A Needs Analysis of ESP in Textile Engineering Profession in Ethiopian Context

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Abstract

This study investigated the English language needs of textile industries in Ethiopia so as to help prepare the students in textile engineering which is currently one of the popular fields at the university level. The data were collected from six textile companies that were selected randomly. Through 156 questionnaires and from interview with eight General Managers, Human Resource Managers and section leaders on the tasks performed in English and the English language needs of the textile industries further information were collected. The results indicate that the textile companies perform many activities using English; therefore, speaking, reading and writing skills necessary for professionals in the textile fields to function properly in their working environments. Consequently, appropriately designed ESP courses could build textile professionals' capacity through needs-based language skills development.

Keywords: Needs Analysis, ESP, Textile Industry, Textile Engineering

Introduction

Background of the Study

English has been a world interest for many years. Its dominance has been increasing from time to time. "English is used as a global lingua franca in an enormous range of domains, from international politics to entertainment, from air traffic to academia, trade, diplomacy and social media" (Mauranen, 2010:1). Similarly, English, which has the status of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the country's curriculum, is a strongly needed language in Ethiopia having a history of more than seven decades as a dominant foreign language. There are common reasons for why English is needed especially in countries such as Ethiopia.

According to Coleman (2010), English plays a significant role for countries to participate in global economy and achieve development through knowledge and skills development. This involves economic equality, employability, international mobility and development as well as unlocking development opportunities and accessing crucial information that includes an impartial knowledge. These and other reasons for learning English can be better addressed through understanding the specific purpose of learning the language. This notion leads to the consideration of teaching and learning English for Specific Purpose.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is different from teaching and learning English for General Purposes (EGP), for it emphasizes the learners' purpose of leaning English. Furthermore, learners of ESP are usually adult learners who are preparing themselves for a certain profession such as teaching, medicine, engineering, law and tourism. Textile Engineering is one of the fields of studies that attracts an increasing number of students to join higher institutions in Ethiopia every academic year. This is because the government takes the textile sector as one of the focus areas to realize an industry-led development. Following that, many local and international textile industries are launching their investment in Ethiopia and looking for professionals who graduate from higher institutions in textile engineering and related fields.

Statement of the problem

Studies and experiences of different countries on skills development such as communication and networking issues show that the participation of the educated and proficient citizens is vital. Since Ethiopia is working on industry-led economy policy in which textiles is one of the major focus areas, productive human and natural resource use to compete in the continual technology, industry and market is crucial. Thinking of having educated and well trained professionals in science, technology and the global market, it is necessary to consider the language of communication or the language of professional areas.

Educational institutions, including higher institutions play significant roles in getting professionals ready for the working world trough content knowledge and skills development. However, even if the weak progress and poor proficiency of English in Ethiopia seems common (Birhanu, 2000; Sharma, 2013), the teaching and learning processes of English language also determine the students' and graduates proficiency especially if the language teaching methodology is not in line with the language needs of the working environment. Actually, significant numbers of employers (mostly from the textile industries) in Ethiopia complain about graduates' English language skills especially communication skills. Furthermore, teaching the language through Communication Skills, Basic Writing Skills and Technical Report Writing and Research Methods courses from first to fifth year students, I also observed significant gaps in students' English language skills. Taking these gaps into consideration, the researcher would like to investigate the English language needs of the textile industries or working environments as well as if there is a requirement to consider a specialist English language teaching and learning in the textile fields.

Research questions

What English language abilities are required in the textile i. industries for communication purposes?

ii. What English language skills are frequently used in textile fields?

Review of Related Studies

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative language teaching becomes the interest of many language experts since 1970s. Although the communicative approach has been criticized for overlooking grammatical rules and structures, it managed attracting scholars for more than four decades. According to Didenko & Pichugova (2015), despite Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) proving to be authoritative and not so perfect, there is no other method which can take the leading role other than itself. In addition to dealing with applied language teaching, CLT and ESP have components that are related, and two of those basic components is that they both prioritize student centered approach and functional learning.

Communicative language teaching has been getting much attention since its introduction than any other approach. It became attractive to language teachers and learners, researches and experts because it has most of the language teaching/learning requirements and it focuses on the purpose of learning the language. Communicative language teaching is a set of principles which deals with the purpose of language teaching/learning, the kinds of activities that best facilitate the language teaching/learning, the role of teachers and the role of students (Richards, 2006).

