ENGLISH AND MARKETING:
A study of marketing students' English language needs and skills

Bachelor's thesis
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HUMANISTINEN TIEDEKUNTA
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Jatkuvasti muuttuvassa ja laajenevassa maailmassa viestinnän merkitys kasvaa huomattavasti. Yhteisen äidinkielen löytäminen ei aina ole mahdollista, joten jokin yhteinen kieli tarvitaan helpottamaan kommunikointia. Tällä hetkellä tämä yhteinen kieli on englanti. Englanti on eniten levinnyt kieli maailmassa, joten ei ole suurikaan yllätys, että se on usein se kieli, jolla kommunikoidaan. Markkinointi alana perustuu hyvinkin vahvalti viestintään ja sen onnistuneeseen toteuttamiseen. Englanti on selkeästi yksi vahvimmista, ellei vahvin, kieli myös markkinoinnissa. Monet tärkeimmät tutkimukset ja julkaisut tehdään englannin kielellä. Alalla pärjääminen vaatii hyviä englannin kielen taitoja. Tästä syystä tutkimuksen kohteeksi valitsin markkinoinnin opiskelijat sekä heidän englannin kielen taidot ja arviot kielitaidon tarpeista työelämässä.

Viitekehyksenä tälle tutkimukselle toimivat aikaisemmat tutkimukset, joissa aiheena olivat englannin kielen taidot ja tarpeellisuus markkinoinnissa sekä kielitaidon tarve työelämässä eri näkökulmista. Tärkeimpänä lähteenä käytin Kirkkopellon (2007) tutkimusta markkinoinnissa työskentelevien englannin kielen tarpeista. Hänen tutkimuksensa tarjosi oivan vertailukohdan tähän tutkimukseen. Yliopiston tutkintovaatimukset sekä Euroopan Unionin vaikutus otettiin huomioon viitekehyksessä. Kielitaidon arvioinnissa käytettiin yleistä eurooppalaista viitekehystä.

Tutkimus suoritettiin kvantitatiivisin menetelmin. Tutkimukseen osallistuneet täyttivät kyselylomakkeen, jolla selvitettiin osallistujien englannin kielen tarpeita opiskeluissa, heidän englannin kielen taitoaan sekä arviotaan englannin kielen tarpeellisuudesta markkinoinnin työtehtävissä. Tulokset osoittivat, että selkeällä enemmistöllä osallistujista englannin kielen taidot olivat viitekehyksen ylempää keskitasoa tai edistynyttä tasoa. Kirkkopellon tutkimukseen viitaten, tähän tutkimukseen osallistuneet omaavat tarvittavat englannin kielen taidot. Myös osallistujien arviot työtehtävien kielitaidon tasoista olivat verrattavissa aiempiin tutkimuksiin, mainittakoon että arviot olivat hieman korkeammat kuin Kirkkopellon tutkimuksessa ilmi tulleet arviot. On otettava huomioon, että tutkimukseen osallistui verraten pieni määrä vastaajia, 49 kappaletta, joista yli puolet oli markkinoinnin sivuaineopiskelijoita. Jatkotutkimuksia ajatellen tarkempia tuloksia saataisiin jos vastaajien määrä olisi suurempi ja vastaajat olisivat markkinoinnin pääaineopiskelijoita.

Asiasanat: language needs, language skills, marketing, students

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1 INTRODUCTION

The reality is that the world is becoming smaller and smaller with the improvements in technology and communication. People from all over the world are interacting with each other in business transactions, collaborations and in numerous other ways. The changes in communication have created an increasing demand in language skills and in people with good command of multiple languages. Mastery of one language is not enough and new languages are entering the corporate world, including Russian and Chinese. Nevertheless, English language is still seen as the most effective way to communicate if a common language is not found between parties. Therefore, having strong skills in English is a way to ensure that one has a somewhat guaranteed form of communication. This study focuses on the language needs and skills of university students, more particularly English language needs and skills of marketing students in the University of Jyväskylä. There is a good amount of literature regarding the language needs in business, for example Huhta (1999), and the skills of those already in professional life, for example Kirkkopelto (2007), but there is not a great deal of information on the language skills of current students and how they perceive their skills to fit the requirements of a workplace. It is therefore I decided to conduct a study into this field and possibly introduce new information to the field from a different point of view. The importance of language skills in general should not, under any circumstances, be underestimated in employment. Lehtonen & Karjalainen (2008:495) go as far as to state that job applicants who have a poor knowledge of languages are not even considered in the employment process. Language competence just might be a deal-breaker.

English is the dominant language in almost any field, especially in business. It allows for people with different cultural backgrounds and languages to communicate and to engage in various collaborations with each other. In many cases English is the corporate language even if there were other viable alternatives. The dominance of English is derived from the fact that it is the most wide spread language. "In the rapidly changing global business environment, there is a need for a shared language, a lingua franca, and currently it is English." (Kirkkopelto 2007:15). Professional life is a strong factor in the necessity of language skills but another contributing factor is the European Union. I feel that it is important to take the role of the European Union into consideration in this study since it affects the lives of European citizens. European Commission has implemented such policies as Lifelong

Learning and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages which will be discussed later in this paper. The Lifelong Learning program is designed to give everyone a possibility to learn throughout his/her life in a way which suits him/her the best. The program enables people to learn at all stages of life not just in school and universities etc.

