PAKISTANI GRADUATE STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ESL WRITING COURSES AT AN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the learning experiences of 23 Pakistani graduate students and how they perceived the effectiveness of ESL writing courses they have taken. The primary data source was an online survey; follow up questions from student participants and in-depth interviews from their course instructors. In order to examine how different mediums of instructions influence participants perception about ESL writing courses they were asked to share their background explicitly. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to categorize and analyze the data for valid outcomes of this study. Pakistani student's different educational background affects their proficiency in English language which led them to have different perceptions about ESL courses. The results of this study show that a majority of students consider graduate level ESL courses helpful for the improvement of their academic writing skills. However, they expressed some reservations in their belief that these courses would be useful in their own field of study. Pakistani graduate students have a specific cultural and linguistic background and bring with them specific techniques for writing. Hence it is suggested, ESL instructors should spend some time to understand international students to evolve their teaching strategies accordingly.

To my mother

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Language of instructions plays an important role in academic success. In Pakistan there are many languages in the common parlance. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and English is the undeclared official language, in Pakistan higher education is offered in these two languages. English is at the top of the hierarchy of different regional languages as far as higher education is concerned. Whenever there is communication among highly educated people in Pakistan, they use the two major languages of Urdu and English. Writing skills are considered to be an important indicator of high literacy and good education in Pakistan, and are required for any good job. For example the English-based central superior services (CSS) exams are used to select officers for the top bureaucratic positions of Pakistan. English writing skills become even more important when Pakistani students go to English-speaking countries for their higher studies. There are considerable numbers of Pakistani students in the U.S. in general, and at UIUC in particular. Most of the graduate students from Pakistan complete their basic education in Pakistan and then come to the U.S. for advanced degrees. However, there is no research on Pakistani graduate students enrolled in ESL classes, focusing on how they go through the process of proving their proficiency in English and whether their medium of education in Pakistan has some impact on that process or not. Hence it is important that we understand that the writing needs of Pakistani students can be different from the students of other nationalities as they come from a very different linguistic and educational background.

What writing is and how it is used depends upon the culture. It is vitally important in the everyday social interactions of men and women; it influences the perceiving and thinking abilities which, consequently, influence the way people react to different situations. In Pakistan there is one national language, along with some regional languages. Urdu, as mentioned above, is the national language which plays its role in the everyday discourse of the people of Pakistan. Because of this, Pakistani students tend to ignore the real significance of writing skills in English to some extent. English writing skills are also ignored as a result of the poor standards of English learning and teaching in Pakistan. The examination system encourages students to rote-learning and regurgitates summaries and essays in their final exams without learning how to effectively write. However, the pivotal role of English writing skills cannot be refuted, by any means, once Pakistani students join an American university. As international students at UIUC there are slim chances that these students will have the ability to understand all the details of his or her chosen field of study without having proficiency in English. Pakistani students often need to enroll themselves in ESL writing courses in order to become an effective part of the social milieu at University of Illinois in the United States.

In Pakistani society, both English and Urdu have gained great importance particularly when it comes to academic discourse. In recent years, a crucial factor for job recruitment is proficiency in English in general, and writing skills in particular. Effective writing skills have become more than just a tool to communicate; they are means of earning a livelihood for individuals, family, and communities. The same is true once international students join American schools; in order to perform well, they need to write papers and in order to communicate effectively with their professors and the university administration; they need to write

professional emails. This everyday use of writing skills multiplies the significance of the ESL courses available to them on campus.

All the determinations of academic success in general - communication, writing assignments, participation in academic activities in different fields of study, etc. - are affected directly or indirectly by the writing skills of international students studying in the U.S. As a result, most L2 students who enroll in U.S. universities with low TOEFL scores, have been required to take ESL courses in order to meet U.S. academic expectations. Writing skills also have a direct influence on students' social relationships, as it is a tool to exchange information, ask questions, complete assignments and take exams. Having effective writing skills in a commonly shared language enables international students to gain access to their course professors and other sources of information for their field in the best possible way. Since writing skills have becomes a focal point in U.S. academic culture at the graduate level, it is important for linguists and writing educators to understand how international students in U.S. schools perceive their teaching effectiveness and how they see the ESL writing courses influencing their academic success in their chosen field of study. With the increase of globalization, ESL writing skills assume even greater significance. English is a vital tool for high paying jobs; especially those that are in the domains of power (i.e. top bureaucratic jobs in Pakistan).Newspaper advertisements warn job seekers that proficiency of English writing skills is a required criterion for recruitment. Writing is a significant language skill which contributes directly to the linguistic capital possessed by international students aspiring to excel in the U.S. academic culture.

1.2 ESL WRITING SERVICE COURSES-RELATED RESEARCH IN THE U.S.

Over the last four decades, the demographics in U.S. institutions of higher education have rapidly changed with an increasing enrollment of ESL students and "1.5 generation students"(the children of immigrants), who do not fit the traditional definition of either mainstream students or ESL students (Harklau, Losey, Siegal, 1999; Matsuda, 1998, 1999, 2003). Although university composition programs are mainly designed for L1 students, currently the L2 student population—both international visa students and 1.5 generation students—is continuously present in these L1 programs. It is important to realize that the boundary between ESL (English as a second language) and EFL (English as a foreign language) is becoming less and less clear. In other words, the English language is no longer foreign to the international students who are admitted to the university, as they grow up interacting with the language through a variety of media because of the advancement of technology. Most L2 students who are coming to the U.S. to pursue college degrees have been exposed to the English language at an early age because of globalization and internationalization: this is a significant change from the writing practices of the L2 students who came to the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s.

Pakistani students are no exception to this rule. English is being taught from early classes in Pakistani public schools as well as private schools. Thus Pakistani students already have some exposure to English writing skills in their basic education from Pakistan. It is important to note that there is a great difference between the two mediums of educational institutes in Pakistan-the Urdu-medium and English-medium educational institutes. This study will focus on the different educational experiences in Pakistan and the many cultural differences that exist between Urdu-medium and English-medium students. Some of these differences distinguish Pakistani students

from other ESL population, as Raimes (1996) asserts, "There is no such thing as generalized ESL student" (p.19).

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

I believe that the present study carries Linguistic significance in the following ways:

1. It serves as a contribution to the field of ESL writing in general and the issues of Pakistani graduate students in particular. There are many studies conducted on ESL student populations from Asia (Raimes, 1996; Kim, 2009; Suzuki, 2002; Silva, 1993; Lee, 2006) but there is no work on Pakistani ESL students in U.S. institutions. This lack of insight into the needs of this population and the significant role that culture plays in their education demonstrate the necessity to pursue a study this new topic. The present study shall serve as a first step in the direction of future studies of Pakistani students at U.S. universities.
2. The increasing number of Pakistani ESL students at UIUC is an important phenomenon having its causes as well as effects on ESL courses. Likewise it has an important bearing on the polarized system of education in Pakistan. Therefore it is important that this topic be dealt with as a sociolinguistic problem and its dynamics be studied in proper detail.
3. This study will bring more awareness about the school-level educational background of Pakistani graduate students so that, ESL instructors of this student population can adopt better approaches to create a better learning environment for these students.
4. Being a Pakistani graduate student myself and an ESL instructor at UIUC, I often found Pakistani students complaining about the ESL courses they are required to take. This

attitude encouraged me to do a study on their experiences and perceptions to confirm some of the claims they were making.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS:

1. To examine how ESL writing courses are perceived by Pakistani graduate students.
2. To investigate whether the ESL writing courses are seen as influencing the performance of graduate students in their chosen field of study. And if so, in which manner their performance is affected most of all by ESL writing courses.
3. To explain how Pakistani graduate students' perception of ESL writing courses can help us to discover the actual ESL needs of these students.
4. To recommend curricular changes or innovation for the graduate level ESL writing courses in light of information gained through this study.
5. To explore the perceptions of Pakistani students, who although are academically strong, are required to take ESL classes, and how they feel about being referred to as ESL students in the process of completing these classes.
6. To explain teachers' perceptions about Pakistani graduate students in their ESL classes and find out if they follow any specific teaching approaches for this student population.
7. To learn more about Pakistani graduate students in terms of their school level education in Pakistan.

1.5 OVERVIEW OF THESIS

Chapter one introduced the study, chapter two presents the previous literature related to the topics, Chapter three discusses the methodology used for this research and chapter four presents a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data collected through the administration of the online questionnaire, follow up questions and responses, and interviews from instructors. The Interpretation of the data and discussion of the different patterns of the perceptions shared by the respondents will also be presented in the fourth chapter of this thesis. The final chapter will discuss the conclusions and implications of this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This chapter includes a review of literature on foreign students' perception of ESL graduate level writing courses at American institutions. The literature review begins with a survey on international students' perception of ESL courses at American universities and then provides an overview of the educational settings in Pakistan to provide some background information for this study. To understand Pakistani graduate students perceptions' of ESL writing courses it is important to review literature including reports, journal articles, books, dissertations, and other publications related to this topic. The researcher has used some of the fine resources available at the University of Illinois library, including the online library database in order to locate potential sources for this review of literature. This review shows that there are a significant number of studies that examine attitudes of undergraduate international students regarding ESL writing courses, yet there are few resources available which specifically focus on international students' perspectives on *graduate* level ESL writing courses. The researcher did not find any resource specifically focused on Pakistani graduate students as there has been no research done on this specific population of graduate level ESL students. However, there were some articles and dissertations exploring the perspectives of Korean and Chinese students on graduate level English as a Second Language (ESL) courses at some American universities. I have reviewed some of them in the overview of literature in the next section of this chapter.

2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

There are two major areas dealing with foreign students' perspectives on graduate level ESL courses: the language needs of international students and the general problems faced by the

international students in ESL courses. Language needs of international students are investigated in many English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs. ESP literature usually focus on the specific needs of students according to their field of study e.g. the Nuclear Plasma and Radiological Engineering (NPRE) project at the University of Illinois is one such example of an ESP needs analysis at an American university. In contrast, graduate level ESL courses have students from diverse backgrounds who want to improve their academic writing skills in general. As a result, the present study is includes both approaches while it focuses on the effectiveness of ESL writing courses for Pakistani graduate students by relating it to their language background in their home country Pakistan.

The literature on ESL students' needs can be categorized according to the students' countries of origin. One such example is a study by Payind (1979) which discusses the English-related problems of students from Afghanistan and Iran. This study found that the academic success of Afghan and Iranian students in their regular university courses directly depended on their English language proficiency. The majority of these studies are done with limited samples usually focusing only on one campus of a university or college in U.S. Ellis had done one such study in 1978 at the Indiana University campus; this study concluded that a lack of English language skills is an important problem for international students as 74% of students considered English as a major stumbling block for their education at Indiana University. Han (1975) had similar findings in his research at the campus of Southern California University in which the researcher found English language difficulty was the second biggest problem for international students after financial concerns. A similar study was conducted by R.D. Porter (1962) focusing on English language proficiency of international students and their academic success at the

University of Washington. This study highlighted English language difficulty was top concern of international students.

In addition, several studies investigate more specifically the English language- related problems of ESL students and how they cope with these problems. Tanaka (2002) has worked on the academic difficulties of East Asian international graduate students by studying the influence of perceived English language proficiency and native educational background of these students. This study focused on the different important academic activities in a Mid-Western university, including: taking notes during lectures, comprehending lectures, asking questions, keeping up with class readings, communicating with fellow American students, giving oral presentations, critically analyzing the reading material and doing well in the class discussions. The results of Tanaka's study (2002) revealed that their home countries did not prepare them well to adjust to the academic culture of a Mid-Western American university. He concluded that the rote learning style in the home countries of international graduate students is partly responsible for problems in activities which require critical and analytical skills. This study recommended including higher learning skills in ESL graduate level courses so that students can develop their critical and analytical skills to a higher level of maturity through explicit instruction of paragraph writing and critical analysis.

Further research found studies on the problems facing international students in ESL courses facing problems due to cultural differences and "ESL labeling." Hyland (2003) opines that, "Cultural factors help shape students' background understandings, or schema knowledge, and are likely to have considerable impact on how they write, their responses to classroom contexts, and their writing performance" (p.36). Pakistani students have their own cultural practices, and these practices influence their academic performance at University of Illinois. For

example Pakistani students do not have formal training in fair source use and citation which appears to be main concern for their ESL instructors at UIUC. Culture has a significant impact on people's behavior, as explained by Novinger (2001): "Culture gives humans their identity. It is the total communication framework for words, actions, body language, emblems, intonation etc." (p.24). When students from different cultural backgrounds come to the U.S. for graduate studies, they face many challenges, which may be linked to their low proficiency in English language skills. This low English proficiency in writing is usually categorized by the "ESL features" in their writing. Some studies have discussed these ESL features, such as Land and Whitely (1989), stating that ESL students usually have problems of clarity, focus and organization. Leki (1992) considers errors in grammar and mechanics to be ESL features of writing, for both international students as well as permanent residents who spent much time out of the U.S., Leki concluded that these two groups have different needs as ESL students. Nero (2005) discussed "ESL labeling," concluding that, "ESL labeling assigns linguistic identities to students as part of a sorting mechanism in education and attitudes towards students" (p.196). This labeling influences the perception of teachers as well as students taking the ESL courses as students that are separate from native speakers of English on the basis of their English language proficiency.

Pakistani graduate students belong to a very different cultural background. Most of them have completed their education in the Pakistani academic environment with very different English language teaching practices. Furthermore, the Pakistani education system has different type of schools catering to different social classes in Pakistan, and it is important to understand the system of English language teaching institutions of Pakistan in order to discuss and highlight the various aspects of Pakistani graduate students in the ESL writing courses at UIUC.

2.2 THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING BACKGROUND OF PAKISTANI GRADUATE STUDENTS

Pakistan became an independent country on August 14, 1947. Before that it was part of India, which had been ruled by British rulers until 1947. Due to its colonial history, English was the primary language introduced by colonial masters in Pakistan. English was introduced in the Indo Pak sub-continent in the 19th century and soon it became the language of highest linguistic capital in Pakistan. English is still a language of power domains in present-day Pakistan. The people of Pakistan consider it a tool to have as cultural capital and career opportunities. For the elite class of Pakistan, English proficiency is considered as an important token of cultural capital cherished by parents and future employers alike. Due to its pivotal role, the English language is taught in different educational institutions of Pakistan, catering to the needs of different social classes. Rich people buy English education in the elitist English-medium schools, whereas poor people send their children to Urdu-medium schools where English is a compulsory subject from primary to higher secondary level public schools. The elite class of Pakistan uses English in their everyday conversations, and subsequently, English is also widely used in the popular media of Pakistan.

In order to grasp the English language background of Pakistani graduate students the linguistics background of Pakistan should be considered. According to the 1998 census, there are six major languages spoken by 96% of Pakistan's population as shown in Table1. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, although it is only spoken by the small minority of 7.57% of the population. English is the official language of Pakistan; however, there are very few native English speakers, as it is used only as an additional language by the elite class of Pakistan.

Table 1 Percentage speakers of the six most popular languages in Pakistan

Languages	Percentages of Speakers
Punjabi	44.15
Sindhi	14.10
Pashto	15.42
Siraiki	10.53
Urdu	7.57
Balochi	3.57
Others	4.66
Sources: Census 1998: 107 (Speakers of six popular languages)	

According to the 1998 census, 17.29% of the total populations of Pakistan are literate in English. However, this is likely an exaggerated figure as the census data consider all those who have passed the SSC (secondary school certificate) examination of English, a compulsory subject, as "literate" in English. David Crystal (1997) has also tabulated the number of speakers of English in different countries in Asia as shown in Table 2. 11.39% of the population of Pakistan was users of English in 1997, but again, the source of these numbers is not provided by Crystal. Wikipedia has ranked Pakistan at number nine (10.97 percent of total population in 2010) in the ranking of countries for the largest English speaking population.

Table 2 Number of users of English in South Asia

NUMBER of USERS of ENGLISH			
Country	Population (1995)	Usage estimate	Percentage
Bangladesh	120,093,000	3,100,000	2.58
Bhutan	1,200,000	60,000	5.00
India	935,744,000	37,320,000	3.99
Nepal	20,093,000	5,927,000	2.95
Pakistan	140,497,000	16,000,000	11.39
Seychelles	75,000	13,000	17.33
Sri Lanka	18,090,000	1,860,000	10.28
Source: Crystal 1997: 57-9			

2.3 LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF PAKISTAN

Pakistan has a complex linguistic landscape. It is easy to see from Table 1 that six languages are in the limelight on the linguistic landscape of Pakistan: Punjabi, Urdu, Sindhi, Pashto, Sariaki and English. Most of the Pakistanis are either bilingual or multilingual and there are few who are truly monolingual. Urbanites, for example, use both Urdu and English in their daily communication. Some use Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Sariaki at home and Urdu and English at their workplace. Highly educated people may use both Urdu and English at home as well. Punjabi is more popular in the streets among the low class workers in the Punjab province. Similarly, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi are more popular on the streets of the provinces of Sindh, Khyber Pakhtoonhawa, and Balochistan respectively. The elite class only uses these languages to show their linguistic and ethnic identity. There are many occasions when people code switch among two or more languages. In fact, there are different domains of influence where people must code switch according to the sociolinguistic context. The majority of Pakistan's population is Muslim, so whenever people meet each other in the mosque they even use many Arabic tags to greet and meet each other. Code switching depends greatly on the social context. For example, whenever university students sit on the café for having good time, they often code switch between their regional language and Urdu and English. Fishman (1989) has also worked on different domains of language use for example at home, school, playground, church etc. According to Fishman these domains were thought to trigger the language choice of one code over the other. This domain oriented code switching is very much part of linguistics landscape of Pakistan.

In Pakistan every language has a special function. Formal Urdu, along with classical Arabic is used in mosques for delivering sermons on Fridays, or other important occasions. Urdu

along with English is used in education, politics, media and literature. Generally, three languages including Urdu, English and one regional language (Punabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi etc.) are used for every-day communication. One important feature of regional languages is that they are not taught in the formal settings, so people acquire them from home and the streets. From this information it can be noticed that most of the Pakistanis are multilingual or bilingual at least. In such a linguistic landscape code-switching happen in almost every conversation. This phenomenon is clearly different from what is found in the West. In the Western countries most people speak only one language and feel proud of it. As a matter of fact, there is little opportunity to use more than the native language in the Western Hemisphere, when compared to Pakistan. Wardhaugh (2006) clearly stated that "ability to use only one language is a norm in the western world and further it is considered as the worldwide phenomenon, in such scenario bilingual or multilingual ability is quite unusual" (p.126).

In Pakistan educated people are supposed to be good at English and Urdu. So if an educated person is not able to speak in English or Urdu he/she is considered to be illiterate. If someone only speaks a regional language, then people judge him/her as uneducated or at least "old fashioned." In the case of Pakistan, speaking only one small regional language is not going to get any-one the social or linguistic capital required for better job opportunities. An upward social mobility is almost impossible for middle class people without having the English language in their linguistic repertoire. English is the dominant language in all aspects of life in Pakistan. It is used along with Urdu in all levels of education and, in some cases, English even dominant Urdu, i.e. in higher education. It is for this reason that a Pakistani who only knows one regional language, like Punjabi in Punjab province will not be able to play a comfortable, functional role in daily activities. For example, a person who wants to visit a health facility for complex medical

tests or any kind of medical examination should know Basic English, since most of the paper work is done in English. Similarly, most financial institutions use English as their mode of communication, requiring English for the simplest of transactions and also to use the automatic teller machines. This shows that speaking English, along with Urdu and a regional language, is not a luxury but has become a utility in Pakistan. In other words, it is only by being multilingual that people can enjoy their routine life in Pakistan.

2.4 ENGLISH IN THE PAKISTANI EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

According to Rahman (2005), English is considered as the second language in Pakistan. English is taught as a second language in most Urdu-medium schools, but in affluent English-medium schools it is treated as the first language with all the school subjects being taught in English. These schools cater to the needs of the elite class of the Pakistani population, who are using English as their first language. Many researchers have studied the different aspects of English language teaching in Pakistani educational institutions. Dr. Tariq Rahman, who has published several books on the subject of language and education in Pakistan, is considered an authority on the subject, having analyzed the different streams of the education system. In Pakistan, even education is not spared from a class divide. According to Rahman (2005), the schooling system in Pakistan runs in three parallel streams: the Urdu-medium schools, the English-medium schools and the religious seminaries, commonly known as "madrassah."

English language teaching is practiced differently depending on different institutional cultures found in each of the three streams of schooling in Pakistan. English is taught differently in vernacular-medium schools as compared to English-medium schools. In vernacular-medium schools, English is compulsory from first grade (in the Punjab and Sindh Province) or sixth grade

(in the Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtonhawa provinces) until tenth grade. In Pakistani education system, English is a compulsory subject for students who go on to a two-year college certificate and even after that for two years bachelor's degree. In most of the English-medium schools, all of the subjects are taught in English. Even among the English-medium schools there are two streams, including expensive-English medium schools that cater to the needs of the elite class, and other moderately priced English-medium schools that cater to the needs of the middle class of Pakistan. These private English-medium schools are very common in the small towns of Pakistan. According to National Educational Census (2005), a national data source for school education in Pakistan, these schools are increasing dramatically. In order to understand how the different institutions fulfill that demand of English language the remainder of this chapter discusses the different type of institutions functioning in Pakistan: the English-medium schools, the Urdu-medium school, and the Madrassas.

2.5 ENGLISH TEACHING IN THE ENGLISH-MEDIUM SCHOOLS

Anyone travelling to Pakistan can witness myriads of advertising boards for English-medium schools claiming to make a student proficient in English language in just a few months. These boards are common in all areas, even in some of the remote areas of Pakistan. Most of such schools are private, without any trained teachers, well designed syllabi, or examination system; they just want to take the money from the common people eager to learn English to better their future. These schools hire anyone who can speak English fluently without taking into account whether that individual can teach or not. According to Rahman (2005), English-medium schools can be further categorized into three subtypes (1) State-influenced elitist public schools (2) private elitist schools (3) non-elitist schools.

Rahman (2004) mentioned a category of English-medium schools which are state-influenced elitist public schools run by the armed forces of Pakistan or administered by big pubic organizations like Pakistan International Airline (PIA), Pakistan Customs, etc. All of these schools have lower fees for children of the employees of the owning organization and higher fees for common people. These institutions offer a better quality of teaching and learning and cater to the affluent elite class of Pakistan including the children of civil employees and military officers. These schools are administered on the aristocratic policies of the British rule to create a ruling elite. Some of these elitist schools trace their roots from the British rule and cater to the needs of a hereditary aristocracy and the newly emerging professional classes in the Indo-Pak sub-continent. Rahman (2005) has discussed how different political regimes in Pakistan continued to defend this differentiation of English learning opportunities for different socio-economic classes. Staunch pro-Islamic regimes, like General Zia (1977-1988), reassured the English medium schools in 1987 that such schools would keep their privileged position in the country. Federal and provincial governments spend money on these elitist state- influenced English medium schools even though they claim to support the promotion of Urdu language in their political rhetoric. The Armed forces particularly support these schools as they recruit students there. There are different cadet colleges all across the country offering English-medium education, with some of the most important institutions being administered by the armed forces, as seen below in Table 3. Most of these schools are heavily influenced by the military, but at the same time the federal government finances them. This shows that the state plays an important role in the creation of the class oriented parallel system of education. Student from these military colleges are considered more suitable for jobs in the armed forces and they have an advantage over other candidates from state-administered Urdu-medium schools.