Some researchers believe that the current vitality of these principles prove that CLT is still important in language teaching. On the other hand, others believe that language learning pedagogy is at the post-modern stage where neither approaches nor methodologies are required. CLT, unlike grammatical competence which deals with mechanical habit formation, it focuses on communicative competence. The communicative competence includes how to use the range of languages for different functions; how to vary the use of the language based on the specific situations; how to use and understand different types of texts; and

how to maintain communication in spite of limitations (Roberts, 2004).

The issue of competence takes its history back in 1960s where the issue of linguistic competence and performance raised as significant agendas by Chomsky. This was raised as a reaction to the then prevalent language teaching method, audio-lingual method (Al- Humaidi, nd.). These two concepts later developed in to communicative competence which refers to the psychological, cultural and social rules that discipline the use of speech later by Hymes (Hedge, 2000). Hymes, as a sociolinguist was concerned about the social and cultural knowledge that is relevant to the speaker to use and understand the linguistic forms. In other words, he was concerned about not only the learners' knowledge of the language but also their capacity to use it in communication.

Consequently, communicative competence is claimed as encompassing linguistic or grammatical competence, sociolinguistic or pragmatic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence and fluency (Richards & Rogers, 1986; Hedge, 2000). Hymes (1972) states communicative competence as a knowledge of the rules for understanding the referential and social meaning of a language. Also, he claims that rules of speech are the controlling factors for the linguistic form as a whole; simultaneously, the social factors interfere or restrict the grammar use since the rules of use are dominant over the rules of grammar.

This practical situation is highly contributing to the loose loop of the communicative language pedagogy that initiates the questions raised on learners' competence from their performance. However, scholars like Hymes and Widdowson have advocated the relevance of both competence and performance in language learning/teaching processes claiming that CLT can deal with that systematically. Especially, since 1990 the use of CLT has been prevalent and the language teaching theory and practice draws on a number of various educational paradigms and traditions. That includes ability based learning, second language acquisition research, collaborative learning and content based instruction (Prasad, 2013).

Generally, CLT is assumed to contribute to the desired communicative competence through the application of its comprehensive principles. Hence, learners will develop their communicative ability in practicing in a wide range of activities.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

Similar to CLT, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach that is becoming attractive since the end of the Second World War even if its introduction goes back to the Greek and Roman Empires (Duddly- Evans & St John, 1998). The economic domination of the oil-rich countries, the need for specialist language for science and technology and the need for specialist use of language are the dominant reasons for the demand for ESP. Scholars such as Halliday, Mackintosh, Strevens, Duddly-Evans & St John and Hatchinson and Waters contribute significantly in delivering important justifications about ESP.

According to Duddly-Evans & St John (1998) ESP has characteristics. absolute and variable As the absolute characteristics, ESP is defined to meet specific needs of learners. It also makes use of the underlined methodologies and activities of the discipline it serves. Moreover, it centered on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genre appropriate to these activities. The variable characteristics of ESP are it may be related or designed for specific disciplines; it may use in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English; it is likely to be designed for adult learners either at tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation, or it could be for secondary level learners; and it is generally for intermediate or advanced students.

When learners are studying different specialist areas of fields, they need to practice English that contributes to the better understanding of their specialist area and use English successfully in their working environment. Hence the recognition of learners' purpose of learning English can provide a favorable chance for practical language learning. Regarding to this view, Otilia (2015) states that ESP focuses on practical aspects that are

based on needs analysis and effective communication. Hutchinson and Waters (1997) also claim that ESP is not different from any other form of language teaching, yet it should be based in the first instance on principles of effective and efficient learning.