In the following section I will introduce the theoretical background on which this current study is based. After that the data and methodology of the study are presented. The fourth section introduces the results of the research and in the fifth section the results are analyzed and compared to the theoretical background. The sixth, and final, section concludes this study and suggests some possible ideas for future research in the similar field.

2 LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS, NEEDS AND SKILLS

The theoretical background is very much based on the language requirements of the workplace and the language needs as perceived by employers and employees. The language skills of current students and their expectations about the requirements of the workplace have not been discussed in great detail prior to this study. The theoretical background of this study will provide support for the expected findings and thus resulting in a more comprehensive picture of the topic of this study. The connection between language skills of the students and the language skill expectations of the employers is of great importance. In this section I will discuss the previous studies in the field of language requirements of the workplace and language needs as well as the effect of the European Union in this area. Also the degree requirements for the marketing students relevant to this study and the role of the university are discussed.

2.1 The role of the European Union

The European Union has many goals and objectives. Some of these objectives are to become one of the strongest economic areas in the world and to establish and maintain free movement of people, capital, products and services within its borders. These objectives call for a closer cooperation between different countries which in turn increases the role of communication. The growing demand for communication skills adds expectations to those who are entering the common workplace of the

EU. According to Taillefer (2007:149), competence in one's mother tongue plus two other languages is a goal within the European Union. This adds responsibilities to both students and educational institutions. One of the reasons why English for Specific Purposes (ESP), among others, has managed to raise attention is because of the growing need of communicative competences. The pre-requisite for mobility and Europe-wide employability are these competences (Krausse 2008:233). The need for mobility and Europe-wide employability comes from the authorities of the European Union since one of their main interests is to enable students to move freely throughout the continent (Ruiz-Garrido and Palmer-Silveira 2008:148). Free movement of students naturally requires language skills from the students themselves and possibly efforts need to be made by the universities as well. According to Ruiz-Garrido and Palmer-Silveira (2008:149), there has been an increasing interest in the use of English in business studies. They also raise the question how the teaching of ESP should be oriented. Should the focus of ESP be more on the future language needs of the workplace or on the current requirements of the university? This question poses an interesting situation. Naturally, universities would prefer that language teaching in universities to be designed to benefit the students' time at the university. At the same time, the universities offer tools and skills for the students to be able to function in the professional life. Is one more important than the other? It must be noted here that these two aspects complement each other. When a student is learning oral and writing skills at university he/she will undoubtedly use these skills later in life. Furthermore, learning skills designed towards the professional life will have a positive effect on the studies in general. By taking the effect of the European Union into consideration one is able to gain more understanding of the needs of the workplace and the responsibilities it has. It would be foolish to disregard the role of a supranational organization which plays an important role in shaping the industries and businesses of Europe.

2.2 Language needs of the workplace

Language skills have become more and more essential to any employee in almost any industry. The importance of language skills varies between different industries, some require very high skills in several languages and some require just the basics in one language. The language needs of any workplace are very heavily defined by the industry it operates in. Furthermore, there are several different perceptions about language needs in the workplace. Employees, employers and future employees and employers all need to consider the language needs of their workplace.

2.2.1 Required skill level of the workplace

A good starting point for this research is the study conducted by Kirkkopelto (2007). Her study was very extensive and it also included quantitative needs of English in writing, reading and speaking at work. Kirkkopelto (2007:67) also studied the importance of speech fluency, grammatical accuracy and other aspects of English at the workplace. Her study focused on Finnish economists actually working in marketing and how they perceived their actual needs for English language skills in day-to-day work. "The results of the study proved that English language skills as well as cultural competencies are both a part of the professional competence of the economists working in marketing." (Kirkkopelto 2007:103). These results may not be surprising since in today's global working environment employers expect from their employees at least a basic knowledge of English. To examine the qualitative language skills of the respondents, Kirkkopelto used the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2001). The Framework, from now on will be referred to by its abbreviated form CEFR, distinguishes six different levels of proficiency of language users; basic user (A1 and A2), independent user (B1 and B2) and proficient user (C1 and C2) (Council of Europe 2001:23). These proficiency levels are a global scale which is designed to simplify the framework to non-specialist users of language (Council of Europe 2001:24). Kirkkopelto's (2007:65) findings suggest that almost half of the respondents (43%) in her study estimated that the required proficiency level at the workplace was B2, or upper intermediate level. Rather surprisingly, over a third of the respondents estimated the required proficiency level to be advanced (C1 and C2 level) with C1 level chosen by 31% of the respondents and C2 level by 5% of the respondents. The study did not separate the skill levels in written or spoken English, but it was only concerned with the overall skill level. It would have been interesting to see how the participants would have evaluated their writing and speaking skill levels. The study also revealed that almost half of the respondents (45%) stated that they needed English for speaking almost every day (Kirkkopelto 2007:59). Approximately half of those (51%) working in marketing claimed that English was needed for writing almost every day (Kirkkopelto 2007:60). From this point of view, conducting a study on the English language skills of marketing students will provide useful information on how they meet the requirements of the workplace.