Table 3 Army Colleges and their Cost Distribution

Institutions	Funding from provincial Govt. in Pak	Number of students	Yearly cost per student to Govt. in Pak rupees
Cadet College, Kohat	5,819,800	575	10,121
Cadet College, Larkana	6,000,000	480	12,500
Cadet College, Petaro	14,344,000	700	20,491
Lawrence College	12,000,000	711	16,878
Cadet College, Hasanabdal	8,096,000	480	16,867
Source: Rahman (2005) "Denizens of Alien Worlds"			

Private elitist schools are another category of English-medium education in Pakistan. These schools are run by private owners; most of these schools have chains in major cities of Pakistan. Some of the popular schools in this category are the Beacon house school system; the City school system; the Roots; the American National School; the Cheoufiat school system, the Khaldunia school system, and so on. These schools offer Cambridge-based ordinary level (O, level) and advanced level (A level) along with the traditional Pakistani secondary school certificate. Rahman (2005) asserts that, private elitist schools limit their client base to the elite class, by charge high fees ranging from 16, 000 Rupees ($200 US) to 25,000 Rupees ($300 US) per month, which is beyond the financial capacity of members of the middle or lower middle classes in Pakistan. Some of these schools also charge very high admission fees ranging from 16,000 Rupees ($200 US) to 50,000 Rupees ($475 US). The students of these private elitist English medium schools usually have better English proficiency as compared to cadet colleges controlled by the armed forces of Pakistan. Elitist English medium schools have some native speaker teachers who act as mentors and offer their services for teacher training of non-native teachers from Pakistan. Curricula and textbooks from the Cambridge and Oxford boards are used in private elitist English-medium schools. All the subjects are taught in English including the

compulsory subjects of Islamic and Pakistan studies. Nisar Ahmad Farooqi (1968), one of the most prominent writers from Pakistan, describes students of these schools as better at using English than Urdu despite that it is the first language in most of the cities of Pakistan. Although, this study is over forty years old, not much has changed in Pakistan in this aspect, except that the quality of public schools has deteriorated further and the private elitist schools in Pakistan have not.

The last category in English-medium schools consists of non-elitist English- medium schools. These schools are spread throughout all of the big cities and small towns of Pakistan. These schools do not charge high fees as they do in the elitist English- medium schools, so they are affordable for the lower middle class of Pakistan. Non- elitist English-medium schools charge from 160 rupees ($2US) to 3200($40 US) per month, which makes them affordable for the majority of the Pakistani population. However, these schools only pose as English-medium schools, and do not actually teach all subjects in English. The teachers are often not qualified enough to teach English well (Rahman, 2005). Students are encouraged to learn in a rote memory style; teachers train students how to memorize facts likely to come up in exams. According to a survey by Awan (1987), out of 250 schools in Rawalpindi, only 39 were following the teaching practices of recognized English-medium schools in the country. Rawalpindi is one of the metropolitan cities of Pakistan, so if such a situation prevails in big cities, can only be assumed that the quality of English-medium education in the smaller cities and towns is even lower.

According to another survey, most of the non-elitist English-medium schools teach only Mathematics and English language in English, while the rest of the subjects are taught in Urdu (Naqvi, 1999). However, there is still a great demand for English- medium education in Pakistan.

Many such schools have more than 3000 students and usually about half of them pay an extra fee for evening classes in the same schools. This state of affairs explains quality of English education in non-elitist English-medium schools. In such English-medium schools out of class interaction is in Urdu or other local languages, and there is no real emphasis on the improvement of writing skills. As mentioned earlier, English teachers usually encourage students to cram for essays, answer questions, letters, and applications from the textbook and ask students to reproduce them in the class or exams. According to researcher's own teaching experiencing in non-elitist English-medium schools, teachers are not even qualified enough to understand the process of writing with the exceptions of some female teachers from well off families who have better English training. Such female teachers usually have some background of true English-medium education and they use their background to teach English well. Rahman (2005) opines out that these non-elitist private English medium schools are following the curriculum of provincial textbook boards. He further asserts that there are hardly any schools in this category offering Cambridge University based Ordinary (O, Level) or Advanced level (A, Level) exams as they do not have qualified teachers to teach such advanced-level students. In a nutshell, there are three sub-types of English-medium schools in Pakistan, which have different standards of English teaching.

2.6 ENGLISH TEACHING IN URDU-MEDIUM SCHOOLS

Urdu-medium schools are the largest network of schools in all the provinces of Pakistan. These schools offer all subjects in Urdu, except English language which is taught in English. Urdu-medium schools also offer basic Arabic and one regional language as elective subjects. These schools are administered by the provincial ministries of education in their respective

provinces. Rahman (1996) states that Urdu-medium schools usually cater to the needs of the *have not* class of Pakistani society. People from the lower socio-economic classes cannot afford the English-medium education, so they opt to send their children to Urdu-medium schools instead. Most of the students and teachers of these schools belong to poor families. According to one study conducted by Rahman (2002), both the students and teachers at these schools belong to the lower-middle class. In the questionnaire, most of the respondents did not write their family income due to the stigma of poverty, and even teachers hesitated to report their salaries as they are not paid well in these schools. This demonstrates the deep divide among the quality of education for different classes in Pakistani society.

Urdu-medium schools teach all the subjects in Urdu. English had traditionally been taught starting in the sixth grade, but this was recently changed in the Punjab province where English language is now introduced beginning in the first grade. Both students and teachers have limited exposure to Western media and its discourse, and as a result have limited understanding of English (Rahman, 2005). After completing the tenth grade, students of Urdu-medium schools take the secondary school certificate (SSC) exam conducted by the provincial board of intermediate education and prepare to join different colleges for their high secondary certificate (HSC). Once again, most of the Urdu-medium students opt for Urdu-medium colleges where they study most subjects in Urdu, except for the science related subjects, like Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Statistics, etc. While discussing conditions of English teaching in higher education in Pakistan Rahman (2005) explains that English is a compulsory subject in all colleges, but that once again there is rote learning of summaries, essays, translation, etc. without actual learning of English communication.

Teachers of English are not trained to teach English, and they often have the minimum possible qualification. Rahman (2002) opines out that, most have twelve years of Urdu-medium education and a one-year teaching certificate, unfortunately, in Urdu- medium schools most of the teachers have opted for teaching as their last resort. This situation prevails due to low salaries of Urdu-medium school teachers. Rahman (2002) provides salaries of teachers of Urdu-medium schools, which can range from $90 for a primary school teacher to $220 for a headmaster who is administrator of the school with the educational qualification of a Master of Education (M.Ed.). The following table depicts the salary structure of Urdu-medium school teachers with different educational qualifications. This shows how Urdu-medium school teachers hardly make both ends meet; low salary has caused school teaching to be a lower class profession in Pakistan; usually only those who have failed to get other jobs apply to be school teachers.

Table 4 Educational qualifications and salaries of Urdu-medium school teachers

Salaries of Urdu medium School teachers		
Educational Level	Salary Grade	Average pay & allowances per month.
Matriculation	7	7,578 Rupees $90 US
F.A (CT)	10	8,448 Rupees $100 US
B.A (B. Ed)	16	14,099 Rupees $170 US
Headmaster	17	18,316 Rupees $220 US
Source: Rahman (2005) "Denizens of Alien Worlds"		

One interesting feature of Urdu-medium school teachers is that they are not trained to teach English. Most of them have studied it as a compulsory language as anyone else in their educational background by memorizing passages, summaries, essays, etc. In their teaching practice at Urdu-medium schools they follow the same method of English teaching by encouraging their students to memorize passages and summaries which will be part of their final

exams. The focus of their teaching is to prepare students the final term exams rather than encouraging them to use English language through speaking and writing. According to report on the English curriculum in 20 Urdu-medium schools in Lahore, the provincial capital of Punjab province, students were not able to read English fluently or write something creative in English in the tenth grade which is highest grade in the Urdu medium schools (Curriculum, 1982). The situation is even worse in rural areas where schools are having more problems.

Language learning can be fun if students have informal exposure to the target language outside of the classroom. This is a big challenge for the English language learners of Urdu-medium schools (Rahman, 2002). As mentioned above, most of the students in the Urdu medium schools belong to the lower middle class, and as a result, these students do not have the exposure to English discourse. There has been some change in Pakistani media, especially since the media revolution during the regime of president Musharraf, but still most TV and radio programs are in Urdu, not English. Personal computers are still uncommon in lower income families, and even some cultural reasons may contribute to students' lack of exposure.

According to Naz (2004), the only exposure students have is when their teachers read lessons in English and translate them into vernacular languages word by word. This researcher remembers his own school days in an Urdu-medium school, where the teacher translated lessons of English word by word into Urdu and then asked the students to repeat it, one by one. The students stood up in front of the whole class, and then translated key English words into Urdu. After every key word or line, students would stop and the rest of the class would repeat the same word or line as a chorus. This loud chorus was considered an indication that rigorous academic work was going on in the classroom. Still today, English teachers typically write grammar exercises on the black board, which are then copied by students word for word. Most of these

exercises become part of the final term school exams. However, when these same students are asked to use English for oral or written communication, they are not able to do so, due to this "grammar translation method" used in the majority of the Urdu-medium schools.

One study, conducted by Sarwat and Khurshid (1994), investigated this problem and argued that Urdu-medium school students were not doing well in their English language exams and failing in their higher classes due to faulty methods of teaching English. In sum, English language teaching is not having success in the Urdu-medium schools and is causing students attending these schools to lag behind the students at the English medium schools in terms of English language proficiency. It is important to understand this disparity in English proficiency as there is great educational diversity among the Pakistani graduate students attending the University of Illinois.

2.7 ENGLISH TEACHING IN THE MADRASSAS

There is another stream of education run by religious seminaries known as the Madrassas. Over the last few years madrassas in Pakistan and Afghanistan have gained popularity in the international media. Andarbi (2011) stated the popularity of madrassas in the "AF-PAK" policy of Obama administration. Most of these madrassas teach religious subjects to students aspiring to be religious scholars. These religious schools usually resist the teaching of English as they consider English as a language of non-Muslims. Generally, in Pakistan, and in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) in particular, English is also considered a symbol of westernization, so madrassas resist it due to their focus on traditional Islamic education. Pakistani madrassas are administered by five major Islamic sects known as Barelwi, Ahle Hadith, Shia, Deobandi, and Jamat-e-Islami. All of these different sects promote their religious philosophy through these

madrassas. In the past, many governments tried to convince these madrassas to teach English to their students, but they always resisted this effort. The first such effort was made by former president Ayub khan's commission on national education in 1962. This commission encouraged all madrassas to teach English to their students so that they also could learn about modern world views on human rights, liberal democracy and popular discourse on media (Rahman, 2004).

According to one of the studies on madrassas, a representative was interviewed who said, Muslims should not use language of non-Muslims for communication (Amin, 1986). Another study about reforms to teach English concluded that these reforms were mostly unsuccessful, as most of the madrassas did not start teaching English as had been advised by the commission (Malik, 1996). The government of General Pervaiz Musharraf also introduced several reforms to introduce modern subjects and teach English in the madrassas, but this too received mixed reactions from madrassa administrators. Only Jamat-e- Islami and Dawat-e-Islami madrassas are now teaching English as a part of their curriculum. These madrassas follow the syllabus of Urdu medium-schools. A study by Saeedi (1999) confirmed that the madrassas also hire their own English teachers who are responsible for all of the teaching and assessment. According to Rahman (2002), most of the madrassa students learn a few lessons by heart in order to pass the board examination and do not take real interest in the English language learning because there is more of a focus on the Arabic language. In most of the madrassas, students can read out of English text books, but they cannot communicate intelligibly in the English language. Rahman (2002) questions that even though a madrassa qualification is generally equated with general B.A. degree, whether students of madrassa actually learn any English. In conclusion, madrassa students do not have high English proficiency when compared to students from the English-medium and Urdu-medium background.

In summary, there are limited studies focusing on the perceptions of international students about the effectiveness of graduate level ESL courses. Some of the studies based on international students discuss the language needs of students from Korea, China, Afghanistan, Iran, etc., but there was no literature on the language needs or perceptions of Pakistani students. Most of the studies focus on the relationship between English proficiency and achievement of foreign students, problems faced by foreign students due to their low proficiency, and the cultural background of the international students and its impact on their language learning in Western universities. The second part of the literature discusses the educational background of Pakistani students. Pakistani students come from different areas of Pakistan and tend to have different English proficiencies, which may be attributed to their basic educational background from Pakistan: English- medium schools, Urdu- medium schools and the madrassas. Some of these variables will be included in the questionnaire used to survey the Pakistani student population in this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents information pertaining to the research methodology used in this study. This research was based on a mixed-method study design. Denizen and Lincoln (2000) discuss the significance of a mixed-method in these words: "the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question" (p. 5). This method of research was appropriate for meeting the purpose of my study which revolves around the perceptions of graduate students of ESL courses from Pakistan. This researcher adopted this method as it can lead to detailed information needed to perform better analysis for assessing perceptions of Pakistani graduate students about ESL writing courses at UIUC. This method helped the researcher to draw on all possibilities as perceptions of students were collected through an online survey. With the help of follow-up interview questions afterwards, all of the missing details were revealed. The data was collected through classroom observations, 23 survey responses, and follow-up interviews with student participants and 3 in-depth interviews with the instructors of the Pakistani graduate students. Details of these research methods and the overall methodology have been provided in the following sections.

3.1 THE RESEARCH DESIGN: MIXED-METHOD (DESCRIPTIVE AND EXPLANATORY)

The present study aims to describe and explain the perceptions of Pakistani graduate students about the effectiveness of ESL writing courses. In order to draw some valid conclusions, the researcher needed to use appropriate research methods. Quantitative and qualitative research methods have their own pros and cons. Therefore, in the next section the researcher will discuss

some possible options for research methods and justification for the one most suitable for the type and purpose of the present research.

3.1.1 Type and Purpose of Research

The first steps to take in order to design an effective study are choosing a topic and a research methodology. Depending on the topic chosen, researchers may adopt different approaches to build their studies on. Two of these broadly recognized approaches endorsed in Applied Linguistics are "quantitative research" and "qualitative research." There has been a debate as to which approach is better than the other among researchers. According to O'Leary (2004), "the two most confusing words in the methods world are 'qualitative' and 'quantitative." (p. 99). Although most researchers will agree that one is not "better" than the other, depending on the topic, one may be more suitable. Ary and Jacobs (2002) discuss the quantitative and qualitative approaches in these words: "Quantitative research uses objective measurement and statistical analysis of numeric data to understand and explain the phenomena. It generally requires a well-controlled setting. Qualitative research, in contrast, focuses on understanding of social phenomena from the perspective of human participants in the study." (p. 22).

Krathwohl (2004) also differentiated between qualitative and quantitative research methods, stating that *quantitative research* is "deductively preplanned and designed around one or more hypotheses with data" (p. 26). In this approach, a researcher basically investigates an established problem, as well as tests a theory. The data is measured with numbers, and analyzed using statistical techniques. The goal of this researcher is to find out if the generalizations of a theory are true or not. *Qualitative Research*: "provides description of a case, a group, a situation, or an event" (Krathwohl, 2004, p. 26). The goal of this approach is to better understand a social

or human problem from various points of view. A researcher adopting this approach conducts his study in naturalistic conditions, and tries to construct a holistic and comprehensive representation of the issue at hand.

It is noteworthy to be aware of the distinction between these two approaches because once an approach is selected for a particular study in Applied Linguistics, the whole structure of the research is influenced such as the research questions asked, the methodology chosen, the analysis of the data, and the conclusion drawn from the study. In selecting a particular research approach, a researcher should mainly consider the problem or the issue, the population being researched, the researcher's training and experience, the audience of the research, time, money, and other resources available to the researcher. Similar to other social sciences, some researchers of applied linguistics have adopted the quantitative approach, and arguing that it is superior to the qualitative approach. The researcher personally thinks that some of those researchers endorse a quantitative approach because they believe that it is always safer to know in advance what the researcher is looking for. But this is not always safe as sometimes quantitative researchers run the risk of missing critical data from having too narrow a focus. The researcher may not know the final direction of the research at the start of the process when using a qualitative approach so it can also capture developmental aspects of certain phenomenon under study.

In addition, collecting data in quantitative research is relatively easier. The researcher can design tools such as questionnaires, surveys and other equipment to collect numerical data in a short span of time. This type of data is used to test hypotheses and may appear more efficient at face value. On the contrary, collecting data in qualitative research is rather time-consuming, and is not normally used to come up with larger generalizations. Therefore, a qualitative approach is indeed not very much desired by some researchers in the field of Applied Linguistics. According

to Walker (1985), there are certain questions that cannot be answered by quantitative methods, while there can be certain other questions that cannot be answered by qualitative methods. In sum, it is desirable to use both of these methods in mixed-method research by combining the strengths of both methods to overcome their weaknesses. The ultimate purpose of research is to contribute to the development of knowledge, and if it can be achieved by mixed-methods, then researchers should not stick only to explicit categories of qualitative and quantitative research.

Krathwohl (2004) argued that, "research is a creative act we cannot and should not fix into firm categories" (p. 26). It is significant for researchers to recognize the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches and to realize that qualitative and quantitative methods can be used in combination with each other. What is critical then is how researchers of Applied Linguistics can effectively incorporate rudiments of both approaches to make sure that their studies are as precise and comprehensive as possible. One good thing about a mixed-method approach is that it can be used for the integration of the two types of data collected by qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed-method research is defined by some researchers as, "the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research" (Creswell, Plano Clark, et. al., 2003, p.212).

The research conducted in this study was done with a mixed-method. The mixed-method enabled this researcher to collect quantitative data with the help of an online survey, to study the detailed narratives of the respondents, and to pay attention to the qualitative information gained from them in terms of words, phrases and expressions as well as the body language and non-verbal cues witnessed during the classroom observations. Using qualitative and quantitative data

helped this researcher to have a rich understanding of the topic of this study. This mixed-methodology helped to describe and explain the Pakistani graduate students' perceptions of the ESL courses they have taken or are taking at the moment of data collection.

The purposes of carrying out this research were both descriptive and explanatory in nature. Below, the researcher has presented the ways in which the project can be appropriately defined as being descriptive and explanatory in nature:

3.1.2 Descriptive research

Descriptive research is mainly used in qualitative studies in order to "describe situations and events" (Babbie, 2003, P.89). The researcher "observes and then describes what was observed answering questions of what, where, when and how" (P.89). The research on the graduate level ESL writing courses also required a lot of observation and reporting of details in terms of the following research questions:

How the respondents do described their experiences of taking these courses?

What feelings do they associated with their classes?

What were some of the things that make them happy or sad about being in the graduate-level ESL writing courses?

Did they realize that these classes are helpful for their own field of study?

When did they feel these classes should be taken?

When did they think they can feel comfortable even without taking ESL writing classes?

To answer above questions a lot of descriptive data needed to be collected from the respondents in terms of the '*what, where, when* and *how*' questions related to the ESL

courses they have taken or are taking now. Hence, the study had to have a descriptive research design.

3.1.3 Explanatory research

Explanatory research answers the questions pertaining to '*why*'. Babbie (2003) points out that "studies are seldom limited to a merely descriptive purpose. Research projects usually go on to examine why the observed patterns exist and what they imply" (P.89). In the present study, once the data will be analyzed for the different patterns related to the graduate-level ESL writing courses, then those patterns will be examined for different pedagogical implications. Some of these implications will be discussed in the discussion and conclusion section of this thesis.

Since the topic of research was related to the perceptions of Pakistani graduate students of the graduate-level ESL writing courses, the topic itself implied that this would have to be implemented as explanatory research; a study that answers questions relating to:

What do Pakistani graduate students think about these courses*?*

How do they feel once they are done with these courses?

How do they feel about being labeled as "ESL students"?

Why are more and more Pakistani graduate students ending up in ESL writing classes?

All above questions can be pursued in an explanatory research design.

3.2 TARGET POPULATION

The target population for this study consisted of Pakistani graduate students studying in different graduate programs at the University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign. All Pakistani

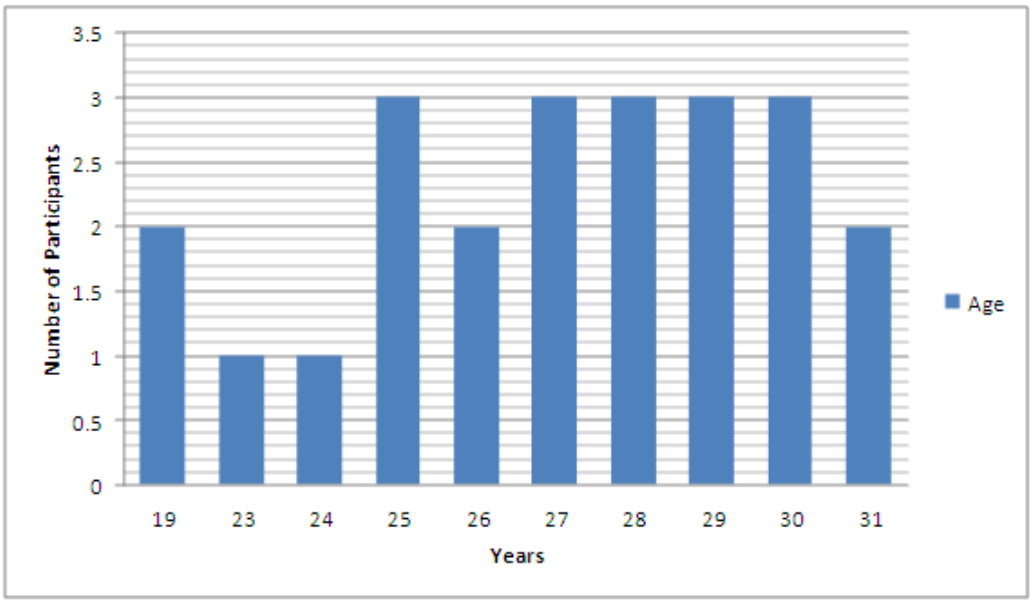
graduate students who have studied or are currently studying at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign were part of the target population for this study.

3.3 SAMPLE

The sample consisted of a total of 63 Pakistani respondents from different graduate programs in UIUC. In order to recruit potential research participants, the researcher contacted the Pakistan Graduate Student Association (PGSA) to get a list of all of the present and past graduate students at UIUC. This list only goes as far as 2005. Out of these respondents only those respondents who have already taken or taking graduate level ESL writing courses were invited to participate in this study. From 2005 to 2008 there were only a few Pakistani students who were registered in graduate-level ESL courses but there was great surge from 2008 to 2010. But still, Pakistani graduate students are few as compared to the graduate students from some other countries. The number of Pakistani graduate students who took English Proficiency Test (EPT) between 2006 and 2010 was less than 1% as compared to students from China with 29.5%, Korea with 18.1%, and Taiwan with 15.6% (Kohan, 2010). Therefore, the data was collected from 23 respondents who had already passed or were currently taking their ESL classes at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The ages of participants ranged from 19 to 31. The numbers of participants in different age groups are illustrated in the chart below.

Figure 1 Age of the participants.