Needs Analysis

Needs analysis is basically a process of identifying the lacks and demands. Titcomb (2000) defines needs analysis as the gap between what is and what should be. Also, Reviere (1996) defines it as a gap between real and ideal that is both acknowledged by community values and potentially amenable to change. Needs analysis (NA) has been recognized 1970s which is the same time with the introduction of CLT. According to Boroujeni & Fard (2013), the perception of needs in the CLT had a vast influence on needs analysis work. Similarly, NA is considered as the basic principal of ESP (Robinson, 1991). In other words, most of the information in NA came from ESP. According to Tahir (2011), what distinguishes ESP from the General English is not the existence of needs, rather the awareness of the needs and adult learners' awareness of such needs. Boroujeni & Fard (2013) also claim that a NA approach possibly is more relevant when learners' needs are linked to a discrete set of communicative situations. Although learners' language need is highly important, there are other aspects that NA has to be considered. Needs analysis can include the interest or demand of sponsors, countries, institutions or certain departments (Jordan, 1997). Asadi (1990) also states that the subjective learner needs such as what and how, objective analysis of target situation needs or institutional needs, learning situation needs or pragmatic needs have to be incorporated in the learning syllabus which is always open for negotiation and reassessment.

In addition, Tahir (2011:5) supplements that as "Learning needs are linked with the 'route' to the destination set by target situation. It is naïve to base the course design and the whole ESP program merely on target needs." He further elaborates that the methodological, administrative and psychological needs have to

obtain the same space in needs analysis as the target needs do. Therefore, NA has to be viewed from different perspectives in order to upgrade the language learning process to the required level.

One of the relevant NA approaches is Target Situation Analysis (TSA). The Target Situation Analysis (TSA) comprises objective, perceived and product-oriented needs or necessities. The objective of TSA is to establish the learners' language needs in the work or professional context. Early TSA procedures were designed to see how much English is used in the working environment, not for what purpose the language is used. Similarly, Munby's (1978) communicative competence or Communicative Needs Processor (CNP) has provided a framework for most TSA studies (West, 1994).

Generally, needs analysis in language learning involves people of certain needs or demands on the language they are learning or planning to learn. For instance, those needs can range from socializing to professional work as well as in education since people need it to access knowledge. Similarly, engineering students are supposed to use English as a tool to read academic and technical documents in English and to help them communicate in various situations that are crucial for their future careers (Changpueng & Pattanapichet, 2015). This process can be handled by using interviews, questionnaires and observations (Tahir, 2011). NA is important for curricula designers to learn two first hand important things (Romo, 2006). First, they obtain information on what general and specific language proficiency learners have. Second, they understand what general and specific language proficiency learners need to acquire. Since NA has targets identifying the learners' communicative requirements, proper references should be considered.

Methodology

This study focused on identifying the English language needs of the textile sectors. In order to obtain the necessary data the necessary steps were taken. From these steps selecting the sites, adapting data collecting instruments, approaching the data providers and collecting the data are the major ones. Further procedures that are considered in the data collection process are addressed under the following sub-titles.

Research Design an Approach

The research design was exploratory because the study focused on investigating the English language needs of the textile industries. Using this design the researcher accessed the information about the basic requirements of language skills in the textile fields. Moreover, the design has been useful to navigate the necessary data through the data collecting instruments thoroughly. The research approach is mainly qualitative. However, a quantitative approach is used to accommodate the data obtained from the questionnaires.

Participants

A hundred and fifty-six workers who have been working in textile industries from 2-45 years are included to deliver the data. They are Human Resource Managers, General Managers and section leaders in the textile industries. Eighty-six percent of the participants have diploma and degree certificates in Textiles. The rest 14% of them are from marketing, business management and industrial engineering fields. These participants are working taking managerial, supervisorial and expert positions in the textile industries. They are selected using convenience and purposive sampling techniques from the randomly selected textile industries from Bahir Dar. Addis Ababa and Hawassa. The selected participants from industries provided data through questionnaires and semi-structured interview. Bahir Dar, Addis Ababa and Hawassa are selected because of the proximity and condensation of the target industries. Consequently, Bahir Dar Textile Share Company, JJ Textiles, Seda Textiles PLC, Epic Apparels, Hela Endochine and JP Textiles were the specific sites selected to collect the necessary data.

Sampling Technique

The researcher used convenience sampling technique to workers in the selected textile industries, and a purposive sampling technique to get information from General Managers, Human Resource Managers and section leaders. The textile industries were selected using a lottery technique. Additionally, purposive sampling technique is used to access the necessary data from General Managers, Human Resource Managers and section leaders of the textile industries.

