CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses in detail the findings based on the questionnaire distributed to the respondents and the interview sessions with the IT personnel as mentioned in Chapter III. The findings are represented in forms of Tables and Figures to easily identify the summary of the overall findings.

4.2   ANALYSIS OF PERSONNEL'S QUESTIONNAIRE

This section presents the findings gathered from the questionnaire distributed to the 10 personnel of Armed Forces in the Computer Technology Department.

4.2.1   SECTION A – PERSONAL PARTICULARS

5 questions were addressed to the personnel in this section which included age, job designation, gender, qualifications and years of

service. The age ranges from 30 to 38 years old. 6 of the respondents are males and 4 are females. Their job designations vary from one to the other. 3 are web programmers for the Armed Forces, 3 are Technical Officers, 2 are computer analysts and the other 2 are Information Technology (IT) officers. They are degree holders either in the IT or Computer Engineering disciplines. From the questionnaire, the respondents possess from 5 to 10 years of experience in the Armed Forces. Thus, due to the relatively long period of time servicing in the IT department, the responses are vital as they are familiar with the writing skills required in performing the duties and responsibilities.

4.2.2   SECTION B – NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

This section is essential as the personnel emphasized the writing skills required in the IT department of the MAF.

In response to question 1 regarding the requirement for employees to write in English, 100% of the respondents indicated that the employees are required to write in English. From this finding, it is clear that writing skills in English among the officers are necessary.

The use of the writing skills is further enhanced in the following analysis whereby 8 out of 10 respondents opted *very often* as their choice and 2 opted for *seldom* and none of the respondents opted *never*. This shows that the frequency of applying writing skills is considered necessary. The analysis is presented as below.

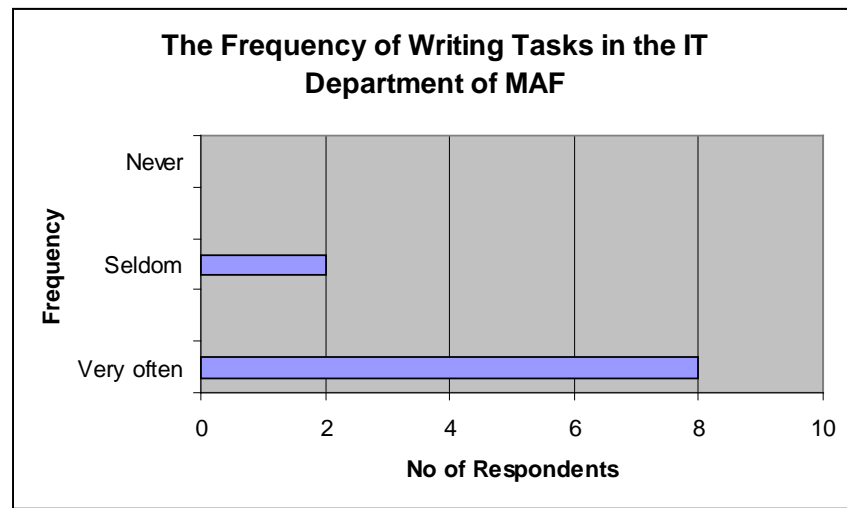**The Frequency of Writing Tasks in the IT Department of MAF**

Figure 4.1 The Frequency of Writing Tasks in the IT Department of MAF

In response to the following question as to whether it is important for the undergraduates to have good writing skills, 9 out of 10 selected *yes* and 1 *no*. For further details on this question, the respondents who agreed to having good writing skills noted that the officers in the IT department are required to write reports and summaries of newly-installed programmes in English. Besides that, the manuals for the systems in the department are written in English, and then only translated into Bahasa Malaysia. The one

and only respondent who opted for no, noted that many of the documents have ready made templates, therefore, the necessity of having good writing skills in English is not a priority. The analysis is presented in Figure 4.2.