3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE: PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

The method that was used for sampling was convenience sampling; "a type of non-probability sampling in which you select the units to be observed on the basis of your own judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative" (Babbie, 2003, p.183). The judgment of an expert is necessary in selecting cases "with a specific purpose in mind" (Neuman, 1997, p. 206). This study was focused on Pakistani graduate students' perception about graduate level ESL courses. Consequently, only those students were selected who have taken or are taking ESL writing course at UIUC. Similarly, only those instructors were selected for the interviews who had taught at least four to five students in their ESL classes.

3.4.1 Reasons for Selecting Purposive Sampling

Neuman (1997) states the usefulness of purposive sampling in a given situation, this type of sampling help to select unique informants from a specialized population which is not in an easy access of researcher. The research can select such informants for in-depth analysis of research questions related to them.

In the light of these statements, the basic reason why purposive sampling was used was to try to find out those respondents who could provide the greatest insight into the topic, considering them to be a specialized population. In this case student ‘diverse backgrounds, mediums of education in Pakistan, and ESL courses they have taken – all had to be taken in consideration when selecting the participants. Therefore, purposive sampling was the most appropriate technique according to the purpose of research and the intricacies of the topic.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

A questionnaire was designed to collect data from Pakistani graduate students at the University of Illinois about the effectiveness of the ESL writing courses offered to international students to improve their proficiency in English for Academic Purposes (EAP). This questionnaire was designed for a web-based survey, the primary tool for data collection in this study. For data collection, all necessary training and procedures were followed, including the completion of the Human Subjects Research Modules of the IRB (Institutional Review Board) at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. This module taught all the ethical and professional intricacies of research involving human subjects. In order to get approval from the institutional review board of the University of Illinois, the following mandatory trainings were undertaken by the researcher.

- History and Ethical Principles (SBR)
- Defining Research and Human Subjects (SBR)
- Informed Consent (SBR)
- Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction
- CITI Internet Research
- Short UIUC home grown module

All of these modules were helpful in revising the IRB exempt application as there were new items to be included in the letters of consent for participants.

3.6 Evolution of Questionnaire

A questionnaire (appendix A) was designed as is generally required for a research topic of this type. This instrument helped the participants to share their perceptions about the graduate level ESL writing courses by discussing the effectiveness of these courses with reference to their own field of study. Questionnaires as a research tool have many merits, including their ability to collect a large amount of data quickly and economically (Krathwohl, 1998). Questionnaires also have high reliability in terms of consistency and dependability of the results (Leftwich, 2007). But at the same time, it is essential that questionnaires are designed in such a meticulous way so that researcher can use all of its benefits, including the accuracy, generalizability and convenience of this research tool. Keeping this in mind, the questionnaire was designed in a number of steps with a series of revisions from committee members. After minor changes, these steps helped to create the final version which was accepted as a research tool.

3.6.1 Version 1 of the Questionnaire

The design process of the questionnaire began after writing the proposal on the topic of "Pakistani Graduate Students' Perceptions about English Language as a form of Social Capital." As a result, the first version of the questionnaire was heavily grounded in the theory of social capital. This version revolves around the concept of social capital and its three dimensions: the structure of relationships, interpersonal dynamics, like interaction and trust, and the hierarchy of the language skills shared by individuals referred as linguistic capital by some researchers, e.g. Bourdieu. The focus of this questionnaire was on the various dimensions of social capital being created and affected through the ESL writing courses at UIUC. Version 1appeared effective as far as its length, sequence of questions and important instructions for respondents were concerned, so it was piloted to several Pakistani students. However, some of the responses were quite perplexing, almost 93% of the responses were same, and all of the questions containing technical vocabulary resulted in the same responses on the Likert scale. This confusion in results forced the researcher to reevaluate the questionnaire. The tentative proposal and version 1 of questionnaire were presented to several participating in the annual meeting of the linguistics society of America at Pittsburg in January, 2010 for feedback. Several of these professors dis-agreed that ESL writing courses should be related to the idea of Social capital. Social Capital is an ambiguous concept and means many things to many people. After receiving further feedback from faculty members at UIUC, the focus of the research changed.

3.6.2 Version 2

This change of plan resulted in the second version of the questionnaire. In the second version the attributes of social capital were taken out and structured for the course evaluation of

ESL writing courses, including both graduate level courses 500, 501, and undergraduate courses 113,114, and 115. Unfortunately, there were no undergraduate Pakistani students who were available to share their perceptions about the undergraduate ESL writing courses. This finding and discussion with my thesis committee resulted in a solo focus on graduate level ESL writing courses. Finally, relevant background information questions, e.g. type of schooling from Pakistan, were added and a second version of questionnaire was developed. Four Likert response options were used for different questions related to ESL writing courses in this version instead of the three in the first version. This version also asked for respondents' perception about whether ESL writing courses are helpful for their chosen field of study or not. While the focus of the questionnaire had improved, the committee still felt that there were several problems, such as wording of certain questions that might be too vague for the respondents.

3.6.3 Version 3

This version was modified according to the instructions of the faculty members. An addition to part 1 was recommended, concerning the information related to the highest degree earned in Pakistan and the current degree being earned at UIUC in order to investigate the impact of the different disciplines on the ESL writing courses. In one of the questions related to the usefulness of graduate level ESL writing courses with respect to academic resources, the option of electronic resources was elaborated by adding some examples of electronic resources, e.g. online journals. The word "positively" was taken out from a question dealing with the role of ESL classes for the development of speaking skills as it was giving a vague sense to an already clear question statement. Once more the questionnaire was reviewed by the committee and found

to need further revisions. These improvements were taken in to account in the fourth and final version of the questionnaire.

3.6.4 Version 4

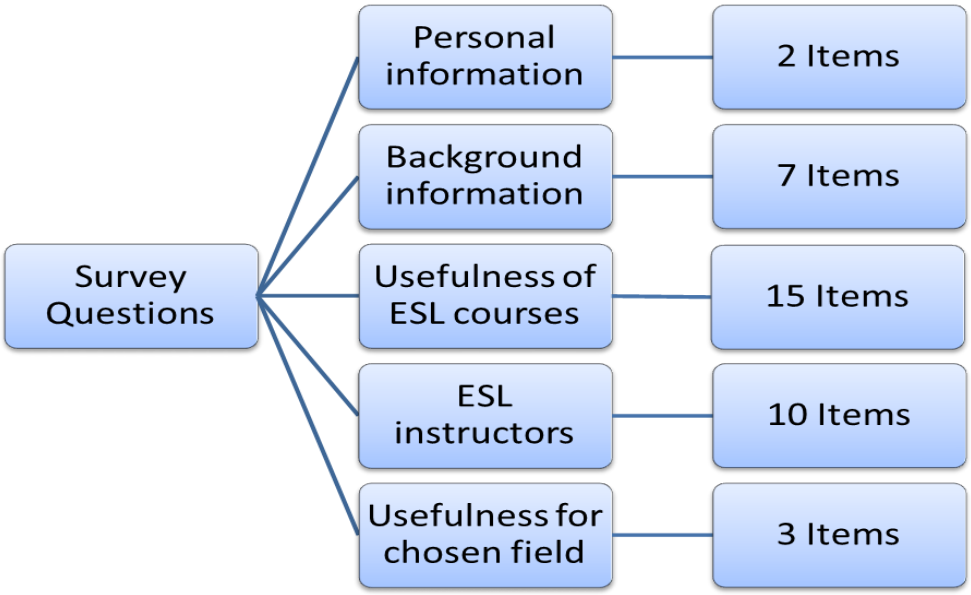
This version has evolved from continuous feedback from faculty members. It asks questions about demographic information of respondents, educational background (Urdu-medium, English-medium) from Pakistan, ESL courses already taken or currently being taking, brief explanation of their choice of course if any, usefulness of ESL courses with respect to respondents' chosen field of study, training for using campus academic resources, sense of personal worth as a ESL student, enhancement of academic skills, and any general information if they have any suggestions for further improvement in these courses. Looking at the fourth version of questionnaire, one can easily see that the intention of this study is to find out the needs, attitudes and interests of some Pakistani graduate students towards ESL writing courses at UIUC.

This survey instrument was administered along with unstructured class observations and interviews of several students and their instructors. This final version of the questionnaire (see Appendix) has some open-ended questions, as well as Likert-scale items, in which they will indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements using a 4-point Likert-type attitude scale. In this final version, special attention was paid to the questions related to the personal information, such as qualifications etc. These items were designed in such a way that participants would not feel uncomfortable by giving specific information about their background. This researcher used another category to include Madrassa education, keeping in mind the sensitivity of this information.

3.6.5 Content of the Questionnaire

The final questionnaire was composed of 37 items dealing with personal information e.g. gender, age, years of English education from Pakistan, medium of education in Pakistan, academic background, course of study at UIUC, ESL course or courses already taken or currently being taking at UIUC. These questions were included in the first part of the questionnaire, and in the second part there were items related to their overall experiences with these course and whether they think these courses have been helpful for them or not. The last part of the questionnaire deals with students' perceptions about their instructors.

Figure 2 Contents of questionnaire.



There are two items related to the personal information of the Pakistani graduate students. In the first part of the questionnaire, age and gender were asked in order to have some insight about the general demographics of the respondents. Next set of nine questions deals with the academic background of respondents. The third question asks about the type of school the respondents attended in Pakistan. This is an important question as there are three different types

of schools available in Pakistan which caters tothe different social classes in Pakistan as discussed in the literature review for this study. The options for this question include those three types of schools commonly named as Urdu-medium, English-medium and madrassa schools.

This question was aimed at having some information about students with different academic background from Pakistan and their enrollment in the different graduate level ESL courses. It may offer some insight about the different types of schooling and how it prepares Pakistani students for graduate level education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. For this reason, the next few questions in the survey deals with the types of ESL courses that respondents are required to take, and if they were not required then their reasons for deciding to take an ESL course along with their other academic responsibilities at UIUC. This part of the questionnaire also asks questions about their highest degree earned in Pakistan, what respondents are studying at the moment and what is their chosen field of study. All of these questions provide valuable insight about their qualifications from Pakistan and the distribution of respondents according to their chosen field of study.

The second part of the survey deals with the perceptions of Pakistani graduate students about the usefulness of graduate level ESL courses. In this part, respondents were asked to share their attitude regarding how the ESL courses are useful in terms of writing better assignments for their chosen field of study. The ESL writing courses focus on different aspects of academic writing so this question inquires whether students from different academic backgrounds consider these courses helpful for writing papers in their own field of study or not. In the same questions, respondents were also asked whether these courses would improve their future career opportunities, since academic writing is a commonly used skill for job applications and future employment. This question was included since having good or bad writing skills will have

implications for job opportunities. English has become lingua franca which makes English writing skills a requirement for international students to have better employment opportunities. Being graduate students from different academic fields, Pakistani graduate students also need to use the different sources available in their field of study to participate effectively in their academic community.

The library and its electronic resources including online journals, web searches etc. and Writers' Workshop are useful academic resources which can be used as a tool for the improvement of academic writing, so this aspect was included in the questionnaire. Most of the Pakistani students come from very different academic cultures, so having the opportunity to use all of these academic resources can make a big difference in their chosen field of study.

Question fourteen deals with the perception of respondents about being labeled as "ESL students." The ESL label attaches a linguistic identity of non-native speakers of English to students and this question was included to confirm positive or negative perceptions of Pakistani graduate students as an ESL student. The next question deals with the different language skills, including listening and speaking skills. This question aimed at knowing the students' attitude about what exactly graduate level ESL writing courses should focus on. The last part of the questionnaire focuses on ESL instructors and the attitudes of Pakistani graduate students towards their instructors.

The first question of this part asks whether respondents have native or non-native instructors as their instructors in the course or courses they have taken. The next question deals with a variety of issues related to effective teaching, like applying pair work and group work, preparedness for classes, running interesting classes, interest in students opinions, advice about how to do well in their chosen field, help with their pronunciation and speaking skills and

answering students' questions satisfactorily. The second to last question of the survey is based on the native/non-native distinction of ESL teachers and what the perception of Pakistani students about their native or non-native ESL instructors is at UIUC. It was an open-ended question and space was provided to students, if they wanted to share details about their choice. The final question is an open-ended question as well giving the last opportunity to Pakistani graduate students to share any issue related to the effectiveness of ESL courses and how these courses can be made more effective with respect to their chosen field of study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Before proceeding with the presentation of data analysis related to this study, it is important that the framework be discussed briefly in which the actual data analysis was carried out. Throughout the data analysis process, an attempt was made to make the analysis as theoretically correct and practically appropriate to established research practice as possible. The respondents for this study varied immensely in their family, educational, and social background. In some cases the cultural contexts were quite different, for example, between respondents belonging to the English-medium schools in the large cities and Urdu medium schools in the remote areas of Pakistan.

Keeping such diversity in mind, it was important to deal with each and every finding with the proper contextual sensitivity. Therefore, as much information as possible was collected about the context and background of the respondents to keep each context in view while attempting to examine and analyze the findings. The data was analyzed according to the different questions asked in the survey and results of those analyses are discussed in order to find the answers of the research questions discussed in Chapter One. Possible implications and explanations of the findings will also be discussed below along with the descriptions of different charts and tables. Burns (2000) stated that data analysis is all about, "finding meanings from the data and a process by which the investigators can interpret the data" (p.430). So, every effort will be made to extract meaningful insights from the data collected from the respondents of this research.

In the initial stages of data analysis, all of the responses from the online filled questionnaires were read carefully. Both open-ended as well as closed-ended questions were included in the questionnaire to adhere to the typical guidelines of survey-based data analysis. The closed ended questions were analyzed by using descriptive statistics whereas the open-ended questions were related to other variables, like the why respondents prefer native or non-native ESL instructors. The responses to the follow-up questions were also read carefully and several significant patterns in the online survey and follow-up questions were able to be identified. Because of this researcher's similar background as some of the respondents, an insider's view of the perceptions and attitudes of the Pakistani graduate students was able to be brought to the light. Furthermore, with teaching experience at both school and college level in both Urdu and English medium schools in Pakistan, there was insight from both perspectives. This insider experience provided special insight throughout the entire process of data analysis. This chapter will first examine the profiles of different participants, and then highlight several aspects of the questionnaires data, and finally discuss the insights of several instructors of the Pakistani graduate students. But first of all let us have a look at the profiles of different participants.

4.2 Participants Profiles

Any qualitative study needs to ensure that the proper contextualization of the narratives takes place, since otherwise the narratives would lose their value in terms of meaning. The present research, in this regard, focused on an in-depth gathering of details related to the respondents and the way in which they presently perceive ESL courses and the factors that actually led them to this perception. This gathering of details was done in both direct and indirect manners; direct through an online survey and follow up interviews, and indirectly through the

process of class observations that revealed many aspects of the respondents' activities during the class according to their class participation, body language and the expressions of joy or confusion during ESL classes. Keeping all of the above in mind, these respondents' profiles and related observations are presented here in order to set the context for the following discussions on the factors that led the subjects to either like or dislike their graduate level ESL courses. At the same time, it is hoped that a detailed analysis of this section would reveal much of the students' shared perceptions, their educational and social backgrounds in Pakistan, and their English proficiency class enrollment at UIUC and how they are related to the type of schools they attended in Pakistan. The four participants discussed below represent the different educational backgrounds in Pakistan and these participants are representatives of target population in terms of gender as well.

4.2.1 Participant #1 Zeeshan

The first participant of this description, Zeeshan was born in Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan. Zeeshan's parents are Pakistani and they speak Urdu at home and at their work place. Zeeshan learned Urdu in school; he used the Urdu language at home, with his friends at school and in the local community as well. English is a commonly spoken language among educated people in Pakistan; Zeeshan was exposed to English in sixth grade, as he attended an Urdu-medium school. In Pakistan, the English language is taught through traditional methodology of grammar translation using some drills and rote memory.

After completion of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC), Zeeshan joined a public college in Islamabad and completed his higher secondary certificate from that college of Pakistan. Afterwards he joined the COMSATS Institute of Information technology and

completed his BSc and MS from this public sector university in Pakistan. In this university, the medium of instruction is English but the teachers and students often talk in Urdu in and out of classrooms.

Because of Zeeshan's good academic background, he was accepted in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the fall of 2010. At the time of data collection, he was in the second semester of his PhD program in the field of Bioinformatics. He was required to take both ESL500 and ESL501 on the basis of his low TOEFL score and EPT placement. Zeeshan was taking ESL 500 class focusing on oral and written communication. Zeeshan has spent nine months in UIUC so far; and has had mixed language experience during this time. He primarily uses English with his research supervisor and fellow international students in his lab, but he switches to Urdu or Punjabi whenever he comes across fellow Pakistani students from his own country. These switches in language were often observed in the classroom, when Zeeshan interact with international students he speaks fluent English but whenever he is in group with another Pakistani he prefers to talk in Urdu or Punjabi. When asked about his opinion on what he wants to learn in the ESL classes, he asserted that he is keen to improve his written English as he quoted his research advisor encourages him to write in a clear and concise way.

4.2.2 Participant #2 Razia

Razia is MS in computer sciences and already has an MBA from a top public sector university in Pakistan. Razia came to the U.S. in 2008 to complete her PhD in computer science, and at the time of data collection she was in her second year and had already completed the requirement of ESL 501. She went to an English-medium school in Pakistan and often speaks in English with her friends and family members. Razia was influenced by her English teacher in

Pakistan; she thinks that she is good at English due to her family socialization and friends in English-speaking countries. When asked about her background she responded in these words, "I think I got pretty good education in term of English language back in Pakistan. My whole schooling focused on English as medium of instruction (except college). I remember one of my teacher in grade ten she was good in English and she always push us to be original and appropriate. Another individual whose English aspired me is my advisor in MBA. I wish I can write like him. No specific text or writing I think inspired me in particular." Razia appears to be happy about having English-medium school background and considers it a reason for her good English.

4.2.3 Participants #3: Aamir

Aamir majored in Human Resource Management (HRM) in his MBA from a private institute of Islamabad, Pakistan. He has an Urdu-medium background; he was exposed to the English language for the first time in 6th grade. Aamir came to UIUC in 2009 to get his PhD in Human Resources Development, and at the time of data collection he was already done with both ESL500 and ESL501. Aamir has many international friends at UIUC and he communicates in English fluently. Aamir responded to the question about his background in these words, my primary Education was from an Urdu-medium school, middle to High school n Urdu-medium where my science subjects were in English, and rest of the books were in Urdu. When asked for university education, he stated that all instruction and material was in English, but discussion with class fellows and professors were in both Urdu and English. This shows how Pakistani students hailing from Urdu-medium background have exposure to English at different level of education.

4.2.4 Participant #4: Ahmed

Ahmad recently finished the two years program for MS in the field of Bioinformatics and is working towards his PhD in the same field at UIUC. Ahmad attended an Urdu medium school in Pakistan; and here in UIUC he was required to take both ESL 500 and ESL 501. At the time of data collection he was done with both courses and considers ESL501to be better than ESL 500 for his own field of study. When asked about his background he responded in these words, "I am non-native English speaker from Pakistan but I took English as academic courses from a private institute from Lahore. After school, the medium of higher secondary education was English. I do not think if somebody or text influenced me in the improvement of my writing skills. I am a science student and never worked on the art of English writing." This shows Pakistani students does not have much training for the improvement of English writing as part of their academic training from Pakistan.

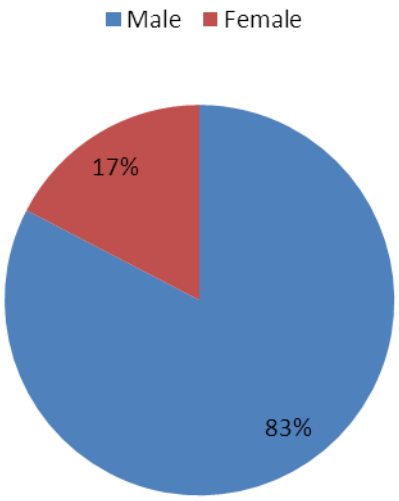
Above participants' background information depict great diversity in terms of educational background as well as linguistic diversity they bring to UIUC. This also shows some of the social and educational contexts in which Pakistani students are socialized.

4.3 Demographic Information

Twenty three Pakistani graduate students participated in this research; however, the majority of the participants were male due to the higher literacy of men in Pakistan as compared to women. This was expected as in Pakistan females are not generally encouraged to pursue higher studies, especially not to study abroad in a western country. There were 19 male and only 4 female participants who shared their perceptions of the graduate level ESL writing courses they

have taken or are currently taking. In percentages, 83% of the respondents were male and 17% were female.

Figure 3 Gender of participants



4.4 Age of Respondents

Participants from different age groups participated in this study. As the focus of research was on graduate level ESL writing courses, the respondents' ages ranged from 19-31 years of age. All the respondents were either Master's or PhD students, as only this category is required to take graduate level ESL courses. For this reason, 74% of the respondents represent ages between 25 and 30 years.

The figure 4 below depicts the data for the gender distribution of the different age groups. According to respondents' data most of the females are in young age groups as compared to the male participants. This trend shows that more young female Pakistani students are pursuing graduate degrees from UIUC in the recent years. There are two female participants twenty five and thirty years old. At the same time there are two nineteen year's old female participants, even

though this is small sample to make any generalization but it indicates a bit change of trend as more young female graduate students are taking ESL courses. Both 19 years old students have Urdu medium education from Pakistan.

Figure 4 Gender based comparison of different age groups

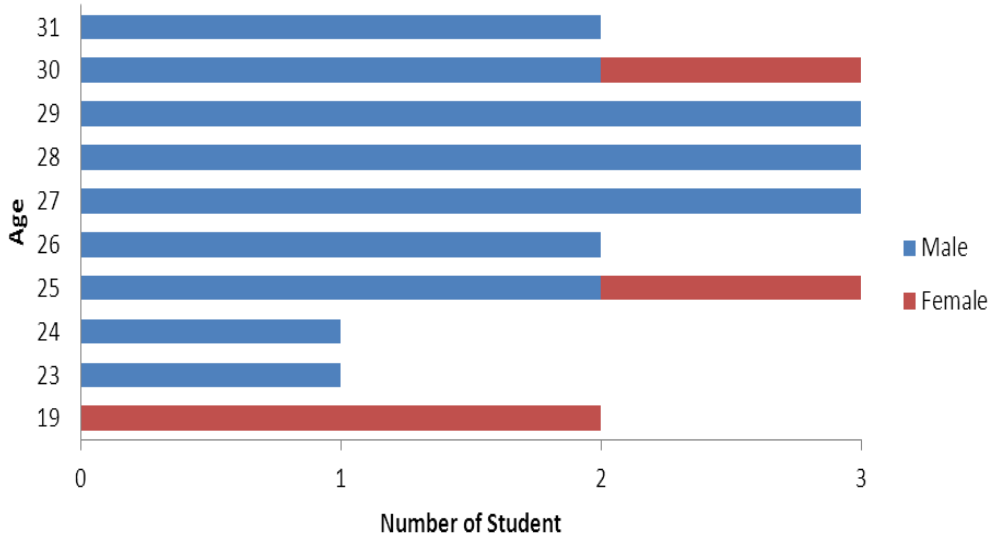


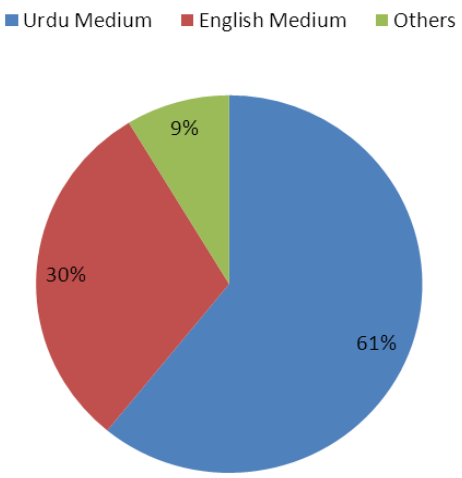
Table 5 Cross tabulation of Age of the students and their Gender

Age	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
19	0	2	2
23	1	0	1
24	1	0	1
25	2	1	3
26	2	0	2
27	3	0	3
28	3	0	3
29	3	0	3
30	2	1	3
31	2	0	2
Total	19	4	23

4.5 Medium of Education in Pakistan

The second chapter discussed in detail the two major mediums of education in Pakistan i.e. Urdu-medium and English-medium. The research participants represent a mix of both mediums of education. However, the majority of the respondents, fourteen in total, were from Urdu-medium background and only seven from an English-medium background. There were two respondents who belong to a background other than English or Urdu i.e. madrasah education background, which is an alternate system of basic education in Pakistan. In the final version of the questionnaire the word "madrasah" was not included due to the sensitivity of sharing this background with others. According to Andarbi (2011) "The public imagination has focused on the madrassa as the incubator of Taliban" (p.2). This can become a sensitive issue for students coming from the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan. There was at least one case in which a student was studying in a madrassa and Urdu medium school at the same time, so others as a third category makes more sense in this case.

