Events
 - iv. Exhibitions and cultural and religious outings
 - v. Overseas studies

- b. Out of school training and exposure would focus on activities such as
 - i. Daily interaction with native English speakers, Arabic speakers of English, and non-Arabic speakers of English
 - ii. Travel and religious encounters
 - iii. Private schooling such as the Wall Street Institute
 - iv. Private tutors

3) **Previous Training and Exposure** – The purpose of this section is to determine the depth and breadth of student training in, and exposure to the English language before KAU students enter their foundation year. This information can be combined with information received from placement tests to better know how to recruit students for, and place students in the foundation year. Areas of training and exposure that would be examined are:

- a. Primary School Training
 - i. Number of years of English language study
 - ii. Private or public school training
 - iii. Extracurricular exposure
- b. Secondary School Training
 - i. Number of years of English language study
 - ii. Private or public school training
 - iii. Extracurricular exposure

4) **Personal Information Not Available in the Student Registry** – The purpose of this section would be to gather any information not available in the student registry that could be useful in helping us to identify better the linguistic nature of the KAU undergraduate and foundation year student body.

PRIMARY GOALS OF THIS RESEARCH

Administered only to those students of the sample
who have passed through the current foundation program.

5) **The Utility of the Foundation Year** – The purpose of this section is to gather student opinion about the usefulness of the foundation year in helping them to succeed in their undergraduate coursework. Specifically students would be asked to comment on

- a. Their overall opinion of the program.
- b. Specific strengths and weaknesses of the program
- c. Areas of suggested improvement.