2.2.2 Language skills evaluated by the workplace

Huhta (1999) raises awareness on the issue of how language teaching could best equip the students with the skills required in business. She also studied the attitudes towards language needs in the workplace according to the employers. This comprehensive study focused on a great number of important issues. One of these issues was what the best way of diagnosing language skills is at the recruitment stage according to the employers. Huhta (1999:59) states that the most efficient ways of determining a candidate's language skills are certificates for study or work abroad, interview and a language test organized by the employer. Of these three, a certificate that an applicant had studied or worked abroad and an interview were considered the most important ways by two thirds of the personnel managers that participated in the study (Huhta 1999:58). From this, one can draw the conclusion that by studying or working abroad one acquires great language skills which will, undoubtedly, be a benefit in acquiring a job. Here one can see how the aforementioned interest of the European Union in the mobility of people within the EU (Ruiz-Garrido & Palmer-Silveira 2008:148) is benefiting the students by increasing their oral skills. The students, who are without a good command of oral skills in English, or another language, will have to rely on their writing skills. It is also mentioned in the study that more than half of the employees who participated in the study stated that their greatest weaknesses were in oral skills (Huhta 1999:80). I expect that the findings of the present study will reveal similar results. Oral skills seem to be the greatest source of difficulties for non-native speakers of a language. Writing skills are often more focused on and they are more frequently practiced in schools.

2.2.3 Language skills evaluated by graduates

Taillefer (2007) studied the professional language needs of economics graduates in the French context. Her findings on the required proficiency level reinforce those of Kirkkopelto. Taillefer (2007:149) suggests that for economics graduates all four language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) are nearly equally necessary, and at a minimum B2 level. The required skill level is the same as Kirkkopelto (2007:65) stated in her study. The difference between these studies is the fact that in Kirkkopelto (2007:59) the most important single aspect of language was speaking and in Taillefer (2007:149) all four were equally necessary, as mentioned above. Taillefer (2007:144) goes

on to point out that a majority of the graduates felt that they needed to improve their performance in all four skills. According to graduates, reading skills were seen as the most important in the professional sense even though it is the most often used and the least difficult (Taillefer 2007:143). Here again differences can be found between Taillefer and Kirkkopelto. Nevertheless, the correlation between the studies by Kirkkopelto and Taillefer comes to illustrate that the graduates' language skills are compatible with the needs of professional life, at least to some degree. I feel that the present study will show similar results to both of the aforementioned studies but the one by Kirkkopelto will very likely be more relevant to this study due to the similarities in context.

2.3 Language skills of the students

As mentioned above one of the goals of the European Union, the mobility of people, is an important factor in the global workplace. This mobility is particularly important for students who can study abroad in other EU countries. Student exchange programs, such as Erasmus, have naturally increased the language needs of students since many universities require a proof of language skills from the exchange students applying to the universities. CEFR offers tools for students to assess their language skills themselves. This self-assessment grid will serve as a guideline for the participants of this present study to evaluate their own skills.

2.3.1 The amount of English studies for marketing students

To give a more comprehensive insight into the English language skills and competences of marketing students of the University of Jyväskylä, the degree requirements will provide valuable information. In order to get a more wider understanding of the degree requirements it is important to look at the older requirements, for students who began their studies between the years 2005 and 2008, as well as the new requirements, for students who began their studies in the autumn of 2008 and thereafter. For the Bachelor's degree the older degree requirements (Degree structure in marketing 2005-2008) required a minimum of 6 credits in English studies accompanied with one optional course in marketing, which was taught in English, at the subject studies phase. For the Master's degree, the required English studies were 4 credits and there were 5 courses taught in English at the advanced level. These courses were also optional. Naturally, each individual student has the option to choose courses from their

minor studies. In the new degree requirements (Degree structure since 1.8.2008), at the Bachelor level there is a required 6 credits to be completed in English studies. As a part of the major studies there is a module called Basic Business Studies which consists of basic courses on accounting, marketing, entrepreneurship and management, all in English. Furthermore, there are two other mandatory courses which are in English. Combining these two courses with the Basic Business Studies module adds up to 40 credits. At the Master's level, there is a requirement of 4 credits to be done in English. Advanced studies include several courses conducted in English which are optional. One can draw the conclusion that by increasing the teaching of English for marketing students the university is taking action to strengthen the English language competence of marketing students. Nevertheless, it must be noted that a great deal of responsibility is left for the students themselves. There are several courses which are taught in English but they are optional. If a student feels confident enough with his/her English skills he/she might take a course taught in English. If a student is sure that his/her English skills are not sufficient enough he/she may be deterred by the possible workload of the course.

2.3.2 The role of the university

As language proficiency requirements at the workplace are becoming higher, it increases the responsibility of the future employees to attain the highest possible level of proficiency in a given language. "In effect this means that university students starting to learn a new language should be encouraged to continue their studies in that language to a level that enables them to actually use the language effectively. It is therefore important to start as early as possible, preferably in the first year of university, and be systematic about the study." (Lehtonen & Karjalainen 2008:501) The relationship between language training at university and the language needs of the workplace is also discussed by Lehtonen and Karjalainen (2008). In their study it is stated that university language centres do not have enough information about the students' future careers and language skills needed at work (ibid.:493). The study also mentions the idea of bridging the gap between language teaching and the linguistic needs of the workplace. This approach calls for a more detailed and customized language teaching in universities in order to prepare students for the professional life. In this present study I will not discuss the role of the universities in great lengths since the focus of this study is the students. It would provide valuable information to study the relationship between universities and the workplace but that might be a topic for a different study.