The Importance of Having Good Writing Skills in English
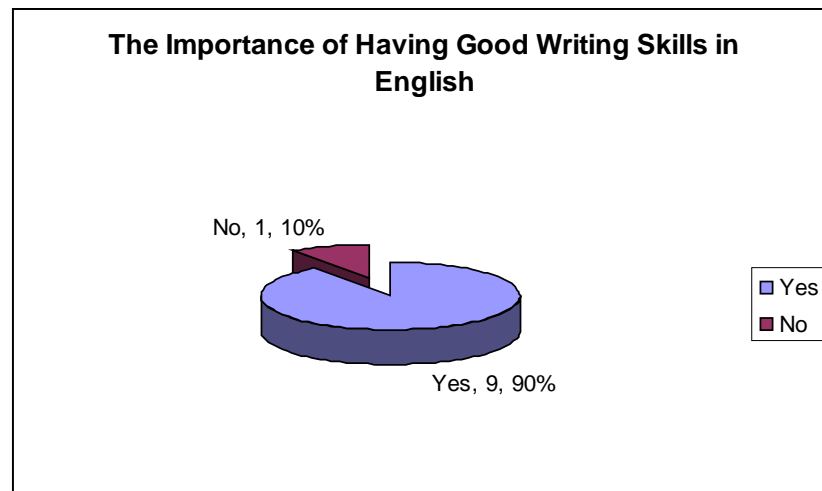
No, 1, 10%

Yes
No

Yes, 9, 90%

Figure 4.2 The importance of having good writing skills in English

The following table reveals the findings that indicate the expectations of the employers towards the employees in terms of writing skills in English. For this question, the respondents are allowed to choose for more than one answers.

Table 4.1 Expectations of the employers in English Language writing tasks

Options provided in the questionnaire:	n =10
a. Convey accurate information through correspondences.	8
b. Write technical papers when required.	10
c. Write non-technical papers when required.	7
d. Communicate effectively in less formal correspondences such as memos and short notes.	10
e. Write high quality technical reports in English especially when required by the higher command.	10

From the information in Table 4.1, it is evident that the respondents are in strong agreement regarding their expectations in writing skills among the Computer Engineering undergraduates. All the above options clearly show high responses which are in the range of 7 to 10 to indicate strong needs to fulfill such writing tasks in the IT Department in the MAF.

The following indicates the writing tasks which are needed in the IT department of the MAF. This question is an extension from the above question to enhance further needs for the writing skills. From the pie chart, the breakdown clearly shows that the majority of the respondents gave high scores for reports (100%), notices and

memos (90%), letter, paperwork and proposal (60%). This means that the needs for these essential writing tasks are very high. However, lower responses are indicated for fax and itinerary writing which is only 40% respectively. This means that there is still a need for those writing tasks, but not as important as the earlier ones opted by the respondents.

Writing Skills Needed in the IT department of MAF

Faks, 4
Paperwork, 6
Letter, 6
Memo, 9
Proposals, 6
Notices, 9
Itinerary, 4
Reports, 10

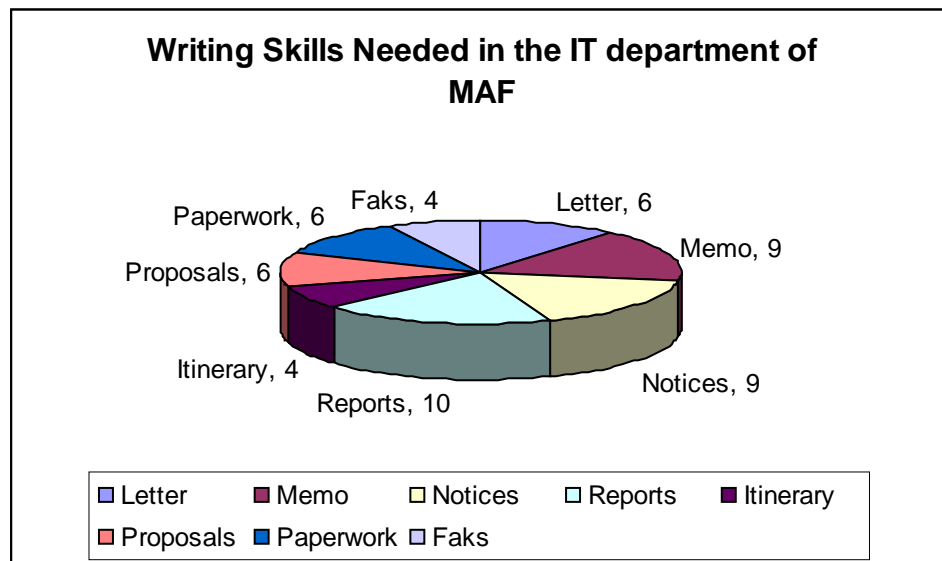Legend: Letter, Memo, Notices, Reports, Itinerary, Proposals, Paperwork, Faks

Figure 4.3 The writing skills needed in the IT department of MAF

Overall, the responses to the questions in this section show that there is a need to master the writing skills in English. Besides that, the employers have mapped out their expectations of the required writing skills for the undergraduates in the Computer Engineering of NDU.