Figure 5 Medium of education from Pakistan



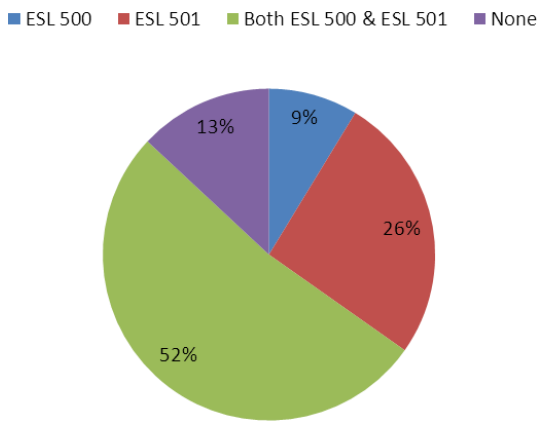
4.6 Required ESL Courses at UIUC

The majority of the Urdu-medium background students were required to take both ESL 500 and ESL 501 courses to fulfill the English language proficiency requirement for their degrees. Thirteen of the fourteen students from Urdu-medium background were required to take both ESL500 and ESL501 graduate level writing classes. The one remaining student was to take ESL 501 to meet the standards of English proficiency at UIUC.

The two "other" Pakistani graduate students from the madrasah were also required to take both graduate level ESL writing courses. In contrast, none of the English-medium background students were required to take both ESL 500 and ESL 501 courses. Two of the English-medium background students were exempted from both courses, but still chose to take ESL 501 to improve their academic English skills. The remaining five other English-medium students tested into ESL 50, and one of them selected to take only ESL 500 by his/her own choice. As it was discussed in the second chapter, English-medium schools have great variation in quality. Yet it is clear in their placement results that Pakistani graduate students at UIUC are graduates of reputed English-medium schools, and they confirmed this in follow-up questions. Figure 6 below shows the distribution of the Pakistani graduate students into the different courses that they were required to take. These results indicate that the Urdu-medium students are required to take more ESL classes than the English-medium students. This result is quite understandable keeping in mind quality of English language teaching in Urdu medium schools in Pakistan.

Below numbers in Figure 6 includes the English-medium students that enrolled in the ESL courses by their own choice. These students selected the option of "none" meaning that they were not required to take any course, but decided to take one to improve their academic writing skills.

Figure 6 Required ESL courses



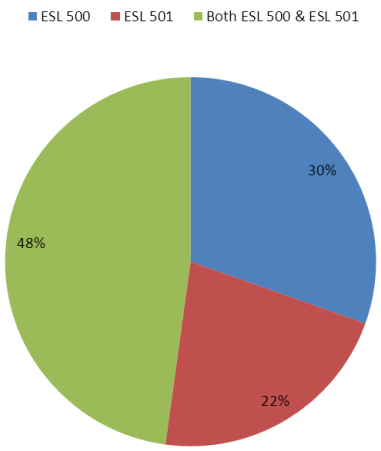
This sometimes happens as Razia mentioned in her follow-up answers, "my research supervisor advised me to take writing proficiency course so in the light of his suggestion I decided to take an ESL course". In the next question, which was open-ended, Pakistani graduate students expressed mixed opinions about these required courses. Ali from an English medium background expressed his frustration with being placed in one of these courses after studying English for so many years in Pakistan. He expressed his views in these words, "I don't think this ESL course will help me to great extent as I went to English medium schools and don't think I have big deficiency in my English writing skills". Rania, in contrast, with an Urdu medium background, expressed her appreciation for these courses in these words, "Yes, it would be quite useful because it tells you about how to write an essay/article in English language and what guideline to follow e.g. introduction (thesis statement, summary), body paragraphs (each paragraph starts with thesis statement, ends with some direction towards next paragraph)." But Ali persists, saying that, "No, I think the level of writing skills in English I had was sufficient." Hasan from the "other" educational category expressed his appreciation for ESL courses in these

words, “Yes, I think it will really help if one could take the course for academic English writing.” Most of the Urdu-medium students admitted that yes, the courses would be helpful. However, some respondents did not reply to this question at all.

4.7 ESL Courses Background at UIUC

There was great diversity among the respondents with regards to the stage of completion they had reached for their ESL course requirements. Out of the total 23 respondents, 11 were already done with both ESL 500 and 501, 7 respondents had completed ESL 500, and 5 had completed ESL 501, either to meet the English proficiency requirement of UIUC or as an voluntary option to improve their academic writing skills. These numbers are depicted as percentages in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7 ESL Courses background of Participants

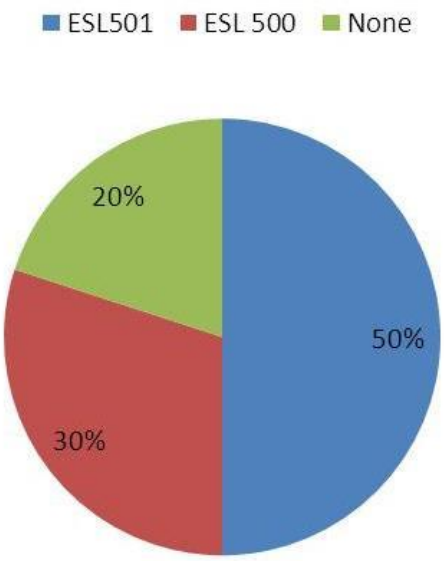


4.8 Comparison of ESL 500 and ESL 501 in terms of Overall Usefulness

Five out of the ten respondents who had taken both ESL 500 and ESL 501 selected for ESL 501 as being more useful than ESL 500. Two students considered ESL 500 more useful, and two considered neither course to be useful for the improvement of their academic writing skills.

This option is understandable in the light of the fact that they do not get any credits for taking the ESL courses toward their degree.

Figure 8 Usefulness of ESL courses



In the follow-up questions, some of these students were asked to differentiate between ESL 500 and 501 and also talk about their usefulness. One of the student, who considered ESL 501 as a better course, responded to follow-up question in these words, "ESL 500 is a basic English course, but ESL 501 is very good course. The objective of ESL 501 is very good. It is very helping course for especially graduate students, who are in the stage of thesis and research article writing stages and topic covered in ESL 501 are really helpful for writing research paper in my own field of study." According to this student, ESL 501 was better able to help with writing research papers and theses, which is much more applicable and useful in his own field of study.

In another follow-up response, another student, Karma, states, "ESL 500 is more basic just like an introductory, while, the ESL 501 is more advance, but both courses are crucial for a

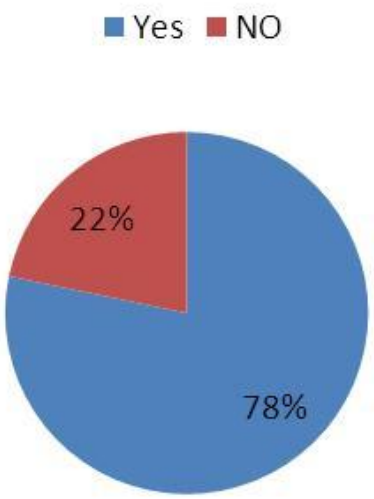
Pakistani student, like me." Gull also favored ESL 501 and in the follow-up questions stating, "If you ask about ESL courses, they are meant to teach non-native English speaker how to communicate and write in English. To me, ESL500 is for oral and basic writing whereas ESL501 is, particularly, for writing so ESL 501 is more focused on actual writing which make it a better course for ESL writing." On the basis of answers it is easy to see opinions of Pakistani graduate students are divided, but still favor ESL501 over ESL500.

4.9 Personal choice of ESL courses for the improvement of academic writing

Is this/are these ESL writing courses that you would have chosen for the improvement of your academic writing?

Pakistani graduate students were asked to share their perception of the graduate- level ESL writing courses they had taken and whether they would prefer for them to be optional. Eighteen out of the twenty-three respondents defended the necessity of these courses; however, five of them disagreed, by arguing that these courses were not helpful for the improvement of their academic writing. This division of opinion is depicted in percentages in Figure 9 below.

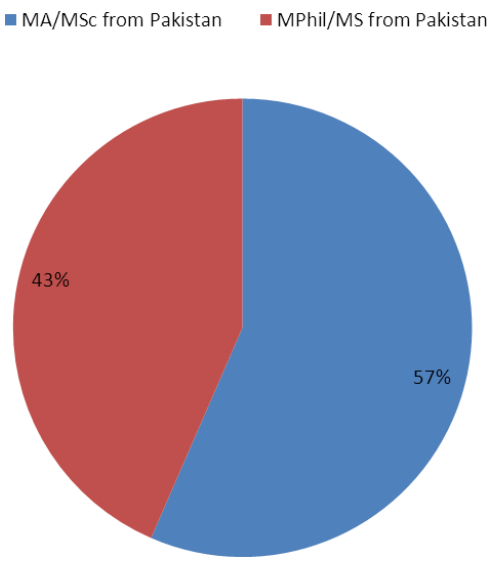
Figure 9 Personal Choices of Participants



4.10 Highest qualification from Pakistan

Pakistani graduate students attending graduate school at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign are usually the top students in their respective fields in their home country. Sixteen years of education is the minimum requirement to apply for admission in most graduate programs in the United States. Therefore, most of the respondents in this research have MA/BSc (Hons) in order to meet this standard. Thirteen out of twenty-three respondents hold Master's degrees as their highest qualification from Pakistan, and the remaining ten have Mphil/MS from Pakistan, which is earned after 18 years of study or two years of study after a conventional Master's. This data is important to know educational background of participants of this study, so all the participants are having at least Master's degree from Pakistan. These numbers related to the highest qualification from Pakistan are depicted in Figure 11 below.

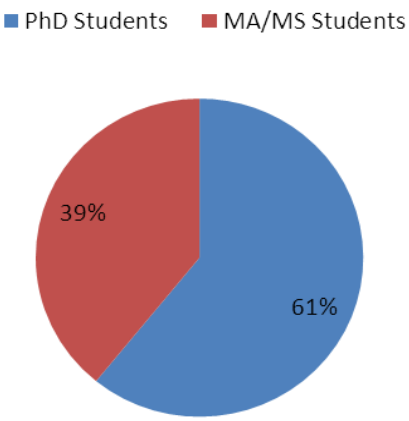
Figure 10 Highest Qualification from Pakistan



4.11 Degree pursuing at UIUC

Fourteen out of the twenty three respondents were pursuing Doctoral degrees and the remaining nine were pursuing Master's at the time they participated in this research. This is illustrated with the help of Figure 11 below.

Figure 11 Degree enrollment at UIUC



4.12 Fields of Study at UIUC

Out of the total of 23 students there were 15 students in the field of natural sciences, 5 from different fields of Engineering and 3 from a social sciences background. These high numbers for natural sciences and engineering are understandable as in Pakistan there is more prestige attached to natural sciences and engineering than social sciences. In addition, the popularity of University of Illinois for its programs in natural sciences and engineering is a contributing factor. Most of the Pakistani graduate students are rely on needed financial scholarships from different funding agencies like Higher Education Commission (HEC), Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), and these funding agencies sponsor more natural

science and engineering graduates than social sciences. This was another reason to pursue the question of how effective these courses are for the participant's chosen field of study.

Table 6 Different fields of study of Participants

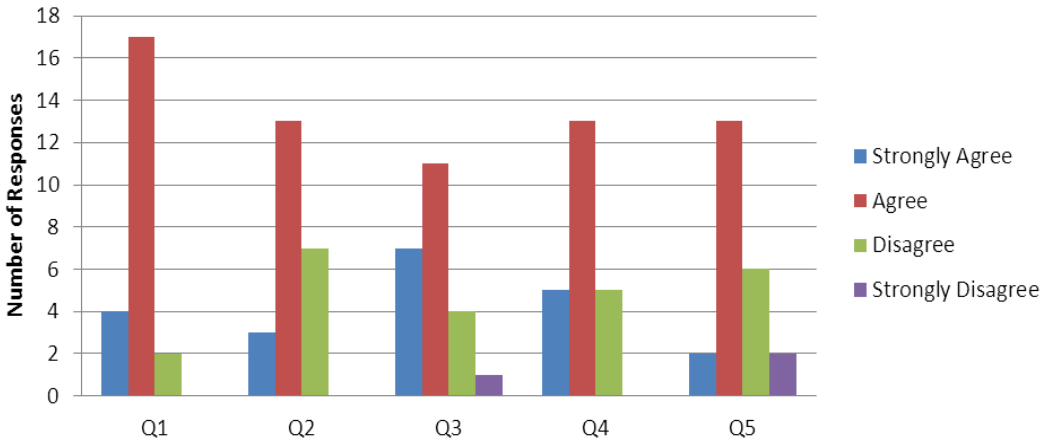
Field of study	Male	Female	Total
Biological	3	0	3
Material	1	1	2
Electrical and	3	0	3
Bioinformatics	5	0	5
Atmospheric	1	0	1
Crop Sciences	1	1	2
Geography	1	0	1
Social	3	0	3
Computer	0	1	1
Animal	1	1	2
Total	19	4	23

4.13 ESL writing courses' role in the enhancement of certain abilities of Pakistani students

The ESL writing courses have enhanced my abilities as an international student in the following five areas: Q1) Academic writing skills; Q2) Speaking skills; Q3) Listening skills; Q4) Reading skills; Q5) Job applications.

This section of the questionnaire focuses on how ESL writing courses help students improve their four key language skills and whether some of these skills can be used for their future job applications. The main question is subdivided into five sub-questions and the overall responses to different questions are given below. There is great diversity in the responses of the participants in all five sub-categories; however, there is overall agreement among the respondents that the ESL courses are helpful for the improvement of their writing skills. Responses to all five sub-questions are discussed in separate charts.

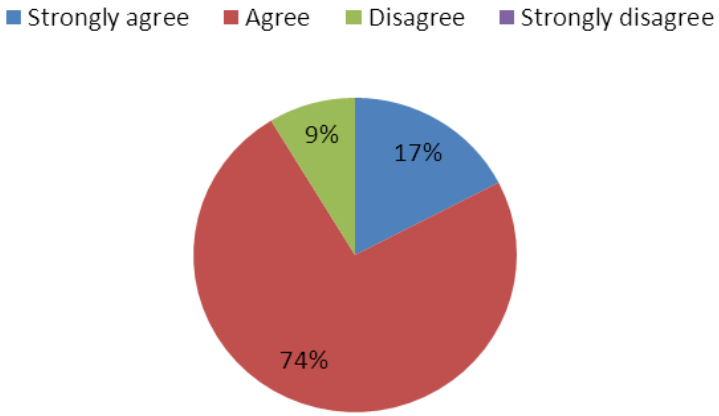
Figure 12 Usefulness of ESL writing courses



4.13.1 Usefulness for Academic Writing Skills

As it is shown in Figure 13 the majority of the students appreciate the role of the ESL courses for the improvement of their academic writing. Seventy four percent "agreed" about the usefulness of these courses for the enhancement of their academic writing skills and seventeen percent of them "strongly agreed." Only nine percent of students "disagreed" that the ESL courses helped them improving their academic writing skills. And better yet, there was not a single student who "strongly disagreed" about the usefulness of the ESL writing courses for the

Figure 13 Usefulness for academic writing skills

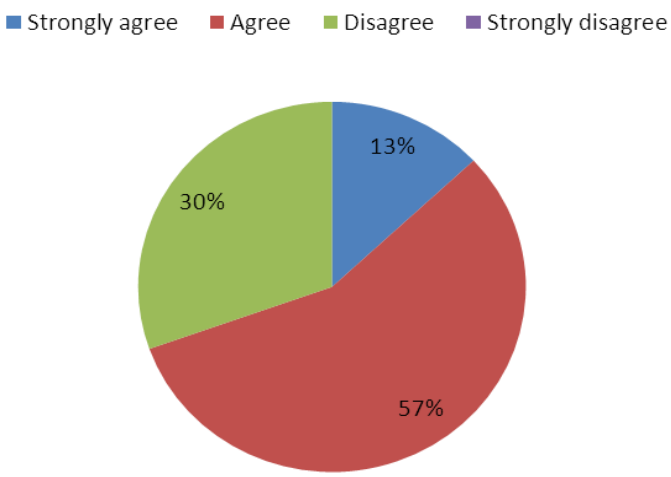


improvement of academic writing. A Similar trend was found in the follow up questions where one student responded in these words, " Yes, these courses definitely helped me with my writing, in Pakistan I never learned all those techniques of effective academic writing which were part of my ESL classes".

4.13.2 Usefulness for speaking Skills

The second sub-question deals with speaking skills. Once again, the majority of the responses demonstrate the helpfulness of the ESL writing courses for polishing the ability to speak English as most of instructors' direct students to speak English during the different class activities. Thirteen percent of the students "strongly agreed" that ESL courses helped them to improve their speaking skills, and fifty seven percent "agreed" agreed that the ESL courses offered some help in the improvement of speaking skills.

Figure 14 Usefulness for speaking skills



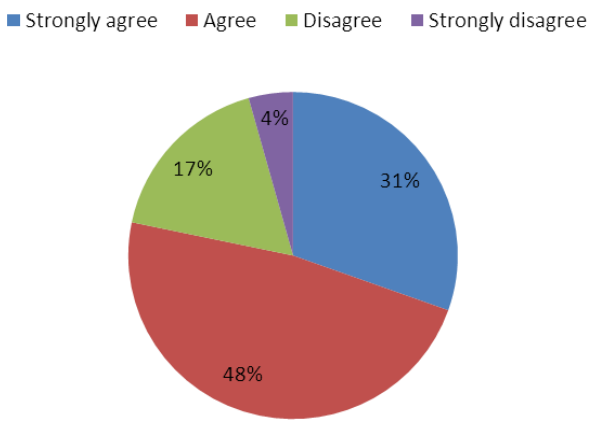
30 percent students did not find the ESL courses to be helping them to improve their speaking skills. However, none of the respondent "strongly disagreed". During class observations of two ESL instructors teaching two groups of Pakistani students, students were

observed to be speaking in English often, but sometimes Pakistani students would switch to Urdu if they were put in the same group for group work. Still, most communication was in English and this particular instructor was good at switching students into different groups. Sometime classroom space issues forced the instructor to put more than one Pakistani student in the same group resulting in some use of their native language. Despite this, the above data shows that the majority of respondents find that the ESL courses help them to improve their speaking skills as well.

4.13.3 Usefulness for Listening Skills

The next question asked the respondents to share their perception of the effectiveness of ESL writing courses for the improvement of their listening skills. Even though these writing courses do not emphasize the improvement of listening skills, many respondents found some help from these courses for the improvement of their listening skills. Forty-eight percent "agreed" that the ESL courses have helped them in the improvement of their listening skills and thirty-one percent "strongly agreed."

Figure 15 Usefulness for listening skills

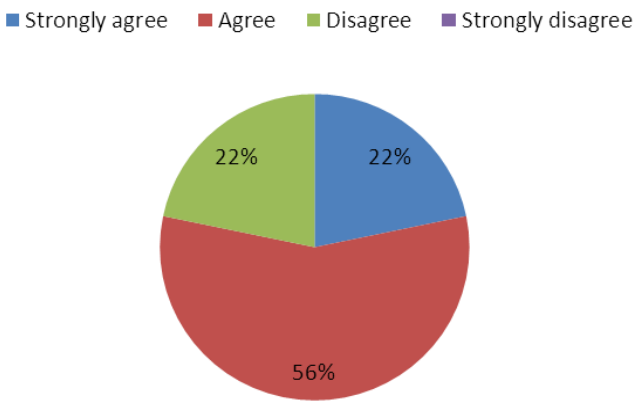


Seventeen percent of student “disagreed” and four percent of respondents “strongly disagreed” that the ESL writing courses are useful for the improvement of their listening skills. Yet the fact remains that most of the Pakistani students do consider the ESL courses’ to be a positive contribution towards the improvement of their listening skills.

4.13.4 Usefulness for Reading Skills

The Pakistani graduate students also find an overall positive role of ESL courses in the improvement of their reading skills. Fifty-six percent respondents “agreed” that the ESL courses help them to improve their reading and another twenty-two percent respondents “strongly agreed.”

Figure 16 Usefulness for reading skills



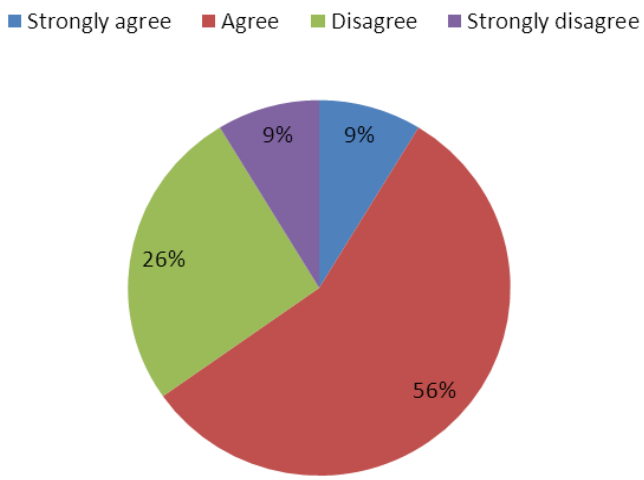
Twenty-two percent respondents “disagreed” that there is any positive role of the ESL writing courses in the improvement of their reading skills. The observations of ESL501 class showed that the students are required to read a variety of authentic sources of information. In addition, in ESL 500 there is some focus on the reading skills themselves, as the course objectives are to focus on the integration of all four language skills. This may be one reason why

the majority of the Pakistani graduate students consider the ESL courses to be helpful for the improvement of their reading skills.

4.13.5 Usefulness for Better Job Marketability

English language skills play an important role for the marketability of a Pakistani employee. The ultimate goal of most of the Pakistani graduate students is to find good jobs after getting their degrees from UIUC. The last part of this question focused on this aspect and the results depicted a positive role of the ESL classes in making students more marketable for jobs. Fifty-six percent of the respondents "agreed" with the positive contribution of the ESL classes for qualifying for better jobs applications and another nine percent strongly agree on some improvement in their jobs and another nine percent "strongly agreed." However, still twenty-six percent students "disagreed" and nine percent "strongly disagreed."