2.4 Research questions

This study will provide information on how the language requirements of the workplace are met by current students. Furthermore, the students' perceptions are also discussed. Previous studies have offered valuable information on what is expected of employees in terms of English language skills. This present study will shed some light on those who will be entering the professional life in the next few years. The purpose is to find some answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the English language skills of marketing students in the University of Jyväskylä?
2. Do the students possess the necessary English language skills to meet the requirements of the workplace?

3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The goal of this study was to introduce new information about the English language skills of marketing students and how their skills meet the requirements of the workplace. I decided to conduct a quantitative research on this topic based on the fact that by doing so, I was able to get a comprehensive view about the language skills of a larger group. In comparison, a qualitative study would have produced detailed information about the language skills of a few individuals. In an ideal situation there would have been enough time and adequate resources to conduct interviews with a larger group of participants.

3.1 The data

A questionnaire (see Appendix) was used to collect the data. The questionnaires were handed out to marketing students in the beginning of three different marketing lectures in the University of Jyväskylä and the students were given ten minutes to complete the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, which was in Finnish, there were only multiple choice questions in which the participants were asked to evaluate the amount of English they use in their studies and in their jobs, if they happened to have

working experience. The reason why the questionnaire was in Finnish was to simplify the answering process for the participants. Some of them might have had difficulties fully understanding everything in it if it would have been in English. Also, I believe the answering process was conducted in a shorter time with the use of a questionnaire in Finnish. In the questionnaire, the participants were also asked to evaluate their own English language skills using the CEFR as was done in Kirkkopelto's (2007) study. The framework itself was included in the questionnaire since many of the participants probably were not familiar with it. I decided not to include any open questions in the questionnaire since I felt the data necessary for this study would be acquired through straightforward answers. The inclusion of open questions would have resulted in more time spent by both parties; the participants and myself. A multiple choice question enabled the participants to evaluate the questions and the answers quickly rather than spend time thinking how to formulate an answer to an open question. The data was gathered in late January and early February 2009. In order to simplify the data gathering process and to get as many participants as possible, all marketing students, regardless of how many years they had studied or if they were major or minor students, were included in the study. The total amount of participants was 49, from which 23 were students with marketing as their major subject and 26 were students with marketing as their minor subject.

3.2 Methodology

Since there were only multiple choice questions in the questionnaire, the entire data was analyzed by means of statistical analysis. The gathered data was entered into the Excel programme and after that it was analyzed with the SPSS programme. In the SPSS programme frequencies of the answers were analyzed. There were some incomplete answers in the questionnaire but they were also taken into account in order to receive valid percentages of the answers. Correlations were drawn between some of the answers to see if there was a connection between them. The significance of these correlations was determined by using Kendall's tau-b.

4 RESULTS

In this section, I will introduce the results of the questionnaires and explain them in detail. In order to a give a more detailed view about the results I will display them in percentage terms and in quantities. First, I will introduce to results which determine how often the participants need English in their studies. In the second section the results for the amount of English studies completed are presented. The final section entails the results for the evaluation of personal skill levels as well as the evaluated skill level of the workplace.

4.1 Participants' perceptions about the frequency of English in their studies

Table 1. English language needs
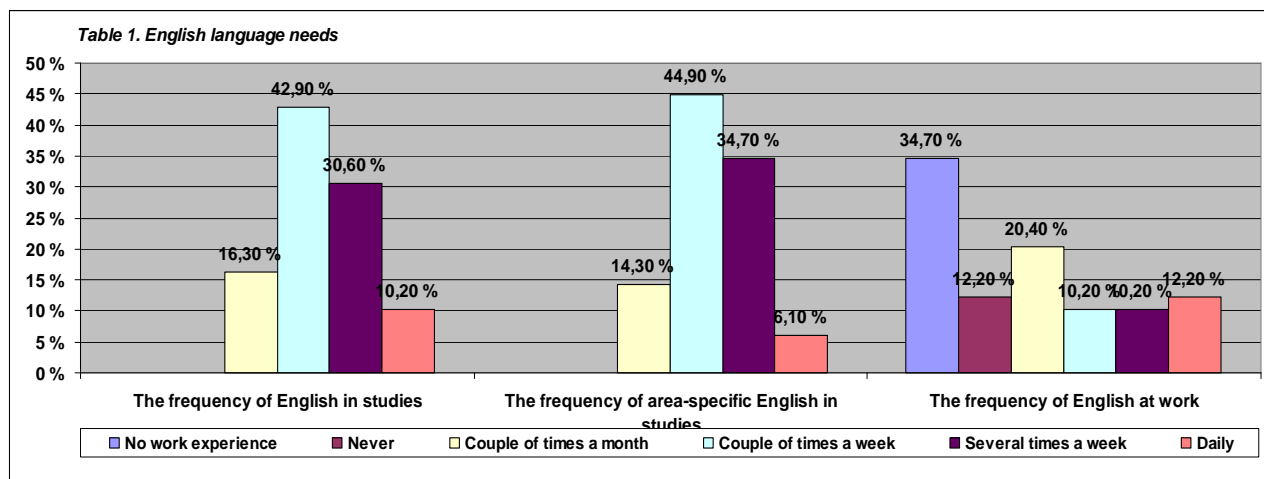
According to the results, 16.3% of the participants (N=8) evaluated that they needed English in their studies a couple of times a month and 42.9% (N=21) stated that they needed English a couple of times a week. 30.6% of the participants (N=15) stated that they needed English several times a week and 10.2% (N=5) claimed that they needed English daily. There were no answers claiming that English was not needed in the studies.