Instruments

Ouestionnaires and interviews were used to obtain the necessary data. A total of 200 questionnaires distributed to General Managers and Human Resource Managers of Bahir Dar Textile Share Company from Bahir Dar; JJ Textiles from Bole Lemi Industry Park Seda Textiles PLC, Epic Apparels, Hela Endochine and JP Textiles from Hawassa Industrial Park. From the dispatched questionnaires, 156 were properly filled and returned. The questionnaires were composed of open and close ended questions to obtain the necessary data. The questionnaire items, which were prepared in English because they were dispatched to professionals who are university graduates, were categorized into three parts. These are the basic information of the respondents (the name of the company they are working for, their position and their level of education), the frequent activities they perform in their company in English and items that require respondents to indicate the specific English language competencies they require from the university graduate workers.

The participants for the interview were eight representatives of the selected textile companies as General Managers and section leaders. The interview questions were similar to that of the items included in the questionnaires; however, additional items were included in order to explore the specific English language needs of the textile companies. The interview questions are presented on Appendix B.

Data Analysis

The collected data is categorized, tabulated and analyzed using percentage descriptions.

Findings and Discussion

Findings from the Questionnaires

According to the respondents, English is significantly important in the textile industries. Many formal discussions such as conferences and reports, and networking activities are usually held using English. However, local languages such as Amharic and Afan-Oromo (local languages that are surrounding the industries selected for this study) are used for horizontal communication among local employees. Even if a local language is used for formal and informal communication among the local communities, English plays the dominant role in the textile industries (see Table 1&2), for it is the language of international interaction which is strongly connected with science, technology, innovation and business. These key elements of the modern world take the largest part in textile industries like many other sectors.

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Table I	I lominant	20117711100	nertormed in	Hingligh in	celected	Textile Companies
Table 1.	Dummanı	acuvincs	periorinea in	. Duguon m	SCICCICU	icame companies

No.	Activity/Task	Alwa	ıys	Frequ	ently	Somet	imes	Rar	ely	Nev	er
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Making phone calls	70	45	27	17	23	15	18	12	18	12
2	Receiving phone calls	35	60	42	27	36	23	20	13	23	15
3	E-mail communications	144	92	8	5	1	1	1	1	2	1
4	Report Writing (Periodic, annual, semi-annual)	61	39	56	35	24	16	10	6	5	3
5	Interactions with suppliers, customers and partners	55	35	60	39	20	13	19	12	2	1
Total Number of Responses		365		193		104		68		50	
Ave	rage Number of	73		39		21		13		10	
Res	pondents										

As indicated in Table 1, an average of 73 respondents use they English that mostly for telephone conversations, communications through e-mail, reports (periodic, monthly, semi-annual and annual reports), and requesting and delivering products from and to customers, partners and material suppliers. Those activities are stated as the frequent activities of an average of 39 respondents; whereas 21, 13 and 10 of the average respondents stated telephone conversations. communications through e-mail, reports (periodic, monthly, semiannual and annual reports), and requesting and delivering products from and to customers, partners and material suppliers are activities that are sometimes, rarely and never performed in English respectively.

The result indicates that such activities are activities that involve listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Furthermore, different levels of encoding and decoding as well as analyzing and synthesizing activities are involved in the process. For instance, discussions with suppliers and negotiations with customers (to/with the majority of the audiences who are not from Ethiopia; therefore, using English is mandatory), compiling reports and making persuasions and decisions are detail confirmations obtained from the open ended questions responses. Hence, in addition to the technical knowledge that workers in textile fields acquire, they need ample training on communication skills.

Table 2. Other Activities Performed in English in Selected Textile Companies

No.	Activity/Task	Alw	ays	Frequ	ently	Some	etimes	Rarely		Never	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Socializing with colleagues	15	10	10	6	41	26	63	40	27	17
2	Interpreting/ translating documents	33	21	39	25	46	29	18	12	20	13
3	Making oral presentation	54	34	40	26	53	34	6	4	3	2
4	Holding press conferences	34	22	25	16	23	15	38	24	36	23
5	Writing letters, memos, emails	35	22	37	24	30	19	25	16	29	19