Figure 17 Usefulness for writing better job marketability



In follow-up questions one respondent expressed his choice in these words, "I don't think ESL courses are meant to help students with job applications but I agree that if a student can

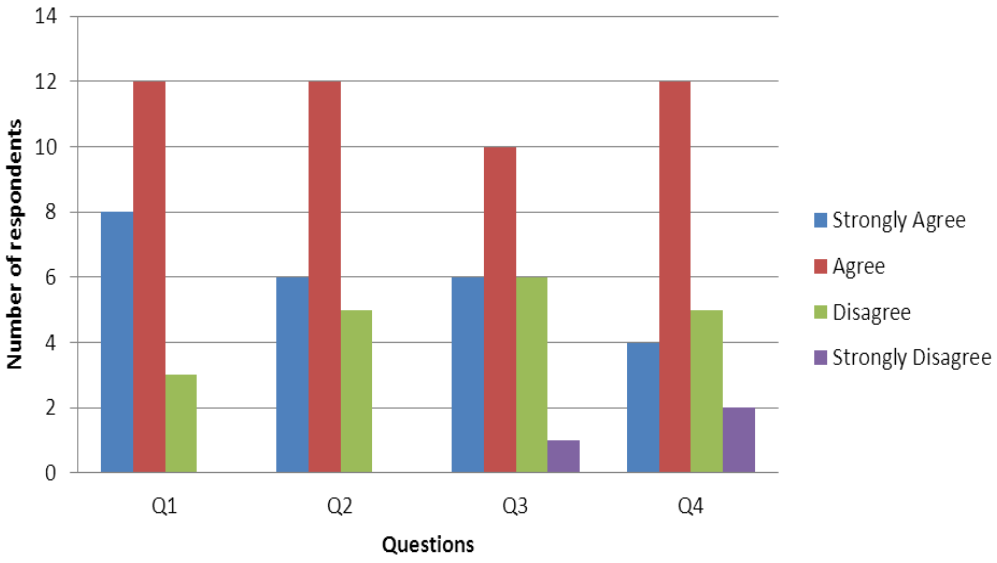
writer better English, then it definitely help him to write better job applications." Another participant expressed his views that, "Yes, after taking these courses one can write better job applications as most of the jobs ask you to write something about yourself so if you write well you have more chances of being called for an interview."

4.14 Usefulness of the graduate level ESL writing courses for students' chosen fields

"The ESL writing courses are useful in terms of:" is subdivided into the following four sub questions: Q1) Writing better assignments for my chosen academic field; Q 2) my career opportunities; Q3) Enabling me to use different sources of information in my chosen area of study; Q4) Participate effectively in my chosen field of study.

This part of the questionnaire deals with the usefulness of the ESL courses in terms of the four important areas related to the Pakistani graduate students. Respondents had mix opinions about the usefulness of ESL writing courses for their chosen field of study in terms of above four questions. Figure 18 shows overall trends in response to these questions.

Figure 18 Usefulness for participant's chosen field of study



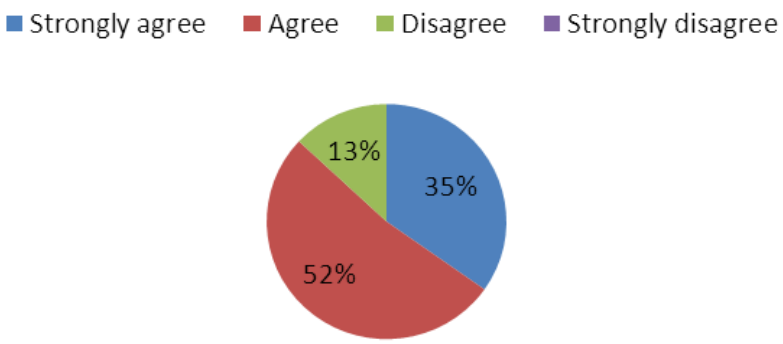
When asked if their ESL writing courses aided them in "writing better assignments for their chosen academic field," fifty-two percent respondent "agreed" that the ESL courses they have taken are useful for their selected field of study and another thirty-five percent "strongly agreed" this is the significant majority of the overall respondents. Only three respondents, out of 23 "disagreed" and there were no students in the "strong disagreement." Interestingly, the course objectives of ESL500 and ESL501 are not field specific.

The primary goals of ESL500/501 are given in the course syllabuses in these words, "Because ESL 500/501 are university service courses, the goals of this sequence reflect the common needs of a wide range of academic programs. Thus, the objectives on which these two courses are based are necessarily varied and subject to change as the composition of the international student population changes." This shows objectives of courses are not field specific, however writing is integral part of graduate level studies at UIUC which can be reason for students to perceive the ESL courses helpful for their chosen field of study. The different choices of participants for the sub-questions are depicted in separate pie charts.

4.14.1 Usefulness to Write Better in Specific Fields of Study

First part of the question dealing with writing better assignments in the chosen field is given below. Here, fifty-two percent respondents "agreed" and another thirty-five percent "strongly agreed" that the ESL courses help them to write better assignments in their chosen field of study. Again this overall majority demonstrate Pakistani students consider the ESL courses contributing toward their written assignments in their chosen field. However, thirteen percent respondents "disagreed" that if the ESL courses helped them to write better assignments in their specific field of study at UIUC.

Figure 19 ESL Usefulness to Write Better in specific fields of study

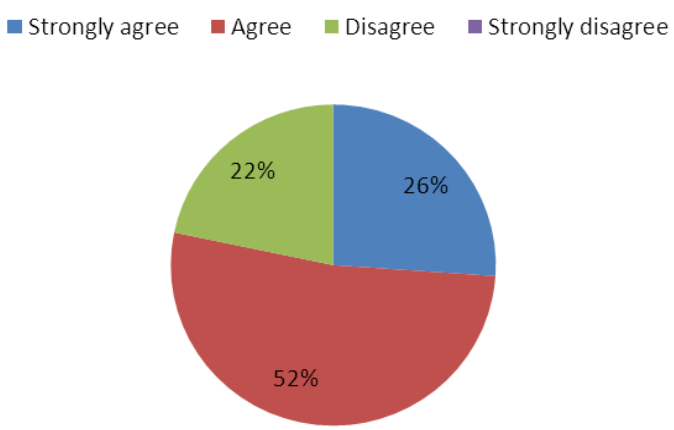


4.14.2 Usefulness for Future Career Opportunities

The second part of the question asked about the usefulness for student's future career opportunities. Here, 26% percent of students "agreed" that these courses are helpful for their future employment opportunities. The English language is considered to be an essential requirement for most of the jobs for educated people in Pakistan, possibly contributing to the 52 % of respondents that perceive the ESL courses to be helpful for their career opportunities. Twenty-two percent respondents "disagreed." Many of the respondents that "disagreed" are specializing in the field of Engineering, where they may need more technical expertise than writing skills.

The respondents from social sciences, as well as biological sciences, " strongly agreed" that the ESL writing courses can help them to find better jobs. In the follow-up questions one of the respondents from social sciences background expressed his views that, "I can have good career chances if I complete my PhD from UIUC. In this scenario, ESL courses are enabling me to get my degree by writing better papers and assignments." If the overall responses are considered, then there is clear consensus that the ESL writing courses are useful for career opportunities.

Figure 20 Usefulness for future career opportunities

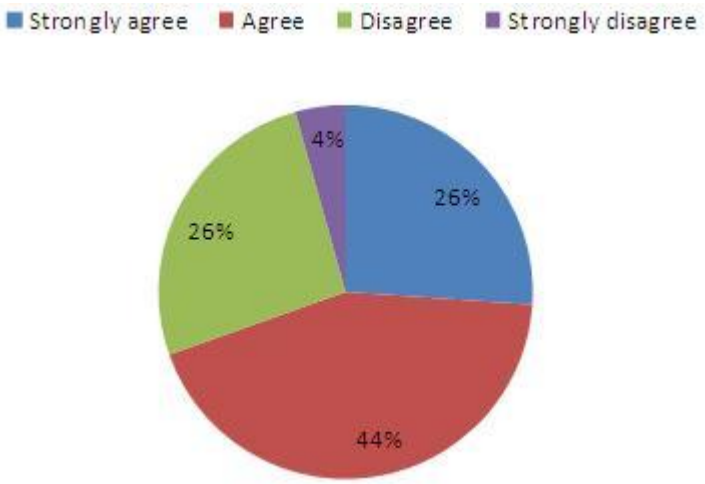


4.14.3 Usefulness for Research in Specific Fields of Study

The next part of the question asks respondents to share their perception of the usefulness of the ESL writing courses for research in their chosen field of study. There was a clear difference of opinion among the respondents for this question. Forty four percent "agreed" that taking graduate level ESL courses enabled them to use the different sources of information for their chosen field of study and another twenty-six percent "strongly agreed." The ESL writing courses cover the main aspects of general researching. For example, one class period minimum is reserved for a library tour and a lecture by an expert in the field of library sciences about how to use the library resources efficiently. The Pakistani educational system is not well-equipped with modern libraries and other sources of information. The modern sources of information, like those used at UIUC, are only used by a few top educational institutions in Pakistan. The tradition of teaching academic skills in public sector universities is rare and the majority of these Pakistani graduate students hail from public sector universities. This could be the reason that the majority of these students consider the ESL courses to be useful in this aspect. Yet at the same time, 26

percent of respondents "disagreed" that there was any meaningful contribution of sources of information in their chosen field of study. Only one respondent "strongly disagreed." It seems that the ESL courses focus only on generic guidelines of research, without digging deeper into the different specialized sources of different fields of study; this could contribute to some of the dissatisfaction of the respondents.

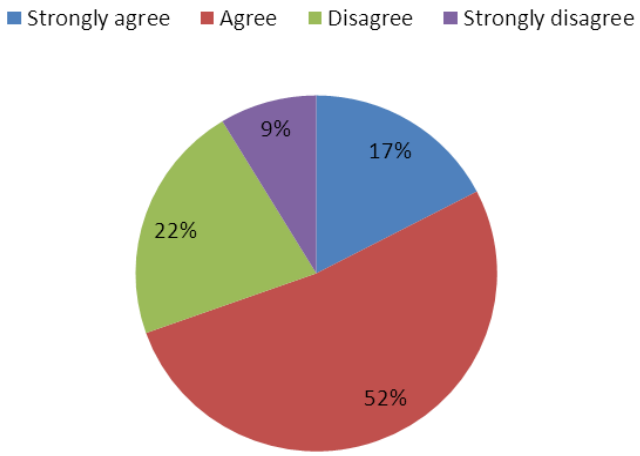
Figure 21 Usefulness for Research in Specific Fields of Study.



4.14.4 Usefulness for Participating Effectively in the Academic Work of Their Chosen Field

The last sub-part of the question considers how the ESL courses help Pakistani graduate students to participate effectively in the academic work in their chosen field of study. Here also there were mixed responses from the survey respondents. Fifty-two percent of respondents "agreed" that the ESL courses have prepared them to participate effectively in their chosen area of study, and another 17 percent of respondents "strongly agreed." Five respondents "disagreed" and two respondents "strongly disagreed" that the ESL courses are effective in this way.

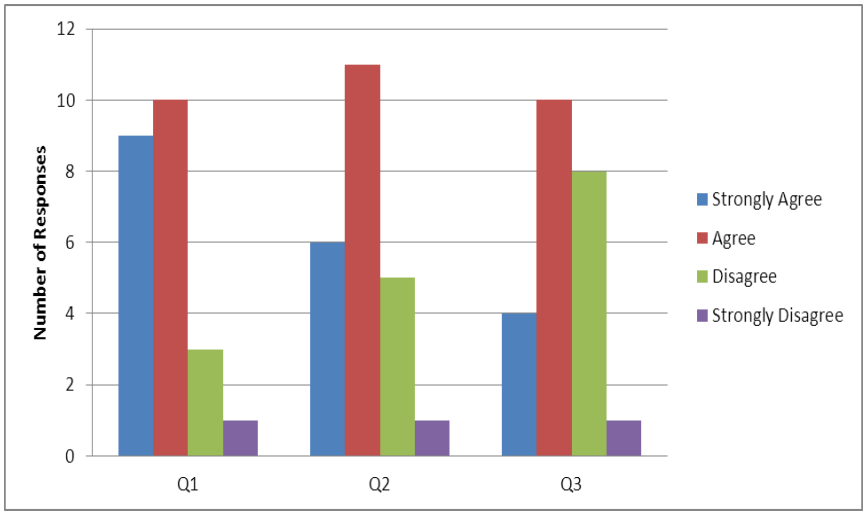
Figure 22 Usefulness for Participating Effectively in the Academic Work of Their Chosen Field



4.15 Usefulness of the Graduate level ESL courses for the use of Academic Resources

This question focused on the usefulness of the ESL courses to enable students to use the various academic resources available at UIUC for the improvement of their academic writing. There were three sub-questions separating the use of library resources, electronic resources, and the writer's workshop receiving a varied reaction from the respondents. The overall trend in responses from participants is summarized in the figure 23below.

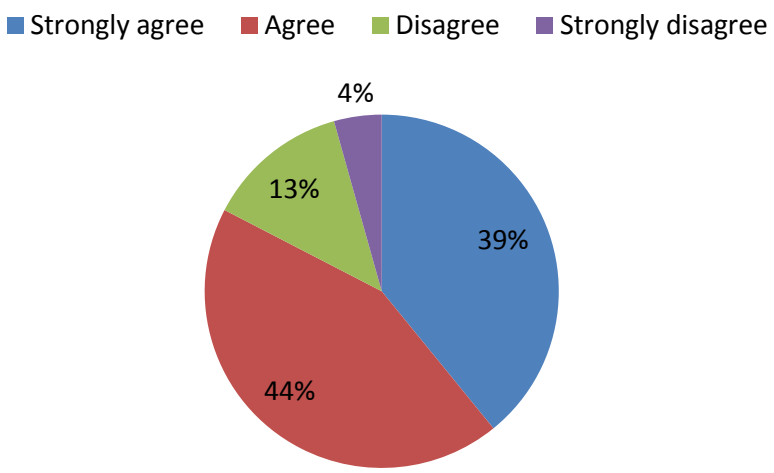
Figure 23 Usefulness for Using Academic Resources



4.15.1 Usefulness for Acquiring Library Resources

The first part of the question inquires about the library as an academic resource at UIUC. UIUC has one of the largest library systems in the U.S.; it has one main library, one undergraduate library, one separate Engineering library and dozens of separate departmental libraries. In all of the ESL classes, the library is an integral component, requiring library tour in which students are exposed to library resources that are helpful for writing different assignments for ESL courses in general and for their related field of study in particular. Some of the ESL instructors even require their ESL students to use resources from the library and spend time exploring the different aspects of the library websites, getting help from the professional staff, and the related library features.

Figure 24 Usefulness for acquiring library resources



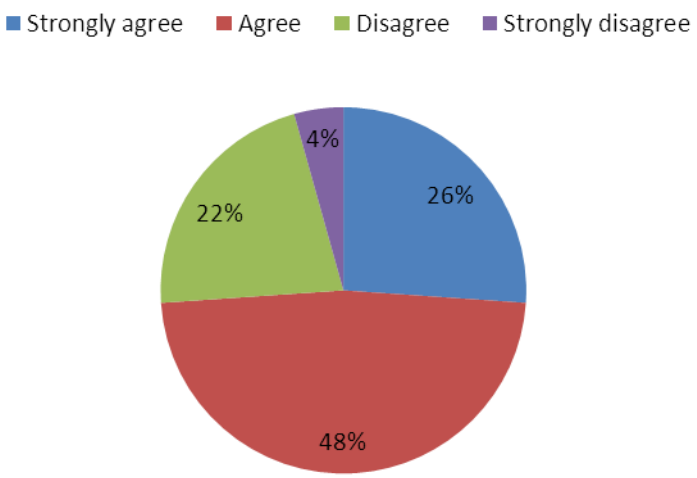
Thirty-nine per-cent respondents recognized this as an important focus of the graduate level ESL courses and showed strong agreement that they have learned useful knowledge of using the library as an academic resource. Forty-three percent of students “agreed” that the ESL courses were helpful for improving their use of library for different academic assignments. This

clearly demonstrates that the majority of the Pakistani graduate students appreciated this part of their course as useful. Only 13% "disagreed" with the usefulness of the ESL courses for helping them use the libraries in a better way. Only 4% "strongly disagreed", it may be he already knew how to use different resources at the library or that he does not consider the library to be useful for his relevant field of study. More focused research is needed to ascertain perceptions of such students. The overall results of this question prove that this part of the course is helpful to the majority of the students.

4.15.2 Usefulness for Electronic Resources

The Second part of the question asked about the usefulness of the ESL courses regarding the effective use of electronic resources, such as online journals, web searches, etc. Electronic resources play an important role in academic writing in general and in modern scientific research in particular. This question was included keeping in mind that most educational institutions in Pakistan do not use much technology in comparison to UIUC. Here again 48% of respondents "agreed" and 26% of respondents "strongly agreed" that the ESL courses are really helpful for learning more about electronic resources. Only five of the twenty three respondents "disagreed" that ESL courses taught them much about the effective use of electronic resources and just one respondent "strongly disagreed." Overall, the majority of respondents appear to be pleased with the usefulness of the ESL courses in this aspect.

Figure 25 Usefulness for Acquiring Electronic Resources

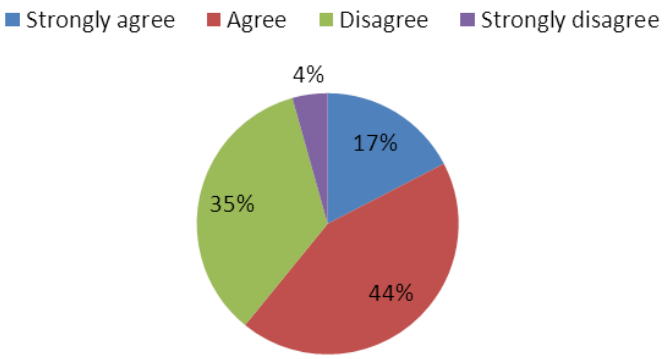


4.15.3 Usefulness for the Awareness about Writer's Workshop

The third sub-question in the questionnaire asked participants about the use of the Writer's Workshop, a university writing center that provides free writing feedback and tutoring, as an academic resource and whether they were encouraged to use it in their ESL classes. The ESL Writing instructors often encourage their students to take advantage of this important resource on campus. The Writer's Workshop is a free and available to all students, faculty and staff who need guidance in the process of writing their assignments, project reports, scholarship essays, personal statements, application essays, theses, and dissertations. Students can make an appointment with writing experts and can seek help with any genre of writing. The Writer's Workshop also helps ESL students in particular so that they can take control of their own writing. In 2011, the Writer's workshop started a new graduate-level ESL writing group to provide a platform for these students to discuss their progress on different writing projects with their fellow graduate students. The respondents of this research have shown mixed reaction

towards the graduate level's ESL writer's courses role in informing them about these opportunities. Only 10 of the 23 respondents "agreed" that the ESL writing courses really encouraged them to use this important resource on campus.

Figure 26 Writer's workshop as a resource



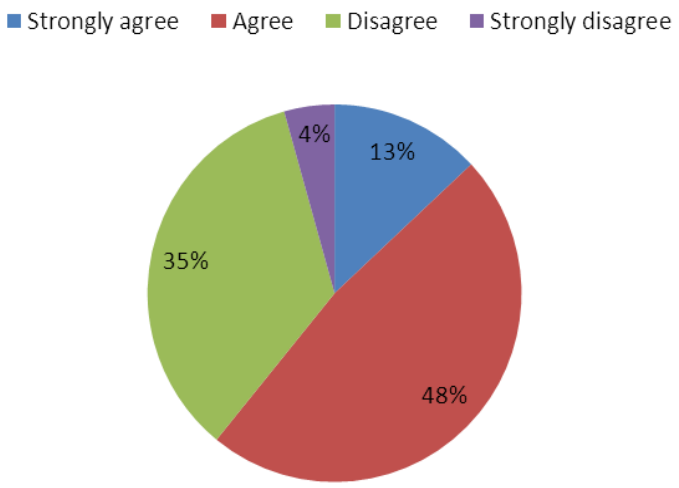
As it is shown in Figure 26, 35% of respondents "disagree" that the ESL courses have taught them about this resource, and one respondent "strongly disagree."

4.16 Graduate level ESL writing courses and sense of personal worth

International students who usually struggle to master the art of academic writing go through a changing state of sense of personal worth. Many ESL students have conflicting opinions about their identity and personal worth while attending ESL classes. This question gave a chance to the Pakistani graduate students to share their perception about their sense of personal worth as an ESL writing student at UIUC. Eleven students "agreed" that they developed a sense of personal worth while attending these courses, and another three students "strongly agreed."In this case, the responses were bit unexpected as it was hypothesized that the majority would disagree that the ESL writing classes develop their sense of personal worth, but in reality only

eight students “disagreed” and one student “strongly disagreed” that these courses are not developing their sense of personal worth.

Figure 27 Participants Sense of Personal Worth



As it is depicted in the Figure 27 below, there was a mixed reaction. In the follow-up questions, students reiterated the positive data, by relating their ESL writing skills with their confidence in writing different assignments and performing well in their courses. Zeeshan responded in these words, “ESL classes develop my sense of personal worth as it helped me in the improvement of my writing skills, now I have better writing skills so I feel good about it”. This shows some students related their ESL label with their confidence in writing and considers these courses as a tool for the development of their personal worth. In contrast, the student who “strongly disagreed” explained that “While taking ESL classes I realized I have a big deficiency as compared to local students and I spent so much extra time for not actually getting any grade, such feeling off course do not help anyone developing his sense of personal worth.” Aamir added that, “ESL courses got nothing to do with my sense of personal worth they are just telling me every day I need to write better English so which part of course helped me in developing

sense of personal worth, I rather feel depressed when my instructor pointed out so many mistakes in my first few assignments." This shows some students do not like to be in these classes and also they do not like if their instructors point out many mistakes in their assignments. ESL instructors should be more sensitive to students while responding to their students' writings.

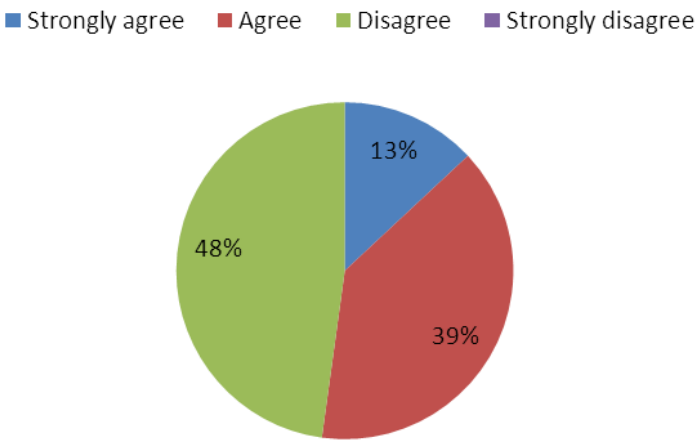
4.17 Usefulness of ESL writing courses for students' area of specialization

This part of the questionnaire deals with any influence that the ESL courses may have on the various areas of specialization of the graduate students. The Pakistani students seemed to have divided opinions about the usefulness of ESL courses for their areas of specialization.