In the following question the participants were asked how often they needed area-specific English in their studies (in this case the area is marketing). Here again there were no answers which suggested that English was completely unnecessary. 14.3% of the participants (N=7) evaluated the need to be a couple of times a month. Approximately 45% of the participants (N=22) claimed that the need for

area-specific English was a couple of times a week and 17 of the participants (34.7%) stated that the need was several times a week. The remaining 6.1% (N=3) evaluated the need to be daily.

The participants were also asked if they had any experiences working in a job related to their studies and if so, how often did they need English when performing that job. 17 of the 49 participants (34.7%) did not have any job experience related to their studies. 12.2% of the participants (N=6) answered that they never used English at their job and at the same time the exact same amount of participants (12.2%) answered that they needed English daily at their work. Approximately 20.4% (N=10) stated that they needed English a couple of times a month. Approximately 10% of the participants (N=5) answered that they used English a couple of times a week and the same amount of participants stated that they used English several times a week.

4.2 Participants' evaluation of completed English studies

Table 2. Completed English studies
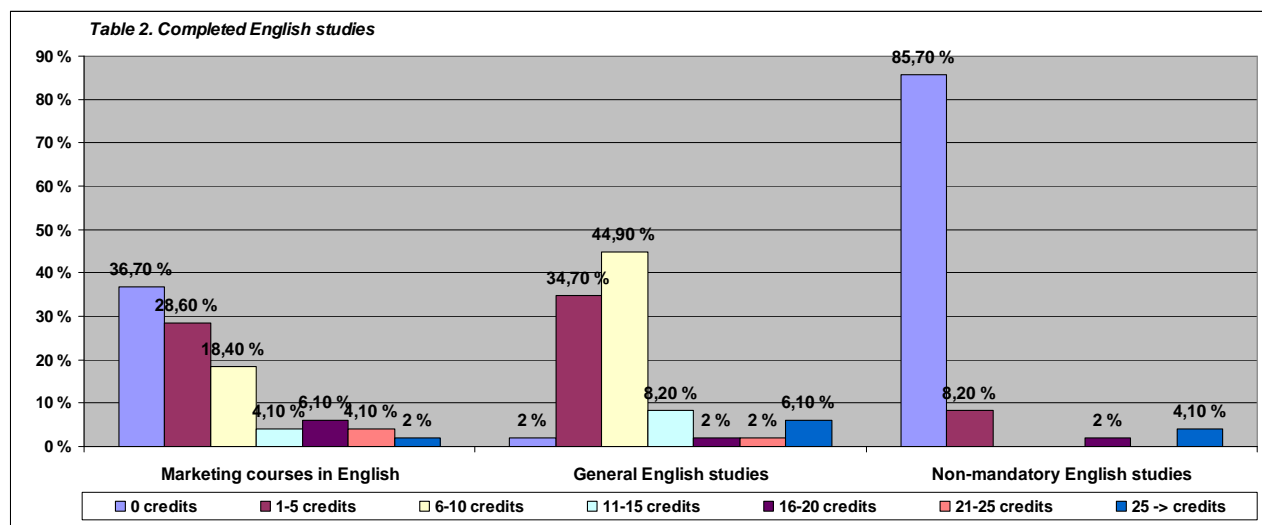
The participants were also asked to evaluate, in study credits, how much they have completed English studies. In the questionnaire they were given seven different choices from which to choose the alternative that suited them the best. They were asked how much they have completed marketing courses in which the teaching was conducted in English. 18 of the participants (36.7%) answered that they had not completed any marketing courses in English. This high amount is explained by the fact that half of the participants who had marketing as a minor subject answered that they had never

completed a marketing course in which the teaching was conducted in English. 28.6% (N=14) answered that the amount of credits they had completed were between 1 and 5 and 18.4% (N=9) answered that they had completed between 6-10 credits. 11-15 credits received 4.1% of the participants (N=2) as did 21-25 credits. 6.1% (N=3) evaluated between 16-20 and 2% (N=1) evaluated more than 25 credits.

The following question dealt with general English studies, for example courses in the language center. Almost half of the participants (44.9%, N=22) evaluated the amount of general English studies they had completed was between 6 and 10 credits. A substantial amount of the participants (34.7%, N=17) evaluated to have completed between 1 and 5 credits. Three of the choices in the question (0 credits, 16-20 credits and 21-25 credits) got 2% (N=1) of the participants each. 11-15 credits received 8.2% (N=4) and credits over 25 received 6.1% (N=3).

In the final question concerning English studies the participants were asked to evaluate how much, if any, they had completed in non-mandatory English studies. These would include courses in English as a minor subject or optional language center courses. 42 of the 49 participants (85.7%) answered that they had not completed any non-mandatory English studies. 8.2% of the participants (N=4) evaluated the amount to be between 1 and 5 credits, 2% (N=1) answered 16-20 credits and 4.1% (N=2) answered more than 25 credits.