No.	Activity/Task	Alw	ays	Frequ	ently	Some	etimes	Raı	ely	Ne	ver	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
6	Preparing documents or contracts	26	17	34	21	39	25	32	20	27	17	
7	Writing notices and minutes	29	19	26	17	32	21	38	24	30	19	
8	Reading contracts	36	23	29	19	47	30	21	13	23	15	
Tot	al Number of Responses	262		240		311		241		195		
Average Number of		33		30		39		30		24		
Res	pondents											

Other activities such as writing different organizational documents such as contracts. minutes. notices. interpreting/translating documents such as manuals that involve both reading and writing skills are viewed by the respondents as moderately as it is indicated in Table 2. Similarly, communicative and interactive activities such as making oral presentations, holding press conferences and socializing with colleagues are relatively considered as not such frequent activities. The average results indicate that all the activities are between 24 and 39 which show that the activities are part of the communicative activities of the textile companies, but they are not performed quite frequently.

Findings from the Interview

The interviewees explained that English is mostly used in their company since most of them (five companies out of eight ones) are exporting their products. Moreover, the companies import machineries, chemicals and other inputs from different countries. Hence, the interviewees confirmed that since English is a lingua franca, the language is playing a significant role to communicate with different partners and customers both inside and outside of Ethiopia.

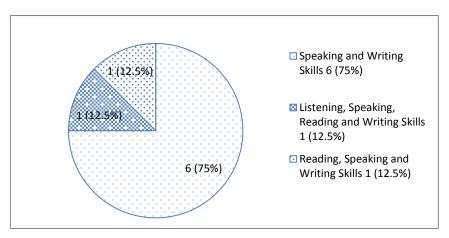


Figure 1. English Language Need of Selected Textile Companies

As shown in Figure 1, the majority (75%) of the interviewees state that speaking and writing skills are the important skills while other skills and combination of them are the second runner (12.5%). Speaking and writing skills are necessary for many tasks such as discussing with customers and suppliers through telephone, e-mail, and letters. Moreover, having work related discussions and writing different reports in addition to letters for international communication as frequent activities, the number of workers even university graduates are usually found challenged by these productive skills. For instance, interviewee number 4, who is graduated in Textile and apparel merchandizing and working as a marketing team leader in one of the textile industries said:

"Some staffs' poor English language ability is visible when they fill purchase requests for their specific sections and also when they are requested to select and approve the available supplies for their request. They do not understand...I can say...the e-mail sent from suppliers and cannot even select and approve what they need properly. Because of that, we face disagreements with our partners and dalliances of products and services we need."

Hence, university graduates do contribute significantly if their speaking and writing skills are reliable. On the other hand, one of the interviewees claim that all the four skills; i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are necessary for the work in textile industries.

According to the interviewees, workers in textile industries all the four skills to use English for successful communication since that is the basic reason English is required for. For example, reading and understanding manuals about Air jet spinning and dying; reading and writing Ticket numbers on technical specifications; writing e-mails clearly about Gauge and comprehending responses from customers and suppliers are common issues that indicate technical jargons or registers and communication activities need to be interwoven.

Adding to this fact, one of the interviewees claim that reading, speaking and writing skills are vital in textile industries because many of the workers face challenges in reading and understanding manuals, technical specifications, messages, customers' requests and respond to questions and requests that require immediate answers.

> "A worker cannot supervise other workers unless he understands the manual of a machine, or he does not understand the request of customers...he does not write products' specifications properly either. So I believe speaking, listening writing and reading skills are important to work efficiently in the industry such as this one. Therefore, universities have to know the relevant communicative elements that are useful for us rather than teaching students grammar and structures that cannot enable us to communicate...because we cannot put all those separate items together and communicate." (Interviewee number 5).

Therefore, the interviewee claims that if the language skills for textile industries have to be prioritized, these three skills (reading, speaking and writing) are mandatory.

Regarding the study results, in addition to the technical knowledge and skill the textile engineering graduates acquire, there is a visible need to develop their English language skills. The

requirement of combined language skills of English (i.e. speaking, writing and reading; speaking and writing as well as all the four skills) indicate that university graduates need to learn and practice the English language skills that are applicable in the working environment.