4.17.1 Usefulness for Area of Specialization

The majority had a positive reaction to this question, with 9 who "agreed" and 3 who "strongly disagreed." However, forty-eight percent subjects did not find the ESL courses helpful for their own field of study.

Figure 28 Usefulness for area of specialization

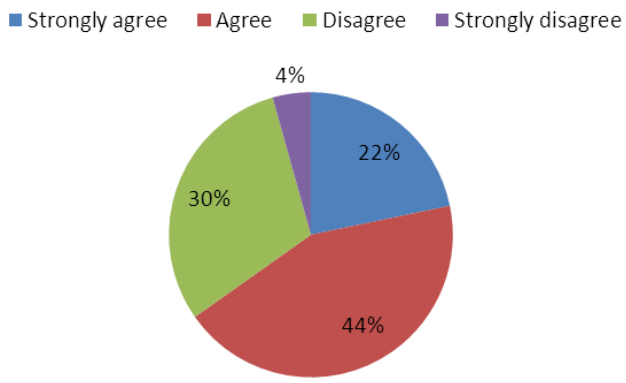


There can be a variety of reasons that almost half of the respondents would not consider the ESL courses to be helpful for their own area of specialization. One obvious reason could be that specialized writing conventions are often used in different disciplines. In the follow-up questions, one respondent who did not find the ESL courses to be helpful for his field stated that, "In my ESL classes we only discussed one specific pattern of research paper which is not what we do in our field, In biotechnology we run experiment, we discuss significance of particular tools used and then come to actual discussion and analysis but in ESL classes we used social sciences model of research paper which is not quite helpful for me". In contrast, a supporter of the ESL courses explained that, "being a PhD student I have to write lot of papers in my area of specialization. In ESL writing courses we work on different aspects of academic writing so there is clear connection between what we do in our ESL classes and writing I do in my area of specialization."

4.17.2 Usefulness for Future Work Place

The second sub-question was based on the usefulness of the ESL writing courses for their future work place. After the completion of the graduate education, students will do variety of tasks at their future work place. The majority of students consider these courses to be helpful for their future work place with over sixty percent of students "strongly agreeing" that the ESL courses are helpful. Yet still about almost 30% "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed." These figures show that as writing is an important part of future work place, the ESL courses are still helpful for the majority in their future workplace.

Figure 29 Usefulness for future work place.



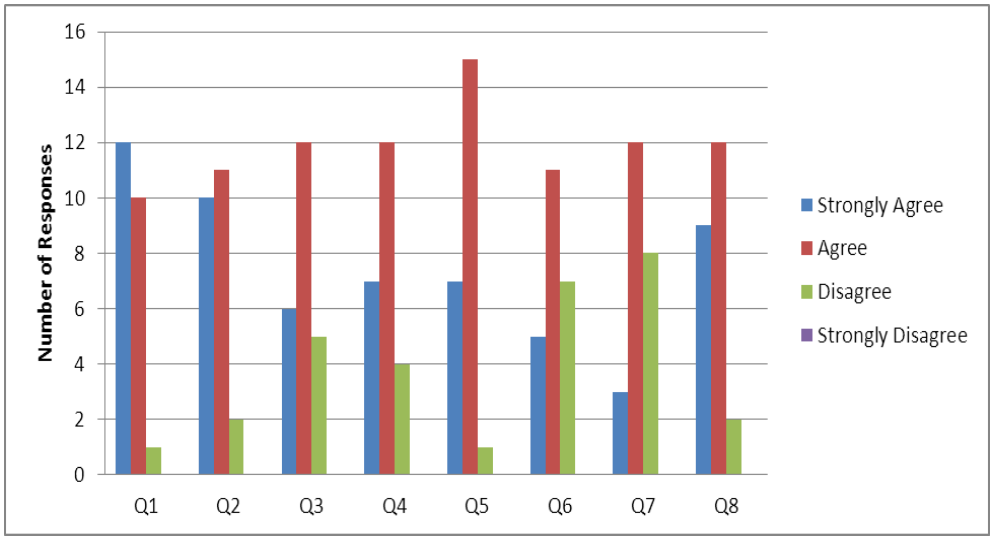
4.18 Effectiveness of the Instructors

In this section participants were asked about their class instructors. Following questions were asked to collect their responses related to the effectiveness of their instructors.

Students were asked to share their perceptions about ESL instructors regarding eight sub questions as: Q1) Apply pair/group work regularly in class; Q2) Prepare well for the lessons; Q3) Help students to develop their speaking skills; Q4) Run interesting classes; Q5) Are interested in their student's opinions ;Q 6) Provide students with good advice about how to do well in their chosen field; Q7) Help students with their pronunciation; Q8) Answer students' questions satisfactorily

Pakistani graduate students were asked about their perceptions related to their ESL instructors i.e. whether the teachers were well prepared, helped students develop speaking skills, applied pair/group work regularly, ran interesting classes, seemed to care about their students opinions, helped students with their pronunciation, and answered students' questions satisfactorily. All of the above questions are plotted against the number of responses per question in the figure 4.13.

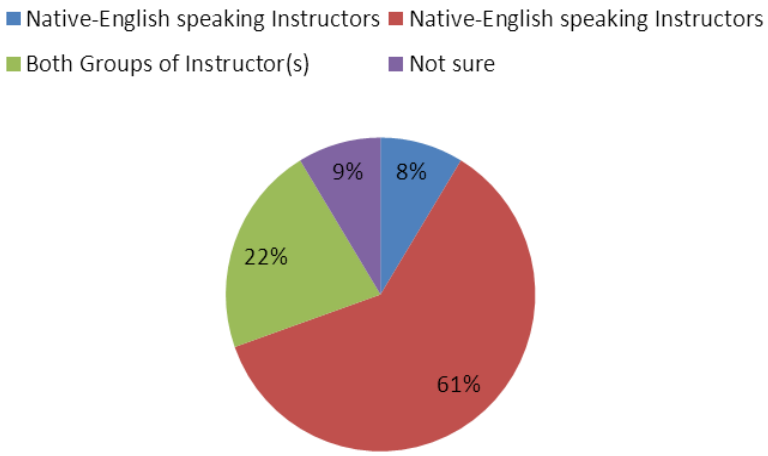
Figure 30 Overview of Perceptions about ESL Instructors



4.18.1 Native vs. Non-Native ESL Instructors

The majority or 61% of students had non-native English speaking instructors. Twenty-two percent of respondents, who took both ESL 500 and ESL 501, reported that they had both non-native and native speakers of English as their ESL instructors. Only 8% had native English speaking instructors. Interestingly, 3 respondents or 8% of the total participants were not sure whether their instructors were native or non-native.

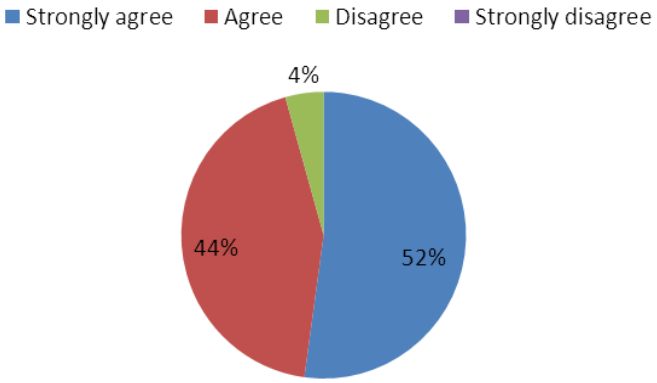
Figure 31 Perception about Native and Non-native ESL instructors



4.18.2 Perception about Instructors Using Regular Pair/Group Work

When students were asked if their writing instructors regularly used pair and group work, a clear majority "strongly agreed." This was also observed by the researcher during his class observation of ESL 501 in which there were four Pakistani graduate students. Ninety-six percent of participants agreed that there was regular use of pair/group work in the ESL classes, and there was only one respondent who disagreed. These results strongly support that pair/group work is being consistently incorporated in the course work, which adheres to the task based language teaching methodology that is currently being promoted in the ESL writing courses at UIUC. Instructors usually follow a standardized syllabus for graduate level writing classes and are encouraged to regularly use pair/group work for the different in-class writing exercises.

Figure 32 Regular use of pair/group work in ESL classes.

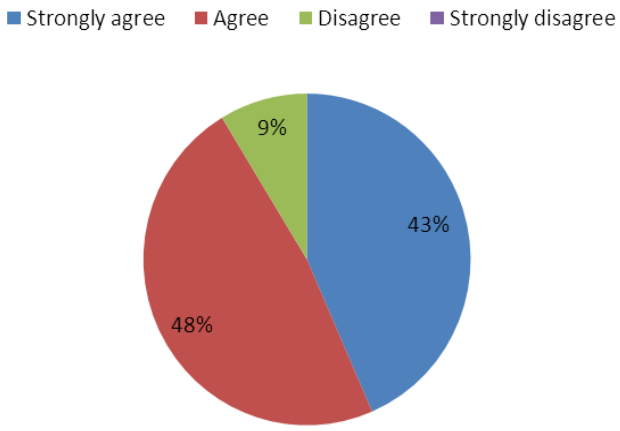


4.18.3 Preparedness of the Instructors

When participants were asked about how they felt about the preparedness of their writing instructors in general, more than 90% participants agreed that instructors come to classes well-prepared. Only 9% of respondents disagreed, implying that their instructor(s) are often unprepared for their classes. In the follow-up questions, one respondent shared his opinion in

these words, “I don’t think they come prepared everyday as on many occasions my instructor changed the activities which were already shown on the course website”. Another respondent expressed her views as, “my instructor was really well prepared for her all classes, and she always knows well how to handle variety of activities in her class”. Therefore, while it appears that the majority are well-prepared, there is still a continuum of diversity, as can be seen in Figure 33below.

Figure 33 Preparedness of ESL Instructors



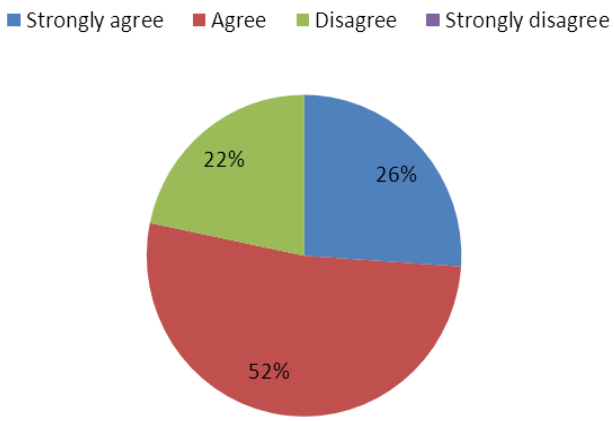
4.18.4 Helpfulness of the Instructors in Developing Speaking Skills

In terms of helpfulness of instructors in developing speaking skills of students, a big number of participants responded in agreement that their instructors offer them some help in developing their speaking skills. Fifty-two percent of respondents “agreed” that their ESL instructors played a positive role in developing their speaking skills, and another 26% “strongly agreed” which can be seen in Figure 34 below. Not surprisingly, all of the respondents who had “strongly agreed” had taken or were taking ESL 500 at the time of survey, which particularly focuses on oral skills.

ESL 500 is considered to be more of an "all skills course" in comparison with ESL 501. The first day handout shares this intention stating, "This course is an "all skills" course that focuses equally on academic speaking skills such as oral presentations in seminars and other academic contexts, and on the principles of academic writing at the essay level." Oral skills development is a unique feature of ESL500, described as follows on ESL TA website at UIUC:

> Oral Component: Students are introduced to the conventions of group discussions and formal oral presentations. They are given extensive practice in large group discussions, small seminar presentations and formal speeches. The students also work on improving fluency by giving impromptu speeches and oral summaries. To develop their ability to interpret and comprehend spoken English, students learn various active listening strategies such as listening for key words, identifying main ideas, taking notes and formulating questions. They develop these skills by listening to academic lectures, videotapes of news broadcasts and short segments of films, and presentations by other class members. (http://uiuceslta.blogspot.com/2010/01/description-of-esl-service-courses.html)

Figure 34 Instructors support for improvement of speaking skills



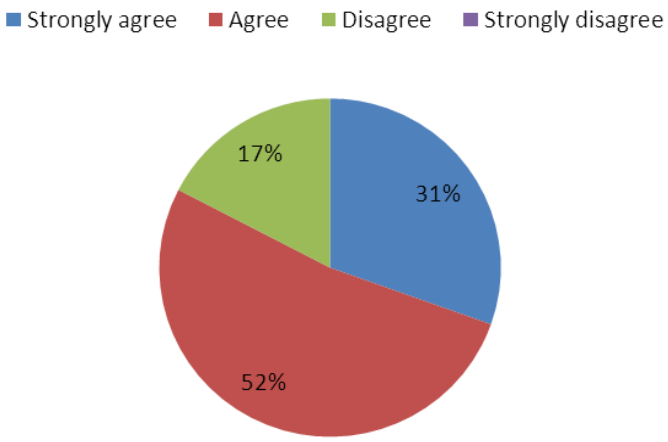
However, 22% of respondents still "disagreed" that the instructors had been helpful for the development of their speaking skills. In the follow-up questions, one respondent who took ESL500 explained, "There was only one presentation at the end of the course. This activity was focused on speaking. Otherwise in the rest of the course we always do more writing exercises. Sometimes there is some class discussion but we don't get any feedback on the way we utter our

answers, so I don't see a big help from instructors in the development of speaking skills". In contrast another participant stated that, he states, "I asked many questions after the class or sometime in the group activity how I should say certain phrase or expression. Many instructors provided me answers which were helpful for the development of my speaking skills". So overall these figures shows participants perceive these courses helpful for the development of their speaking skills.

4.18.5 Perception of Classes to be Interesting or Not

The next sub-questions asked participants to share whether they thought their instructors were running interesting classes or not. A large majority of the participants were happy about the way classes were run. Fifty-two percent "agreed" that their instructors ran interesting classes and another 30% "strongly agreed." The researcher witnessed this during his class observations as well throughout the semester. The students seemed engaged throughout the lectures and activities. The Instructors themselves seemed to make an effort to interest the students, using different video clips and discussion questions as warm-ups for the day's topic. This Researcher also observed that whenever an instructor used a video to lead into, or as part of, an activity, there was much more participation from the students. The Pakistani graduate students in general were active participants in the whole class discussion and group discussion. In fact, on several occasions, the instructor had to cut them off in order to let other students participate in the class discussion. Only 4% participants of participants "disagreed" that their ESL classes were not conducted in an interesting way by their instructors.

Figure 35 DO ESL Instructors run interesting classes?

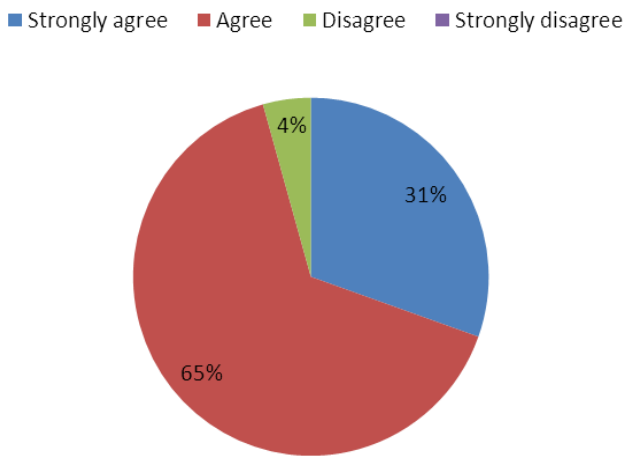


One of the respondents expressed his views on the way classes were run, explaining that, " most of classes were good fun as usually we watch some video and then do follow up activity based on that video, especially after taking other classes in my own field ESL offer us some entertainment along with teaching of writing skills". Another participant expressed that, "I find most of classes really interesting but I really enjoyed the presentations week as I got chance to express my views in front of other students and get some feedback from rest of the class." These opinions illustrate students find their classes interesting and their instructors put efforts to make classes interesting for students.

4.18.6 Instructor's Interest in their Students' Opinions

In response to whether they thought that the instructors were interested in their students' opinions or not, all, except one, agreed that their instructors are indeed interested. Sixty-five percent "agreed" and another 31% "strongly agreed" leaving only one participant with some reservations regarding ESL instructor's interest in his opinion.

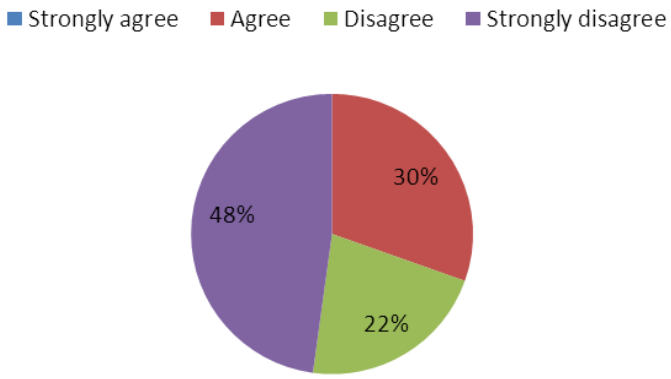
Figure 36 ESL Instructors 'interest in learner's opinions



4.18.7 Instructor's Ability to Offer Advice Related to their Specialized Field of Study

In terms of whether the ESL instructors can provide students with some good advice about how to do well in the writing assignments in their chosen field of study, a clear majority of the Pakistani graduate students did not find their ESL instructors to be helpful resources. As Figure 37 below depicts 48% of students "strongly disagreed" that the ESL instructors are knowledgeable enough to give them good advice about the writing assignments related to their own field of study. Another 22% of participants "disagreed", leaving only 30% who "agreed." Unfortunately, there was not a single student who "strongly agreed" regarding this statement, showing that students may not be getting the support that they need.

Figure 37 ESL Instructors' ability to offer advice related to specialized field of study



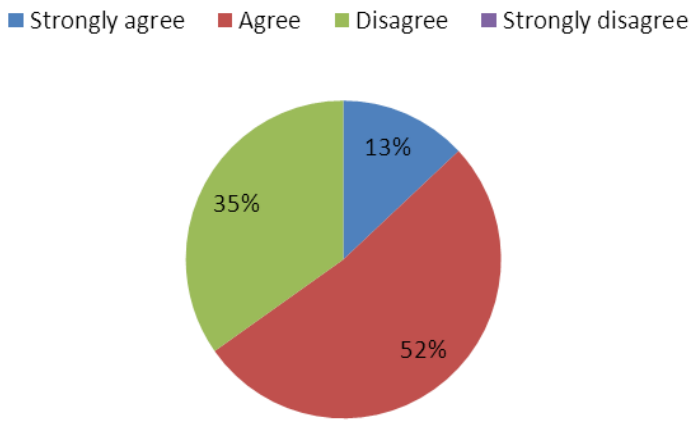
4.18.8 Helpfulness of the Instructor in Improving Pronunciation

Pakistani graduate students were also asked in this section about whether their ESL instructors offered them help if they had some difficulty pronouncing particular word in English. In response to this question, the majority of the students "agreed" that their instructors were helpful. Fifty two percent of participants "agreed" that some help had been offered by their instructors, and another 13% "strongly agreed."

However, there were still thirty five percent of the respondents who "disagreed." In the follow-up questions, one participant explained, "ESL writing courses are not focusing on pronunciation then I don't think my instructors should be able to answer my questions related to pronunciation as both instructors I took classes from instructors who were non-natives so I don't think they can help me in a better way even if they want to help me". Another participant states, " I think ESL instructors didn't offer much help with the pronunciation related questions, sometimes I asked certain questions but instructor didn't feel appropriate to answer them, but we ask such questions keeping in mind better English skills of our instructors". These statements

shows students are not getting much help with their pronunciation questions, also these courses do not focus on pronunciation.

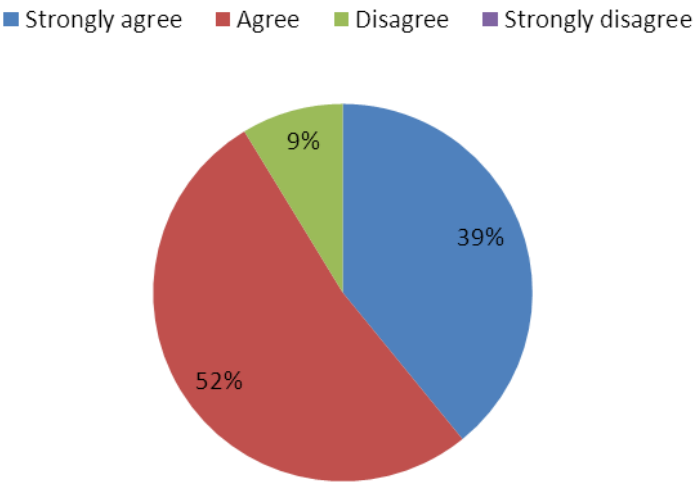
Figure 38 ESL Instructors' support for the improvement of pronunciation



4.18.9 The Ability of the Instructor to Answer Students' Questions Satisfactorily

The final part of question deals with the ability of the ESL instructors to answer students' satisfactorily. Once again, the majority of students agreed that their instructors were able to

Figure 39 ESL Instructors' ability to answer student's questions satisfactorily

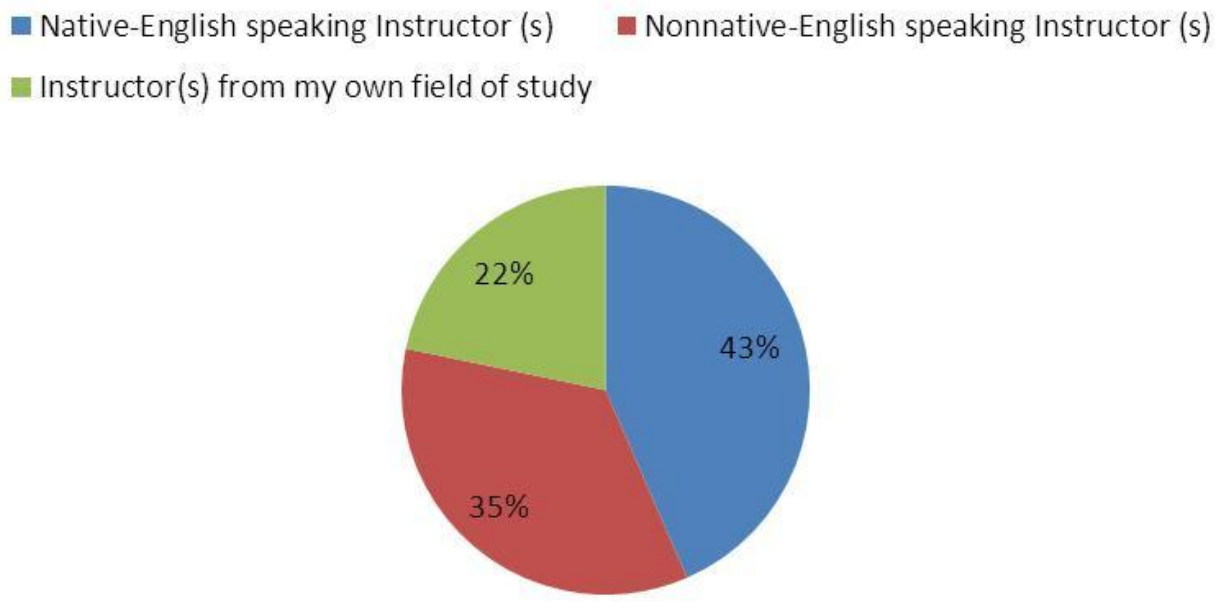


able to answer their questions satisfactorily. Fifty-two percent "agreed" to this statement and another 39% "strongly agreed." Only nine percent of participants "disagreed" that their instructors were helpful in this regard. Fortunately, none of the students "strongly disagreed."