4.3 Participants' evaluation of their English language skills and the required skill level of the workplace

Table 3. Evaluation of skill levels
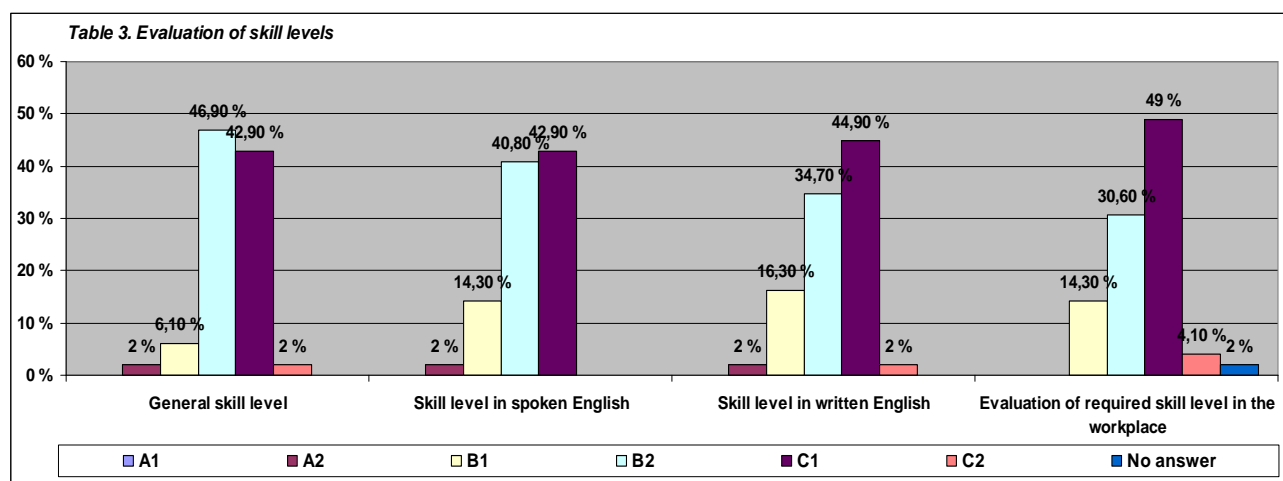
One of the goals of this study was to discover the English language skills of marketing students in Jyväskylä. In the questionnaire the participants were asked to evaluate their English language competence with the use of the CEFR. The evaluation was to be carried out in a relatively straight-forward manner, by choosing the skill level each participant deemed to fit their own. A clarification of each skill level was included in the questionnaire.

In the first question in this section they were asked to evaluate the level of their general skill level in English. The lowest skill level (A1) was not chosen by any of the participants. A2 level was chosen by 2% (N=1) and B1 level by 6.1% (N=3). According to the results, the most common skill level was B2 level with 46.9% of the participants choosing it (N=23). 42.9% (N=21) of the participants evaluated their skill level to be C1 and 2% (N=1) evaluated it to be C2.

In the next question the goal was to determine the oral skills of the participants and they were asked to evaluate their skills in spoken English. As in the previous question none of the participants chose the A1 level to describe their skill level. Furthermore, none of the participants chose the highest skill level (C2). 2% of the participants (N=1) evaluated their skill level as A2 and 14.3% (N=7) as B1. Most of the participants evaluated their spoken English skill levels to be in the upper middle level. 40.8% (N=20) evaluated it to be B2 and 42.9% (N=21) C1.

The final section of the self-evaluation part of the questionnaire was a question to determine the skill level in written English. As in the previous questions in the self-evaluation section, not a single participant evaluated their skill level to be A1. Skill levels A2 and C2 received 2% (N=1) each. B1 level was the choice of 16.3% (N=8). A clear majority of the participants evaluated their skill level to be in the upper middle level with 34.7% (N=17) of B2 level and 44.9% (N=22) of C1 level.

As one of the key topics in this research the participants were asked to evaluate the required English skill level when working in marketing. 14.3% of the participants (N=7) evaluated it to be B1 level and 30.6% (N=15) evaluated it to be B2 level. 24 of the participants (49%) thought that the required level would be C1 and 4% (N=2) estimated it to be C2. No answer was given by one participant (2%). Correlations were drawn between evaluated language skills and evaluated language skill level in the workplace. According to Kendall's tau-b, the exact significance was .828 which is very high and the exact significance (2-sided) in the Fisher's Exact Test was .016. Now that I have presented the results of this research I will move on to discuss and analyze them in greater detail.

5 DISCUSSION

I will now compare the results of the present study to the earlier studies presented in the second section of this paper. First, I will discuss the overall need for English skills in marketing studies according to the results of the questionnaires. This section will deal with the frequency of English in the studies. After that I will move on to discuss the amount of completed English studies by the participants and what kind of conclusions can be drawn from it. In the final section I will analyze the results of the language skill evaluation in relation with the research questions of this research.

5.1 The need for English in marketing studies

The English language need of marketing students was of great interest to discover and I was entirely convinced that there is an actual need for English in marketing studies. The results strengthened this presupposition. With no participants claiming that English was unnecessary in studies it is relatively

safe to assume that English skills are essential. Rather surprisingly the frequency in which English was needed was lower than I had expected with 42.9% (N=21) stating that they needed English only a couple of times a week. This may be explained by the fact that more than half of the participants were minor students of marketing and thus may not have courses in which English is required. As mentioned earlier, Kirkkopelto´s (2007:59) study revealed that almost half of the participants (45%) of her study evaluated the need for spoken English to be almost daily. Furthermore, 51% of the participants evaluated the need for written English to be daily (Kirkkopelto 2007:60). By comparing the need for English during studies and while at work one can see that the workplace has higher demands for English. The need for marketing English was also evident with similar frequencies as general English needed during studies.