In general, conducting NA that mainly bases the Target Situation Analysis (TSA) can help to work on the students' (the future professionals') English language ability or competence in a way that is relevant in the working environment. Following the findings, an ESP syllabus can be designed in universities and colleges. Furthermore, the implementation of the designed items in the syllabus and their contribution has to be checked frequently. Otherwise, there will be still questions on university graduates' communication skills abilities using English in specified fields such as textile industries.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was to discover what English language abilities are required in the textile industries in Ethiopia. The research process included exploring what skills that are frequently in use in the industries. The results of this study indicate that like some other specific fields of studies, there are specific English language skills found necessary in the textile field because they are both frequently in practice for communication and considered as important by professionals and decision makers in the field.

English language in textile fields has its own distinct role that may not be similar in other areas. For instance, the syllabuses for English for Textile Engineers may include speaking practices on spinning technology as part of students' industry visits as apprentice, or writing term papers about agro-textiles and presenting to their classmates. Moreover, many technical jargons or registers that are common in the students' specialized field of study can be put in to practice for students in ESP classes for listening, speaking, reading and writing skills development purposes.

Hence, considering ESP for textile fields seems relevant to train students who will be textile Engineers to use English for practical purposes that are valued in the working environment. language activities that are encompassing specific communicative skills are by far favored needs of the textile companies. Therefore, linking students' specialized study with the English practices in classrooms smoothly can enhance students' communicative skills in English as well as specialized content understanding. Consequently, higher institutions and education centers need to not only recognize those needs but also work to address the needs by considering them in the teaching learning process. Accordingly, the students/graduates will have the ability to contribute in their working environment by taking active roles in the communication process using English.

Recommendation

There is higher demand for textile professionals and laborers in Ethiopia as the textile companies are targeting the international market. Hence, preparing the university graduates to be professionals is necessary. Focusing on English language skills development of the university graduates and emphasizing on specialist language training, exploring the language needs of the working areas (textile companies) is important. Taking this view sound, this study conducted and results obtained and presented in the previous chapter. Based on the results, the following suggestions are presented.

- The current English language methodologies and tasks that students at higher institutions or tertiary levels are dominantly on teaching/learning English for General Purposes. Therefore, conducting additional studies to navigate the English language needs of the textile companies can be useful to shape the curriculum and teaching methodology of English for adult learners.
- Textile companies and education centers should work closely for a better understanding of the English

- language needs of the current working environment and train the students accordingly.
- In addition to the need based language teaching and learning process, in-field capacity building trainings can be conducted through the collaboration of higher institutions and the textile fields.
- English language teachers should enhance professional capacity by conducting interdisciplinary studies which integrate the knowledge in textile fields and the English language so as to upgrade their capacity to train students who are studying textile Engineering so that they can be skillful professionals in their future working environment.

The Author

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for Textile Industry workers, Managers, Human Resource Managers and Section Leaders

This questionnaire is prepared to collect information on English language needs in textile fields. The information that will be collected will be used only for research purpose. Hence, your response will be confidential and is significant to determine the result of this study.

Na	me of the Organization/Company
Pos	sition
A.	Please put a check mark (<) in the table under the given alternatives
	for the frequent activity that is performed in your company.

No.	Activity/Task	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	Making phone calls					
2	Receiving phone calls					
3	E-mail communications					
4	Report Writing (Periodic, annual, semi-annual)					
5	Interactions with suppliers, customers and partners					
6	Socializing with colleagues					
7	Interpreting/ translating documents					
8	Making oral presentation					
9	Holding press conferences					
10	Writing letters, memos, emails					
11	Preparing documents or contracts					
12	Writing notices and minutes					
13	Reading contracts					

В.	What is/are specific activity or activity	ıctivities	that a	re pe	rformed	in	your
	working place using English?						

C.	Are there specific English Language skills you believe important for
	better communication in the working places such as textile
	industries? If there are, please mention them in an order from the
	most important to the least one.

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Appendix B

Questions for Interview

- 1. For what specific purposes do you use English in your company?
- 2. Which skill or skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) is/are necessary in the textile fields as well as to work in a textile company?
- 3. What kind of English language training or teaching do you believe relevant in the textile fields?
- 4. What specific English language skill/skills gaps have you observed from workers who are university graduates during communications?
- 5. What mechanisms do you believe can fill those gaps of university graduates' English language use for on duty communication?