4.18.10 Effectiveness Native vs. Non-native instructors' for teaching the graduate-level ESL courses

In the second to last question, participants shared their perception of the three different categories of instructors and their ability to teach the graduate-level ESL writing courses. The participants were asked to choose form the following three categories: 1) native English speaking instructors, 2) non-native English speaking instructors, and finally 3) instructors from their own field of study. This question was followed by an open-ended question in order for the participants to justify their choices. The results were mixed. Forty-three percent of students supported native-English speaking instructors, over non-native English speaking and instructors from their own field of study.

Figure 40 Perception of the effectiveness of ESL Instructors for writing courses



Thirty- five percent of participants consider nonnative-English speaking instructors to be the most effective, whereas and only 22% of participants consider instructors from their own field of study to be the most effective. The Pakistani graduate students explained their views in great detail in the open- ended section of this question. According to Aamir, "Non-native speakers are always better than native speakers, as they have already done some homework in learning English as their second language and they are already familiar with different problems students might face while learning writing in a second language. I guess Non-native instructors put more effort as I studied from native as well as non-native instructors and my non-native instructor was as hard working as Native-instructor." Ahmad , agreed, stating that, "I think non-native English speaking instructors know the problems of non-native English Speaking students more than Native-English speaking instructors as they themselves have gone through this transition period but native speakers are fine too". Asad expressed his support for native speaking instructors in these words, "Native speakers have natural advantage of native accent, but it does not make them better instructors as compared to non-native instructors who can be equally effective for writing classes as we focus on writing not on accent training, in my case I was extremely happy with the teaching style of my non-native instructor." This shows students like native speakers for their native accent but do appreciate hard work of non-native instructors.

In contrast, Ali argued that, "I prefer native instructors as they have fair accent and can help students to improve their listening skills too."Razia contended for native speakers as ESL writing instructors in these words, "Native speaking instructors have some extra benefits, for example, they can also assist me with my pronunciation problems whereas non-native cannot have perfect pronunciation which students can follow during different activities in their classes. If a choice was given to me at the start of my class then I should have opted for a native

instructor rather than a non-native one." Akmal expressed his opinion in these words, "I think native speakers must have more knowledge about their language and writing skills." Arslan who was from English medium background stated, "ESL instructor should be native English speaker, as knows well about the language as compared to the non-native speakers." Hamid states

Some of the Pakistani graduate students expressed desired to have instructors from their own field of study, Jamil explained that, "If the ESL instructor is from the same field of study then I think it will be very useful for working on writing assignments engaging my own field of study and instructors can also give feedback according to the standards used in my field of study". Ghani, a graduate student in the field of Engineering, expressed his discontent with the current curriculum. "Field of engineering has little to do with the writing skills but I think if ESL TAs do some training under engineering faculty focusing on what they look in their students' writing then ESL instructors can prepare engineering students in much better way". Rahmat expresses his support for instructors from his own field in these words, "I think a person with similar educational background will possess more knowledge of the day to day problems arising in the field and the way to cope up with them." Kashif also has similar opinion, "Having background of my field will help them to understand the academic expectations of my field." Riaz shared these ideas about ESL instructors, "Instructors from my own field of study will have better background to help me in my area of specialization. Such instructors should know about the expectations of professors for students in my field."

Some students, like Hamid, did not even have a preference, stating, "It doesn't matter to me." Nauman emphasized on explicit feedback for his writing in these words, "I don't mind if my instructor is native or non-native as far they are willing to help me with my writing problems more effectively which require them to give more explicit feedback and also using sample of

writing which will be helpful for writing my future dissertation to complete my PhD." This show there is mixed perceptions of the effectiveness of native and non-native ESL writing instructors. Students support native speakers for their mastery of language and native accent, whereas some other respondents appreciate hard work of non-native instructors and their ability to empathize with ESL students.

4.19 Data from the ESL Instructors

This section reports the data from several of the instructors that have had Pakistani graduate students in their writing courses. In previous two year 2010-2011 there were more Pakistani graduate students in ESL writing courses that were observed by the researcher and then requested to respond to the online survey questionnaire. Three instructors responded to the follow-up questions in detail, and one instructor provided brief answers. Their responses are divided into different subsections according to the different questions asked in the interview.

4.19.1 Instructors' background information

The first question asked instructors to share their educational backgrounds and teaching experiences. All instructors participating in this study are MA TESL students in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The real names of instructors have not been used here as a way of maintaining anonymity. Jenny who taught a group of six Pakistani students explained her teaching experience and methodology, "I used to teach EFL in a high school in South Korea for four and a half years, mostly focused on teaching reading and grammar, occasionally teaching conversation. The most influential theory that I draw on is communicative and collaborative language learning. I also use integrated approach – integrating

four skills -- in my teaching. Although this is a writing class, I try to do a lot of speaking tasks so that students can interact with each other more and actively engaged in learning materials. I also think the most important stage of teaching is diagnosing what students do and do not know. This way, I believe that teaching can be the most efficient and beneficial."

Ashley, who taught four Pakistani graduate students, explained her experience as well, stating that, "Before coming here I tutored writing and taught survival English. I draw on my experience tutoring and on writing essays. I also use the blog and try to think of specific issues for ESL students."

Carola, who taught three Pakistani graduate students, shared her background and teaching experience in these words, "I have studied English as a major in college/grad school. I am Korean born and grown up in Germany. My teaching experience: (1 year) lecturer teaching an Intro to English Linguistics class, (2 years) instructor for Intro to Linguistics classes, (2 years) ESL Writing instructor. There are no influential theories or texts, but Professors with whom I worked with or I have taken classes who had an impact on my teaching skills." This shows ESL writing instructors have diverse educational and teaching background; this may influence their teaching methodology. Let us have some insight about the research interests of ESL instructors.

4.19.2 Research interests of instructors

The Second question in the interview asked the instructors to share their research interests. Jenny claimed that, "I don't have any specific research interest, I sometimes observe students how they respond to different class activities, and then try to relate with their cultural traits. For example, I have lot of Korean and Chinese students so I try to compare what is

common or different among them. Specifically I don't think I will do a big research project in MA TESL."

Similarly, Ashley explained that, "I don't do independent research as a MATESL student but if I did it would be something in Sociolinguistics. As an undergrad at UIUC I wrote a thesis on how sociolinguistic features affect how Austrian Standard German is perceived as different from German Standard German. I'm very interested in how culture affects how one perceives language. Of course I haven't done much with that in the MATESL program. I do try to think about the connection though when teaching writing." Carola, in turn, briefly shared her research interests in these words, "I am interested in Conversation Analysis."

4.19.3 Curriculum unit most suitable for Pakistani students

The instructors were next asked to share their opinion if there was any particular unit in the ESL writing curriculum which was suitable to the particular writing problems of Pakistani graduate students. Jenny agreed that the nature of the curriculum does aim to benefit the Pakistani students in some aspects, specifically with plagiarism. She explains that, "The curriculum was set up by the coordinator. So, I didn't have much control over it. Judging from reflective assignments and informal feedback from Pakistani students, students seem to have benefited a lot from "avoiding plagiarism" unit although I do not think they have really succeeded in mastering the skills – paraphrasing, making references, and summarizing. I think Pakistani students were having more problems with the structure of paragraph and overall coherence in the longer pieces of writing which they improved to a great extent but I can't say that they master all the skills of structure and coherence."

Carola explained an aspect that she thought was missing, “The Pakistani students in my class were all very hard-working and highly motivated. The greatest weakness I noticed, if they really had any, involved grammar problems. I tried to give as much feedback in the writing assignments, but I did not cover many grammar aspects in class. I did cover all other topics and required units of my course. The reason for covering all these topics is our curriculum that we need to follow. There weren’t any special units to which my Pakistani students paid greater attention.”

Ashley noted that, “To be honest I really can’t say. I had so many students and they all seemed equally bored during much of the class, no matter where they were from. I suspect this was because it was a summer class that they were forced to take. I can’t remember any particular unit in the course except they asked for grammar related help which we don’t cover in our ESL classes. Two Pakistani students were having some issues with the use of articles but I don’t want to generalize it to only Pakistani students as some other students from Asia were also having the similar issues with the use of articles.” So, one instructor consider Pakistani student learnt a lot from unit on “avoiding plagiarism”, other two instructors were not sure which unit was most suitable for the needs of Pakistani students.

4.19.4 Freedom to introduce new material for specific students

The third question asked instructors if they have the freedom to introduce changes in the units as they see, Jenny reiterated that, “there was not much leeway in the course design due to a tight schedule to follow. At our level meetings [meeting of ESL 500], Carola and I usually talk about how Pakistani students are very vocal, which I thought was good. However, one of them was a little too dominant in class (group activities) and made a few other students complain. Two

students complained to me that this Pakistani student doesn't give them any chance to talk during group activities. This, however, is not about him being Pakistani. This could be just a personality of that particular student."

Ashley explained her similar situation that, "I was required to cover nearly everything in the course, except the lessons I did on wordiness and idioms. I was not thinking of introducing something new for some specific group of students. We didn't have level meetings over the summer. [The assistant coordinator] told me to look at the blog for guidance but I was pretty much on my own. I did have to cover the four major papers though so it was necessary to use materials from the blog. The process was rather chaotic because the blog is designed for a regular semester course which meets 2 days a week for an hour and twenty minutes. My summer class met 2 hours 4 days a week so I had to do a lot of adjusting. It was pretty much like a fish thrown out of water."

Not surprisingly, Carola gave a similar response, stating that, "There are units listed on the TAs website which are all required. We had lesson plans that we either design on our own or that have been designed by other fellow instructors that we use to teach our classes. We have a separate website where we have our lesson plans. Every semester we update it and change the lesson plans according to our and the students' needs. In the level meetings we discuss the upcoming lesson plans, talk about student developments, and any special events that happened during our classes. However, we don't focus on particular group of students from one country and then make changes accordingly." This shows ESL instructors have some freedom to design activities according to the needs of their students, but they are required to cover main units of courses. These units are already selected, and they should cover them in the span of semester.

Instructors mentioned they discuss problems of specific student populations in their weekly TA meetings.

4.19.5 Specific problems of Pakistani students in research paper unit

The instructors were then asked to share their experiences with the research paper unit, and whether they experienced any specific problems with the Pakistani graduate students working on their research papers. According to Jenny, "In general, I did not find any major problems in their research paper (source-based argumentative paper, technically speaking). In fact, their writings were pretty good as compared to other students. They, however, showed weakness in citations ["weaker than other international students"] in their research paper. Since citation is rather a technical problem rather than content or organization of a paper, this seems to be a matter of practice. I think they may not have paid full attention in class when we covered citations. So I think they need to pay more attention to this unit in order to avoid plagiarism in their future work."

In accordance with Jenny's intuition, it was observed by the researcher during the class observations, that in some classes, the Pakistani students were not serious; they sometime sat at the back of the class in their own group and used social media rather than paying attention to the proceedings in their class. The Researcher observed this in more than three classes.

Ashley explained her experiences teaching the research paper unit with the Pakistani students. "I didn't find it any more difficult to explain research papers to Pakistani students. I did however have two major cases of plagiarism from two Pakistani students though I don't think this had to do with their nationality. The other two students from this country were fine. I think it

was the individual students' personalities. The two students who plagiarized never seemed to respect me."

Carola pointed out that her Pakistani students struggled with the overall structure of their final research paper. "I had the impression that they were preparing well for their papers. Two Pakistani students had some difficulties in finding the right topic and finding more authentic sources and their citation. I didn't have any difficulties explaining certain aspects to them. But I have to accept they were struggling with the overall structure of their final papers." All instructors agreed that Pakistani students need more attention with fair citation, but overall instructors did not find any other major problem with Pakistani students in research paper unit.

4.19.6 Special needs of Pakistani students in writing assignments

The next questions asked the instructors to share their opinions whether the Pakistani students needed some extra help for the writing assignments in their classes. The instructors' views on this question are given below.

Jenny stated that, "No, I do not think they need any specific help. They need help just as any other international student needs help. Many other students from other countries also faced same problems with the structure of their papers."

Ashley pointed out Pakistani students need more help with clear paragraphs, topic sentences and thesis statement. "I can't say if it's specific to research papers, but in general, Pakistani students needed a lot more assistance with essay structure than I could give them. They had difficulty forming clear paragraphs with topic sentences and forming a thesis."

Carola emphasized more work in the area of citation for Pakistani students. "For ESL500, I think it is because I believe students need to learn the different types of writing as compared to

what they are already used to in their past training. They, like all other students, need help with formatting the research paper. I did not observe any specific need for Pakistani students even though I observed little more problems with citation of sources and integration of ideas from other sources." So one instructor felt Pakistani students need more work with clear structure of essays and another instructor still recommended more work on the special needs related to fair citation of sources.

4.19.7 Feedback on writing assignments

Let's discuss your comments and feedback. Can you explain what your goals are in responding to Pakistani students' writing?

Jenny explained her approach to feedback by stating that, "I focus on different things when commenting on different drafts – the outline, 1st draft, and 2nd draft. On the outline, I usually focus on looking at the organization. On the 1st draft, I look at the coherence and logical flow of the content. On the final draft, I look at formatting, citation, and grammar. There is nothing special about commenting on Pakistani students' writing. I have four Pakistani students and they all have different needs."

Ashley disagreed slightly, explaining that the Pakistani students in general need more feedback on the structural aspects of their papers. She also pointed out that students from other countries, particularly Bangladeshi students, also have similar issues with their writing. It is interesting to note that both Bangladesh and Pakistan were one country until 15 December, 1971 and have many similarities in their educational policies. Ashley expressed her views in these words: "I really think they need more assistance with structure. The class was dominated by Chinese students who already knew essay structure very well so I couldn't spend the time

necessary for my Pakistani students, though it merits mentioning that my student from Bangladesh also had some trouble in this area. I don't want it to seem that it's specific to students from Pakistan."

Carola also highlighted the issues of structure and clarity in her answer, "In my comments and feedback, I try to improve their writing skills by responding to their format, specific aspects in terms of content and grammar/language problems. I want their writing to become structured and clear and convincing to the readers."

4.19.8 Overall improvement of Pakistani graduate students

Over the course of semester, what aspects of academic writing do you think your Pakistani students have improved the most?

Instructors were then asked to share their views about overall improvement made by Pakistani students by the end of the semester. Jenny found this question hard to answer. According to her, "This is hard to tell since all four of them had different needs and have shown different level and kind of improvement over the course."

Ashley repeated her earlier comments on the structural issues faced by Pakistani students she stated that it was too hard to think of something specific. "Hmmm I honestly don't know. Besides struggling with structure and improving it finally, it's hard to think of anything specific." Carola mentioned three key areas in which improvements were made by the Pakistani students in her class. "I think Pakistani students in my class made more progress in the area of format of paper, organization of arguments, and avoiding plagiarism"

4.19.9 Specific need of clear organization in writing

What do you think about pattern-finding (or identifying organizational structure) training in a writing classroom? Do you think Pakistani graduate students you taught need specific help in this area of Academic writing?

The next question focused on the writing organization unit (i.e. thesis statement, 5 paragraph essay, etc.). Responses varied greatly. Jenny asserted that clear organization is important for all ESL students including Pakistani graduate students. Jenny stated that "I think all international students need help in this aspect. Organization is a very important part of academic writing, which almost always follows a set pattern in order to achieve efficiency and clarity. Students usually find this helpful because recognizing and using a rather 'set' clear organization helps them overcome their limited ability to express certain things. It was same for Pakistani students in my ESL classes"

Ashley did not teach pattern-finding and justified her reason for doing so. "I deviated from the syllabus so I never taught the section about organization to Pakistani students. In my experience this section is very confusing for students; when I taught last time I spent so much time explaining it and the students never really understood, so I just scratched it. Plus it didn't seem all that beneficial to students."

Carola also expressed her views by asserting on the need of clear organization for all students. She states that "It is very important and absolutely necessary in reading other people's writing as well as for your own writing. Pakistani students do need it as all the other students do."

4.19.10 Strategies for Teaching Organization Patterns

What do you think is the best way to teach organizational skills?

All of the ESL instructors participating in this research shared their strategies for teaching organizational pattern to their students. Jenny explained that "In order to improve organization of paragraphs I did make students put sample introduction and conclusion sentences in the right order so that they become more aware of a model structure of introduction and conclusion."

Ashlay stated that "I do think that Pakistani students need specific help in this area and I wish that there was some way to give them more assistance. However, as mentioned above, the service courses are dominated by students from China who typically know how to organize an essay very well, so it's difficult to give students from other countries who struggle in this area some extra help."

Carola explained that "As I mentioned above it is very important and absolutely necessary in reading other people's writing as well as for your own writing. They do as all the other students do and if majority of students are not having this specific issue of organization for example students from China, Korea, and Taiwan are good at it then it is difficult to come up with some specific activities targeting few students from one county"

Here instructors opined that Pakistani students do need more assistance with organizational patterns, however graduate ESL writing classes are dominated by students from China and Korea, they do not have this issue, which make it difficult for instructors to assist Pakistani students with this specific issue.

4.19.11 Class material focused on the specific needs of Pakistani students

The instructors were asked if they keep in mind specific needs of students from different academic backgrounds like students from Pakistan while designing class material and different activities. Jenney discussed how she learned from her previous classes and tried to tailor her materials accordingly. She further added that class materials are usually made from various sources. "I use academic writing guide books such as Diane Hacker's *Rules for Writers* as main reference sources and add sources from some of the well-known websites of writing centers, such as Online Writing Lab (by Purdue University)." When making handouts, Jenny usually kept in mind the problems and needs that her previous 500-level students had and inserted examples of their writings into class handouts. However, as she referred to Pakistani students she explained that, "My Pakistani ESL 500 students this semester sometimes have different problems. In this case, I address those problems in review sessions or individual feedback." So she addresses such issues in her individual feedback to students.

"As for specific needs of Pakistani students, I almost always kept their needs in mind when designing lessons and during the lesson. To begin with, as I wrote earlier, they have much higher level of English (at least speaking) and are outgoing and active in general (especially compared to other Asian students from China, Japan, and Korea). I always tried to think if the lesson is challenging and engaging enough for them. In other words, I had to make sure they don't get bored in class." At the same time, she also had to make sure that non-Pakistani students were not intimidated by their (Pakistani classmates') high level of speaking and active participation. "As I wrote earlier, there were a couple of students who do not seem to be happy when Pakistani students "dominated" the group activities (according to what those students said).

Since they were very close to each other (not that they were exclusively close to each other), I tried to "separate" them from time to time." This practice was witnessed by the researcher in her classes as whenever all four Pakistani students sit together they dominate the whole discussion and sometimes Jenny had to stop them in order to give the other students a chance. Furthermore, when they were blended with other international students in group activities, they still seemed to dominate the activities. She suggested that, "So, what I did was alternating the random seating arrangement (mixing all students together by randomly assigning them pairs) with natural seating arrangement (where Pakistani students would naturally sit together). On Tuesdays, they would usually sit wherever they want to sit. On Thursdays, they are assigned random partners by drawing (I called this partner game)." This was a good strategy, and it worked for her most of the time.

Jenny also provided insight into whole class discussion activities and how she managed the talking time of Pakistani students. "In whole-class discussions, I always had to try hard to get more participation from non-Pakistani students while accepting Pakistani students' opinions flexibly." Pakistani students always volunteered good opinions and participation. As a teacher, she greatly appreciated and enjoyed Pakistani students' participation, although sometimes she had to intentionally cut their somewhat "lengthy" talks (not because their talks were irrelevant or useless but just because of the time pressure and her attempt to elicit participation from various students). This was also observed by the researcher during his class observations. Jenny also explained some of the difficulties that she faced concerning the enthusiastic participation of Pakistani students, and how sometimes other students complained about their dominating speaking time in her class. "Although there were some complaints from a few students, most of the time, I thought that these Pakistani students made class atmosphere more cheerful."

Ashley explained how she adapted almost every lesson according to the needs of the different students including the Pakistani students in her class. She stated that the class moved so quickly during the summer session that she did not have enough time to cater to the needs of the individual students from different backgrounds as much as she normally would. "For the most part, I used the 501 blog for my materials but I did adapt nearly every lesson from it for my own class and sometimes even developed my own lessons. I didn't really keep in mind different academic backgrounds because the class moved so quickly and there was too much diversity academic-wise." The service course instructors are not usually told what to think about this either. The researcher attended the TA training for the academic year 2011-2012, but there was not any specific instruction about how to cater to the needs of the smaller groups having similar background in the classes. Ashley did a special lesson on the needs of Pakistani students as she stated that, "Towards the beginning of the course I did notice though that my Pakistani students were struggling with structure so I did a lesson on different writing styles. I developed this independent of the blog. In class, they seemed to absorb the material well but their essays still weren't where they needed to be. I don't want to say that it was a complete waste of time. By the end of the class they had a better idea but I'm still not confident they're where they need to be."

Carola explained that it is really hard to design material and class activities for specific students, "We spent some time in the beginning on talking about cultural differences in writing. I use this opportunity to ask my students about particular problems and differences and then tried to keep some of those problems in mind. However, I think it is really difficult to design the material and different class activities addressing the needs of different nationalities in the class."

4.19.12 Favorite class activities of Pakistani students

The instructors were also asked if the Pakistani students had any favorite class activity and if they could share some particular reason for this particular interest. Jenny again talked about the excitement of the Pakistani students during all types of speaking activities. “All sorts of discussion -- I think Pakistani students love expressing their point of view on any kind of matter. They always have something to say and they express their point of view with passion.”

Ashley mentioned that Pakistani students were always eager to express themselves, whether they have something to say or not, “Honestly, the class moved so quickly and there was so much information that I can’t say. Overall they seemed to like discussion much more than the Chinese students. They love to express themselves whether they have some solid point to add or not.”

Carola reiterated this same point, stating that “They seem to like working in group discussion activities. The class environment was friendly and they got along with their classmates. I think that was the main reason they participated eagerly in different class activities.” This shows class discussion was favorite class activity for Pakistani students.

4.19.13 Unite on Citation Training and the Specific Needs of Pakistani Students

The instructors also had the opportunity to express their views about the unit on citation training and Pakistani students’ needs in this area according to their field of study. Jenny justified the use of APA as a way to raise awareness about all citation styles. She explains that, “We teach APA because it is one of the most widely used styles. However, I do not aim at making all students “master” it, since different disciplines and publishers require different styles. I just try to

raise an awareness that what kinds of things differ according to styles. Students should work to master the citation style in their own field of study; I think they can seek assistance from their research supervisors in their field of study. I personally believe we don't have time to teach different citation style in one class" Carola agreed with this strategy, stating that "I think it is important to teach students that they have to stick to one citation system; that is, to be coherent with their citations. If Pakistani students want to master different citation styles they can learn if they familiarize themselves with one consistent citation style like APA."