In order to get a more detailed view of the evaluated English language needs of the workplace the participants of the present study were asked if they had any working experiences in marketing. If they had experiences they were asked to evaluate English language need at work. Here the results differ quite much from Kirkkopelto's findings. As mentioned above, Kirkkopelto (2007:59-60) discovered the need for both spoken and written English was almost daily according to approximately half of the participants. In the present study, only 12.2% (N=6) claimed they needed English daily at work and 20.4% (N=10) stated that the need for English at work was only a couple of times a month. Perhaps the low need for English at work is explained by the job descriptions the participants had had. Often students get simple tasks to perform and are not given a lot of responsibilities, at least at first. It must also be noted there was a quite high amount of participants (34.7%, N=17) who did not have any job experiences in marketing. A greater amount of participants with work experiences would have provided interesting results. Regardless of that, it is safe to assume that students of marketing need English skills to cope with their studies.

5.2 Completed English studies

This section was designed to introduce information on how much the participants had completed English studies and in particular had they completed more than the minimum. The older degree requirements (Degree structure in marketing 2005-2008) stated that the combined amount of required English studies in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees was 10 credits. There were also six marketing

courses which were taught in English. When the results of this study are considered with the degree requirements in mind, one can see that a large amount of the participants had not completed more English studies than was required. In general English studies 34.7% (N=17) had completed between 1-5 credits and 44.9% (N=22) had completed between 6-10 credits. There seems to be a tendency towards not choosing any extra English studies. This may be a result of many things. For example, language courses tend to require a significant amount of work for a relatively small amount of credits and students may be deterred by this. Another reason why marketing students are not taking more courses in English may be the lack of motivation. They may feel that their English language skills are good enough and additional courses would be a waste of time. At the same time some students may feel that their skills are so poor that the additional work in language courses etc. would prove to be overwhelming. Whatever the reasons behind the low interest in English courses among marketing students, further action might be needed to raise the general interest.

5.3 Language skills and required skill levels – are they compatible?

Now that I have discussed the English language needs of marketing students and the amount of English studies they actually had completed I will move on to discuss the vital points of this research. The main topics of this research were the language skills of marketing students and the applicability of the skills to the required skill levels of the workplace. As mentioned earlier, Kirkkopelto's (2007:65) research discovered that 43% of those working in marketing evaluated the required proficiency level to be B2, 31% evaluated C1 and 5% C2. In comparison, 46.9% (N=23) of the participants of this study evaluated their skill level to be B2, 42.9% (N=21) evaluated C1 and 2% (N=1) C2. So, over 90% (N=45) of the participants stated that their skill level in English was in the upper middle level or the advanced level. From this point of view, the participants do have the necessary skills to function properly in the workplace. Furthermore, the participants of this research evaluated the required skill level in the workplace to be slightly higher than those in Kirkkopelto (2007:65). 49% (N=24) participants of the current study evaluated the skill level to be as high as C1 and 4.1% (N=2) evaluated it to be C2. B2 level received 30.6% (N=15) of the participants and B1 level was chosen by 14.3% (N=7). In general these evaluations were very much in line with Kirkkopelto. Marketing students are very aware of the English language skill requirements of the workplace and their own skill levels meet these requirements quite well.

Another good point of comparison for this study is Taillefer's (2007) study. Economics graduates need to have a minimum B2 level proficiency in all language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) (Taillefer 2007:149). Marketing students in Jyväskylä seem to meet these requirements as more than 80% (N=41) of the participants stated their speaking skills to be of B2 or C1 level and almost the same amount of participants (N=40) stated their writing skills to be of B2, C1 or C2 level. The major difference between Taillefer and this study is that Taillefer distinguished the language proficiencies in the four areas. In retrospect it would have been useful to have the same distinction in this research. Huhta (1999:80) stated that the greatest weaknesses among employees who took part in her study were in oral skills. This was not touched upon in this research and undoubtedly it would have been useful to include it. Perhaps surprisingly a slightly higher amount of participants of this study stated their spoken English skills to be of higher level as opposed to written English skills (see Table 3).

6 CONCLUSION

According to the results of this study, students of marketing in Jyväskylä have a good command of English language skills. 90% of the participants evaluated their English skill level to be in the upper middle or advanced level. This raises some questions and pitfalls in this research. First, how honest were the answers by the participants? Perhaps they evaluated their skill level higher than it actually is in order to give the impression that their language skills are very good. It was about how critically the participants were able to analyze their own skills. Secondly, the amount of participants was not very significant and the participant group contained both major and minor students of marketing. In an ideal scenario for this type of research there would a higher amount of only major students or possibly enough of major and minor students to conduct a deeper analysis between them. Thirdly, there are still students who are in the lower skill levels. In an area like marketing English is the lingua franca and the job requires a good knowledge of it. How will they cope in the professional life if their English language skills are below a certain level?

This research allows one to draw other conclusions as well. English skills are needed in marketing studies and marketing students meet the requirements of the workplace. In a larger context these results are insignificant but the possibilities for future research in this field are numerous and informative. Similar studies conducted in universities across Finland and even across Europe may give a deeper insight to language skills of students from all areas. Other areas for future studies might include comparisons between marketing degrees in different universities and how much emphasis these degrees have on English and other language studies. There might be significant differences in the language studies and it would be useful to see if these have an effect on the language skills of students. Another important topic for future research would be to conduct interviews with marketing students. This would provide more detailed information about the students' thoughts on language skills and discover what possible improvements the students would welcome.

This study provided new information in a field which has not been given much attention. Language skills and needs in different fields have been previously studied but students have been neglected so far. Further research in this particular field will be of great use for both the educational institutions as well as the students themselves.

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8 APPENDIX I Questionnaire for the participants

1. Ikä: 18-20   21-23   24-26   27-29   30->

2. Sukupuoli:

3. Monesko vuosi yliopistossa (markkinoinnin pääaineopiskelijana):

Kuinka usein käytätte englannin kieltä opiskeluissa? (esim. tenttikirjat, kurssien opetus, luentomonisteet jne.)

     1 = en koskaan

     2 = pari kertaa kuukaudessa

     3 = pari kertaa viikossa

     4 = monta kertaa viikossa

     5 = päivittäin

Kuinka usein käytätte englanninkielistä alakohtaista sanastoa opiskeluissa? (esim. termit, käsitteet jne.)

     1 = en koskaan

     2 = pari kertaa kuukaudessa

     3 = pari kertaa viikossa

     4 = monta kertaa viikossa

     5 = päivittäin

Onko teillä kokemusta työskentelystä oman alan työpaikoissa? (esim. kesätyöt, työharjoittelut jne.)

Jos kyllä, niin kuinka usein käytitte englannin kieltä työssä?

     0 = ei ole työkokemusta

     1 = en koskaan

     2 = pari kertaa kuukaudessa

     3 = pari kertaa viikossa

     4 = monta kertaa viikossa

     5 = päivittäin

Kuinka paljon olette suorittanut markkinoinnin kursseja joissa opetus on ollut englannin kielellä?

(arvioikaa opintopisteinä) 0   1-5   6-10   11-15   16-20   21-25   25->

Kuinka paljon yleisiä englannin kielen opintoja olette suorittanut? (esim. Kielikeskuksen kursseja)

(arvioikaa opintopisteinä)   0   1-5   6-10   11-15   16-20   21-25   25->

Oletteko suorittanut ylimääräisiä englannin kielen opintoja? (kursseja jotka eivät kuulu tutkintovaatimuksiin)

Jos kyllä, arvioikaa suoritusten määrä opintopisteinä. 0   1-5   6-10   11-15   16-20   21-25   25->

Ohessa yleinen eurooppalainen viitekehys, jota käytetään arviointiin.

Yleinen eurooppalainen viitekehys (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)

Perustaso

A1	Selviää kaikkein yksinkertaisimmista puhetilanteista. Ymmärtää selkeää puhetta ja lyhyitä tekstejä. Osaa kirjoittaa lyhyitä viestejä.
A2	Osaa kommunikoida yksinkertaisin lausein arkipäivän viestintätilanteissa. Ymmärtää lyhyiden kirjallisten ja suullisten viestien keskeisen sisällön. Osaa kirjoittaa lyhyitä viestejä mutta teksti voi olla hajanaista.

Keskitaso

B1	Osaa kommunikoida tavallisimmissa arkipäiväisissä ja työhön liittyvissä tilanteissa ja osaa perustella mielipiteitään. Ymmärtää pidempää puhetta ja tekstejä, jos aihepiiri on suhteellisen tuttu. Pystyy kirjoittamaan yksinkertaista, yhtenäistä tekstiä, jossa on kuitenkin kielellisiä puutteita.
B2	Osaa viestiä sujuvasti lähes kaikissa vapaa-aikaan ja työhön liittyvissä tilanteissa. Pystyy osallistumaan melko sujuvasti vaativiin keskusteluihin. Ymmärtää pääosan työhön, vapaa-aikaan ja ajankohtaisiin ilmiöihin liittyvistä keskusteluista ja teksteistä. Tuottaa selkeää, yksityiskohtaista tekstiä useasta aihepiiristä. Hallitsee peruskieliopin ja sanaston hyvin.

Edistynyt taso

C1	Viestii tehokkaasti ja joustavasti vapaa-aikaan ja työhön liittyvissä vaativissa tilanteissa. Käyttää sujuvasti kielen eri rakenteita. Ymmärtää vaivatta rakenteellisesti ja kielellisesti monimutkaisia tekstejä. Kommunikoi sujuvasti syntyperäisten kielenpuhujien kanssa. Kirjallinen tuotos on sujuvaa ja selkeää. Hallitsee kieliopin ja sanaston monipuolisesti ja hyvin.
C2	Puhuu ja kirjoittaa erittäin sujuvasti tilanteeseen sopivalla tyylillä ja pystyy ilmaisemaan hienojakin merkitysvivahteita. Ymmärtää vaivatta kaikenlaista puhuttua ja kirjoitettua kieltä. Kielitaito on lähes syntyperäisen kielenpuhujan kaltainen.

Arvioikaa tämänhetkinen yleinen taitotasonne englannin kielessä yllä olevan taulukon mukaan.

A1   A2   B1   B2   C1   C2

Arvioikaa tämänhetkinen taitotasonne puhutussa englannin kielessä yllä olevan taulukon mukaan.

A1   A2   B1   B2   C1   C2

Arvioikaa tämänhetkinen taitotasonne kirjoitetussa englannin kielessä yllä olevan taulukon mukaan.

A1   A2   B1   B2   C1   C2

Mikä on arvionne englannin kielitaitovaatimuksista koulutustanne vastaavissa työtehtävissä? Arvioikaa yllä olevan taulukon mukaan.

A1   A2   B1   B2   C1   C2