Ashley pointed out the importance of using other citation styles. "I didn't use citation style of Pakistani students' field of study, as it is difficult to meet needs of different groups in a class, but in the future, Pakistani students need more help in this area. Although the two students who plagiarized their entire essays did so intentionally, so I'm not sure additional help would have changed things. I'm pretty sure they were aware of what they were doing. Actually, I let them use whatever citation style they wanted. Most used APA but it was ultimately their decision. I think undergrads are required to use APA, not grads." This shows instructors try their best to raise awareness about different citation styles and let students use citation style of their own field of study.

4.19.14 Grammatical needs of Pakistani graduate students

The instructors shared their views on the various grammatical weaknesses that Pakistani students tend to have, and whether they should be offered special classes for the improvement of their grammar or not. Jenny seemed quite happy about the grammatical ability of Pakistani students; she expressed her satisfaction stating that "Their overall grammar proficiency is pretty good. Their grammar mistakes (or errors) are different from other international students,

although all four Pakistani students in my class have different issues. Their grammar mistakes usually include minor problems such as collocation, agreement, spelling, articles, etc., rather than major semantic problems."

Ashley thought that grammar is not the principle problem for the Pakistani students. In her opinion, if students need more help, they should join separate grammar classes. She explained that "This really just isn't part of the service courses. It's just not in the syllabus. We have a few grammar days but that's about it. I don't think perfect grammar is necessary to successfully write an academic paper. If students need more help in this area I'd suggest taking a grammar course. Some Pakistanis students asked some specific questions related to articles and some other aspects which I answered but I don't think teaching grammar is an option in ESL classes."

Carola responded to this question in these words, "I think it is good to give them feedback about individual grammar problems, but due to the tight schedule, there is not much room for grammar instruction in class. Their proficiency was okay, average I would say." This shows all instructors are happy about grammatical ability of Pakistani students; however one instructor suggests more feedback on individual grammatical problems of students.

4.19.15 Rational of the Oral Presentation Unit in Relation to the Needs of the Pakistani Students

What is the rationale for the oral presentation training in the writing classroom? How Pakistani students performed in this part of course?

The instructors were then asked to provide the rationale behind using oral presentations as a major assignment in their classes. They expressed these views in response to this question and they also discussed the performance of their Pakistani students.

Jenny was pleased with the performance of the Pakistani students in this section, stating that "The official title of ESL 500 class is "Oral and Written Communication". So, it is natural that it covers speaking as well as writing. The course description states that the aim of the course is to help students succeed in their major courses. Since many graduate level courses usually involve oral presentation as part of the major assignments, how to give oral presentations is taught in this course (although many international students complain that we do not give enough attention or spend enough time on presentation training)." Jenny emphasized her satisfaction with the performance of the Pakistani students in particular. "Pakistani students' performances on oral presentation were far better than other international students. First of all, they were creative in choosing the topics. While almost all other students chose topics from their major fields Pakistani students chose diverse topics that are not directly related to their majors, such as cousin marriage and terrorism in Pakistan." Furthermore, the researcher observed during his class observations that the Pakistani students in Jenny's class seemed more comfortable with public speaking than other students. However, Jenny explained some of the weaker aspects of the Pakistani students in their oral presentations as well." There were some times I thought they were spending too much time on giving background information or explaining minor points, when just addressing the main points would have been more desirable. However, this can be individual problems. After all, some other international students also have similar problems."

Ashley agreed that the Pakistani students did an adequate job in this unite as well. She explained that, "I'd say the purpose is to prepare them for presentations they might give in graduate school and their career but I'd consult [the coordinator] on this too. Pakistani students did fine, though I don't want to say they excelled more or less than the other students."

Carola provided her rationale for this unite as well. “The rationale is to be clear and precise, to be self-confident and knowledgeable at the same time. They did all well in this task. In the beginning, they seemed to be a little shy, but we had a practice mini-group presentation, which gave them a little training before the actual presentation.” This demonstrates instructors agreed that graduate students need this part of course for their present and future professional needs. Pakistani students like any other students need to be effective presenters, so this part prepares them such needs. All instructors are pleased with performance of the Pakistani students in this unit.

4.19.16 Usefulness of the ESL writing courses for the future needs of the Pakistani students

How do they expect Pakistani students to use what they have learned in this course in the future?

When the instructors were asked to share their opinions on the effects of the course for the future of the students, they had varied ideas. Jenny believes that these courses prepare them to write better papers in their field of study. She explains that, “I expect that they will be able to write academic papers for their field of study with more clarity and coherence.” Ashley expressed her uncertainty, stating that “I really can’t say. I hope they’re better aware of structure and it’s relation to culture. I hope I’ve prepared the two who passed well enough to communicate their message when they write in English.” Carola was hopeful that now the Pakistani students will be better equipped to organize their papers well. “I think the research paper unit helped them a lot to organize a paper well. I hope they will apply what they have learned in class.” All instructors believe after taking their classes Pakistani students will be able to write better academic papers in their own field of study.

4.19.17 Particular goals that the instructors want to achieve in respect to the Pakistani students

What particular goals they want to achieve that you haven't achieved with respect to the needs of Pakistani students?

This item received diverse views. Jenny emphasized the importance of doing citation lesson. "I would do more citation lessons with them they need more work on this unit. I would also do more "avoiding redundancy" (how to write concisely) activities." Ashley' would also want to do more work on citations, stating that, "Honestly I can't say anything except some more work on citation." Carola wished for more individual feedback time, asserting that, "I wish I had a little more time for individual feedback. I have office hours each week, but students don't really come to office hours during the semester." This shows instructors want to spend more time on citation unit if they have the option of spending some more time with Pakistani students. One instructor also mentioned need of giving more individual feedback to Pakistani students.

4.19.18 Suggestions for making the ESL courses more tuned to the needs of Pakistani students

In the final question, instructors were asked to share if they had any suggestions to make the ESL courses more tuned to the needs of Pakistani graduate students. They shared different ideas in response to this question. Jenny suggested more work on citations and structure. "As I stated already, more work on the structure and citations can make these courses more helpful for Pakistani students." Jenny further elaborated on her answer, explaining that "I think again structure is just a specific issue to this population. Though I do not want to make a generalization and say this is true for all Pakistani students. I've only had four, which I don't think is a large enough sample size." Ashley discussed the poor performance of the Pakistani students on their

homework assignments. She stated that, "Overall, these students did very well in class participation but not as well on homework assignments and their papers. I don't know if it's cultural or if these students just felt overworked. All four were in the same major and perhaps also taking the same classes." Ashley seemed cautious about assuming any stereotypes. "I really don't want to make generalizations because one of my Pakistani students was a very hard worker. He even missed four days of class for a conference but didn't complain. He made up most of the work. Another didn't work as hard, but when I conferenced with him seemed genuinely concerned about his writing, knew he was struggling, and was willing to work hard to fix it." She then discussed the disrespectful attitude of the other two Pakistani students who plagiarized their final paper. "The other two argued with me a lot and had a bad attitude. They were the two who plagiarized their third paper. I found it very difficult to work with them but again there was a wide range of personality among these four students! It is difficult to think of anything specific issues."

Carola's views are in accordance with Jenny's as she suggested more emphasis on structure and individual feedback for Pakistani students. "As I said, more time and room for individual feedback on structural aspect of their writing would, in my opinion, will better cater to the needs of Pakistani students. More emphasis on structure, it's unfortunate that these classes aren't more diverse. South Asian students just seem to have different needs." This shows instructors have varied views about how ESL courses can be more tuned to the needs of the Pakistani students; one instructor appears to be cautious about making any conclusions from a limited sample of Pakistani students. The remaining two instructors suggested more emphasize on structure and citation to make ESL writing courses more tuned to the needs of the Pakistani graduate students.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This chapter summarizes the problems addressed in this research and the methodology followed. It also suggests the pedagogical implications of the findings, discusses the limitations of this research and makes suggestions for further research.

5.1 CONCLUSION

The central problem investigated in this study revolves around the perceptions of Pakistani graduate ESL students who are in the process of gaining proficiency in academic English and the extent to which they consider graduate-level ESL courses useful for their own field of study. Also investigated was how their Urdu-medium or English-medium educational background from Pakistan influences their placement and perceptions about the courses. The final issue investigated was how perceptions of Pakistani students help us to understand their actual needs and more broadly whether their feedback can suggest curricular innovations for all international students in the U.S. In order to find answers to these questions a thorough literature review guided me to design the 37-item questionnaire , follow up questions for the Pakistani students, and interview questions for the three ESL writing instructors who had taught Pakistani graduate students.

The respondents in this study included young male and female Pakistani graduate students in the age group of 19 -31, studying at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. These respondents were selected through purposive sampling. The initial focus of the study was to investigate any factors relating to the placement of Pakistani students in the different ESL

courses at UIUC. However, later it was decided to expand the scope of the study to include the medium of schooling in Pakistan, because Pakistan education is offered through two mediums: Urdu and English. It was thought that the language that is used and shared throughout basic schooling in Pakistan can be significant variable influencing the placement and perceptions of Pakistani students in ESL courses. It was ultimately discovered that there were students from an assortment of social classes, and as a result, some belonged to urban areas and others to rural areas. In addition, there was a mix in the educational backgrounds—many students had attended Urdu-medium schools, but several had also attended English-medium schools.

From the results of the questionnaire, it was found that the respondents believed that ESL writing courses are useful for the improvement of their academic writing. In particular, all of the female students appreciated the positive role of the ESL courses in improving their academic writing. Most Urdu-medium students were required to take both ESL500 and ESL501, whereas, the English-medium students were required to take only ESL 501. Few English-medium students took the ESL courses by their own choice. Whether this trend was increasing specifically in the English-medium students or in all students was a contested topic and needs a separate research study. Overall, the primary factors cited for the usefulness of ESL courses included helpfulness for writing better assignments in the student's own field of study, writing better dissertations, writing better job applications, and becoming aware of other academic resources like the Writer's workshop, library resources and online resources.

The majority of the respondents found the unit on presentation skills to be particularly helpful, explaining that it helps them gain confidence. Respondents supported the role of ESL classes as a means to learn how to participate more effectively in their own field of study. Some students suggested that more classes on grammar and presentation skills would be beneficial.

The majority of the Urdu-medium students wished to spend more time on their grammatical problems, instead of such a strong emphasis on the improvement of their academic writing (i.e. structural issues and coherence).

For an overwhelming number of the respondents, an important factor in the value of the ESL courses is their helpfulness for writing better assignments in their own field of study. Pakistani graduate students also valued that the ESL courses developed a better understanding of citation style and provided explicit discussion about plagiarism, enabling them to understand the standards of academic writing in an American university. The students explicitly mentioned that in Pakistan they were not exposed to the different techniques of source citations discussed in their ESL classes. For many of the respondents, such training in writing will prepare them to do well in their future studies.

Other skills in which Pakistani graduate students found much help from their ESL classes were speaking, reading, and listening. The majority of these respondents were from ESL 500, as this course focuses on both oral and written communication. However, there was clear divide among the respondents on the question of the usefulness of the ESL courses for their own field of specialization, as almost half of respondents did not see these courses as helpful for their area of specialization. Fortunately, the majority of students did find general ESL courses helpful for their future careers.

The majority of the participants had non-native English-speaking instructors. Most of the respondents were pleased with having them as their instructors, as these instructors seem to put in a lot of effort to prepare for the classes they teach and could relate better to the challenges of English. An overwhelming majority of the respondents consider both native and non-native ESL instructors helpful for ESL classes. The ESL instructors in general were considered to have been

well-prepared for classes. Students found their instructors to be interested in their learning and helpful in assisting them with their speaking skills and pronunciation-related questions. However, the students did not consider their instructors knowledgeable enough to offer them advice related to writing in their specialized field of study. Few students suggested that instructors should be from their own field of study because it could make the ESL courses more relevant for their specialized area of study.

Hence, Pakistani graduate students consider ESL courses useful for the improvement of academic writing, but show some reservation when they evaluate these courses in terms of their own field of study. Most of the respondents were specifically required to take these courses in order to fulfill a requirement of the graduate college regarding their English proficiency. There were few English-medium students who elected to take these courses even though they were not required. For most respondents, who decided to take these courses as an elective, the decision to take these ESL courses came after it was suggested by their research supervisor. While considering an optional ESL class, the respondents reported thinking about many of the consequences of this decision, including the extra time needed to spend in ESL classes and on ESL homework. Ultimately, they were happy about their decision, as the ESL courses helped them to improve their writing.

Through interviews, it was found that the ESL instructors consider Pakistani students as having more problems with the structural aspects than with the grammatical aspects of the papers they write. They also consider Pakistani students as having more structural issues than other international students for China, Korea, and Taiwan. All instructors agreed that Pakistani students need more work in using citations, and that it is necessary for them to work on their own in order to master the citation style used in their own field of study. Two instructors were quite

happy with the grammatical competence of Pakistani students Common grammar issues were pointed out, including articles, agreement, and collocations. In their suggestions, the interviewed ESL instructors expressed that more work on structure and citation could make these courses more relevant to the needs of Pakistani students. Instructors also confirmed the great diversity among the Pakistani students that they taught in their classes. They believe that it is difficult to generalize the needs of all of the individual Pakistani students they taught, but that, in general, all students struggled with the structure of their papers and with their citations.

5.2 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study only focused on Pakistani graduate students enrolled in the graduate-level ESL courses. It may be interesting to investigate Pakistani graduate students that did not enroll in such courses. A comparative study, based on students who have taken and students who have not taken ESL courses, could provide interesting insights into the benefits of academic ESL writing courses. Future studies working on this topic could benefit from audio-visual recordings of their class observation so that a visual-content analysis could also be conducted. Such an analysis could reveal a lot of information about the social interaction of the different groups of international students and how they work on different writing tasks in ESL classes.

Observations of the respondents should be conducted over a longer time period so as to analyze if their perceptions about ESL courses change or to see whether there is any difference in their conduct when they were not taking ESL classes previously. Another source of feedback could be obtained by collecting the perceptions of students before they take ESL courses, and then again after they are done. This can generate interesting insights for questions related to the identity of international students and how the ESL courses influence their sense of personal

worth. I felt the real need of such a study as I was analyzing the data related to the sense of personal worth of the ESL students taking these courses.

It is recommended that UIUC graduates, who had taken the ESL course and are now working, are also included in future research on this topic. This could provide insight regarding the usefulness of the ESL courses for job applications and the work place.

It is suggested that the comparative study format be adopted in future research about the factors affecting placement in the ESL courses and the perceptions of international students who study in American educational environments versus those who study in other English-speaking educational environments, for example, in the UK, Australia, and New Zealand.

It is strongly recommended that through Internet technologies like email, Orkut, Twitter, and Facebook, international students who have taken or are taking ESL courses in other settings also be included in future research, since this can really help in finding out the various factors that can make the ESL courses more relevant to the international students pursuing different fields of study. Such international students taking ESL courses in different instructional settings can offer interesting insights related to their experiences in these courses.

No undergraduate students were involved in this study; it is suggested to include undergraduate participants in future projects. International undergraduate students may have different perceptions and insights about the ESL courses they take.

All participants in this study were from the University of Illinois, which had the highest international student population among the public universities in the U.S. in 2011 (Open doors, 2011). It is suggested to include participants from other U.S. institutions to conduct a more generalizable study. A large scale study including participants from other U.S. institutions may produce very different results. Finally, the ESL course administrator's perspectives were not

included in this study. Future studies could include their perspective to have more diversity in the findings of such studies. Future studies could focus on other cultural groups to have more insight about the international students and the ESL courses they take.

5.3 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study show that a majority of students consider graduate-level ESL courses helpful for the improvement of their academic writing skills. However, they expressed some reservations in their belief that these courses would be useful in their own field of study. In order to make these courses more useful to the specific fields of the students, the ESL classes could be structured on the basis of the field of studies of the students. For example, all students from Engineering could be placed in one section, all students from social sciences could be placed in another section, students from Business could be placed in another section, etc.

Pakistani graduate students were found to dominate the class in group discussion activities. Instructors teaching small groups of Pakistani students should be careful about their talking time, otherwise, other students might easily feel left out in the discussion. Instructors should put students from the same cultural background in different groups in order to promote balanced group dynamics. Whenever two or more Pakistani students were grouped together they often dominated discussion and other international students were left as spectators in the activities. All instructors agreed that Pakistani students have more problems with source and citation usage when compared to other international students in their classes. In such a scenario, a process approach, based on multiple drafts, can make students' writing more likely to be original, and less likely to be plagiarized. Low-stakes personalized writing activities and anti-plagiarism activities can train such a group of students effectively (Prior, 2011). Instructors

could also motivate students to improve their own writing by highlighting the significance of good writing in their future job settings. Most of the ESL students consider the ESL courses to be a burden and do not take the assignments as seriously as they take assignments in their other subjects. If instructors were to explicitly discuss how ESL classes help them to earn their degrees with a good GPA, then their attitude might be different towards their assignments. Thus, instructors should motivate students by relating these courses with their future academic success.

Pakistani graduate students have a specific cultural and linguistic background and bring with them specific techniques for writing. ESL instructors should spend some time to understand these international students and evolve their teaching strategies accordingly. According to Leki (1992) "[ESL writer] differ so much that it is not exaggeration to say that sometimes the only similarity they share is that they are non-native speakers of English" (p.39). Leki suggests that it is really important for ESL instructors to become aware of the needs of the different ESL students as this will help them to teach them more effectively. The UIUC ESL TA program might benefit its graduates by encouraging them to take some electives in the hard sciences, Engineering and behavioral sciences, in order to better meet the needs of the future ESL students. The MA-TESL program could also arrange joint training with the professors from Engineering and hard sciences, as some professors cared very deeply about their students' writing abilities. Such professors could give brief training to ESL instructors so that they would be able to more accurately address the needs of the international graduate students than the current ESL instructors are able to.

Finally, the ESL-TA program should introduce to students the different linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the ESL population at UIUC, which might be helpful for the variety of ESL students that is currently served.

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Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS OF THE SURVEY

Please complete the questionnaire regarding your experience with ESL courses at UIUC.

1. **Your gender**

- Male
- Female

2. **Your age**

3. **What kind of school did you go to in Pakistan?**

- Urdu Medium
- English Medium
- Other:

4**. Which ESL course(s) were you required taking**?

- ESL 500
- ESL 501
- Both ESL 500 & ESL 501
- None

5. **If none, do you think it would have been useful to take any graduate ESL writing course(s).**

Please briefly explain your preference

6. Which ESL writing course(s) have you taken/are currently taking here at UIUC?

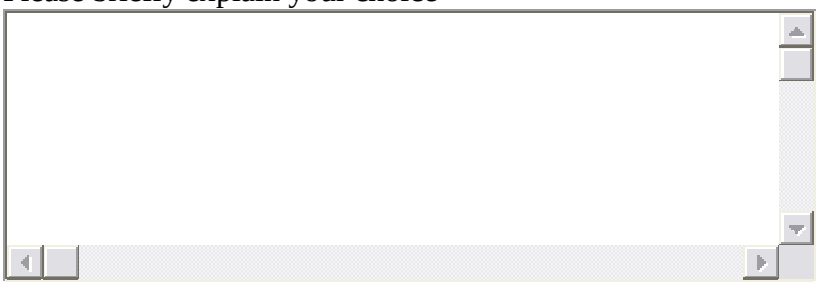
- ESL 500

- ESL 501
- Both ESL 500 & ESL 501
- None

7. Please answer this question only if you have taken both ESL 500 and 501 courses. Which course did you find more useful

- ESL 500
- ESL 501
- None

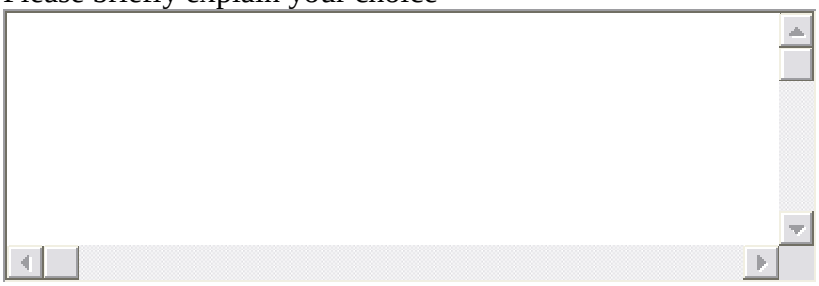
Please briefly explain your choice



8. Is this/are these ESL writing courses that you would have chosen for the improvement of your academic writing?

- Yes
- No

Please briefly explain your choice



9. What is your highest degree from Pakistan?

- MA/MSc/BSC(Hon)/MBBS etc

- MS/MPhil
- PhD

10. What are you currently studying at UIUC?

- MA/MS
- PhD
- Post Doc.

11 What is your field of study?

12. The ESL writing courses are useful in terms of:

12.1 Writing better assignments for my chosen academic field

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12.2 My career opportunities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12.3 Enabling me to use different sources of information in my chosen area of study.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12.4 Participating effectively in my chosen field.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13. The ESL writing courses have taught me how to use the following resources well.
13.1 The Library

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13.2 Electronic Resources (Online journals, web searches, etc)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13.3 The Writers Workshop

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. The ESL writing courses have developed my sense of personal worth as an International Student.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. The ESL writing courses have enhanced my abilities as an International Student in the following areas.

15.1 Academic writing skills

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15.2 Speaking Skills

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15.2 Listening Skills

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15.3 Reading Skills

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15.4 Job Applications

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree

- Strongly Disagree

16 The ESL writing courses have affected my ability to do well:
16.1 In my area of specialization at UIUC.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

16.2 At my future work place

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

17. Who were your instructors in the ESL writing courses?

- Native-English Speaking Instructor(s)
- Nonnative-English Speaking Instructor(s)
- Both Groups of Instructor(s)

18 My ESL writing's Instructor(s).....
18.1 Apply pair/group work regularly in class

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18.2 Prepare well for the lessons.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree

- Strongly Disagree

18.3 Help students develop speaking skills.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18.4 Run interesting classes

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18.5 Are interested in their learners' opinions

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18.6 Provide students with good advice about how to do well in their chosen field.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18.7 Help students with their pronunciation

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree

- Strongly Disagree

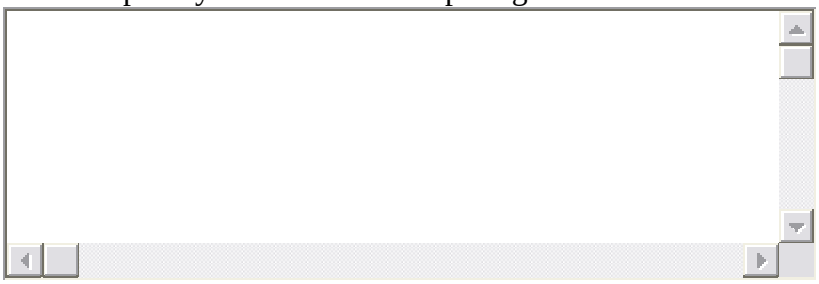
18.8 Answer students' questions satisfactorily

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

19 Which kind of instructors is more effective for teaching ESL courses?

- Native-English Speaking Instructor(s)
- Nonnative-English Speaking Instructor(s)
- Instructor(s) from my own field of study

Please explain your choice in the space given below



20 How can these ESL writing courses be more effective with respect to your chosen field of study?

Please explain in the space given below