4.2.3   SECTION C - GENERAL

This section focuses on general questions pertaining to the writing performance in the department as well as initiatives on the employer's side with regards to training and other feedback deemed relevant to this study.

The first question in this section was posted to find out the graduates' ability and performance to fulfill job functions in terms of writing tasks. Generally, 8 out of 10 respondents indicated *somewhat* and only 2 opted for *yes*. From the responses, it means that the graduates do not seem to function well in writing skills to fulfill their job functions.

The following questions are merely opinions on how best the undergraduates can improve their writing skills. 100% of the respondents opted for attending English Language courses. None opted for self study and others.

In response to the questions whether there is any specific training provided in improving the writing skills among the employees of the MAF, the respondents answered *no*. This means that there is no

training provided to improve the writing skills. It can be deduced that the respondents felt that there is a strong need for writing skills however it is not the responsibilities of the employers to provide such trainings. This is because the general assumption is that the undergraduates should have mastered the skills from their English language courses offered in NDU.

The following question on whether there is any improvement from the early recruitment into the department until a period of time, overall indicated that there is improvement in the long run as many of the documents are already written and produced in the English language. Thus, the officers have the freedom to refer to those documents and polish their writing skills by using similar templates in producing their written work. The majority of them are able to write after several experiences and involvements in the writing tasks. This is supported by the officers interviewed in this study.

In general, it can be summarized that the personnel's feedback on the needs and expectations of writing skills are high. There is a necessity for the undergraduates of Computer Engineering to have a good mastery of writing skills in English. However, the

employers clearly stated in the interview sessions that there has not been any in-house training to aid new recruited officers to improve their writing skills as they highlighted that the English programme should provide the writing skill needed for workplace demand.

4.2.4   ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW SESSIONS

The following section presents the findings from the interview session conducted among the ten (10) IT personnel in the MAF IT Department. These are further clarifications to justify the questions posted in the questionnaire.

In response to Question 1 for example in relation to the needs to write in English in the IT department, all those who were interviewed gave strong responses as they noted *always, most of the time, very frequent* and *everyday*. For example, subject 1 of the interview responded that he used English to write almost everyday when he started working in the MAF. (Interview subject 1, Line 2-5). From these responses, the situation is very clear that in the IT department in MAF there is indeed a great requirement for the personnel to write in English.

The findings for Question 2 vary. In response to difficulties about writing in the field of work present many possible difficulties that newly appointed officers may face. Among the difficulties mentioned in the interview were jargons, specific MAF structures, punctuations which have different functions as compared to the general language use and even spelling.(Subjects 1 and 5). However, they further noted that over a period of time, the personnel would be able to cope as the written tasks are quite similar from time to time. (Subject 3). The writing tasks are demanding in the IT department, however, many of the personnel resort to available documents in the files for reference as well as for ready made templates. In relation to this question, is was further elaborated by the personnel in Question 3 whereby the most difficult writing tasks for IT personnel are writing manuals and working paper. (Subjects 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 10). The reasons that were highlighted by them were language structures and choice of words, either general vocabulary or jargons. In other words, the various problematic writing areas identified need further attention by content developers and language curriculum developer for the enhancement of the English language writing programme.

In order to find out whether the English language writing programmes offered at NDU are beneficial to undergraduates of the Degree in Computer Engineering in preparing them for workplace, a question was posted in terms of their ability to write during the practical training. The outcomes of the interview were surprising as all the respondents indicated very low to unsatisfactory. They also mentioned that the practical training officers were not even aware of the writing tasks expected of them. Besides that, they were also very dependent on senior officers to check their work from time to time. They were incapable of writing simple IT manuals for MAF. Based on the findings, it was clear that the ability to perform in written tasks among the Computer Engineering students was very low and the expectations of the writing tasks were unclear for them. Therefore, many of them failed to show the ability to write due to the unawareness of the written task demands outlined by the senior personnel in the IT department.

In general, the respondents also noted very clearly in the following question whereby, those who came for the practical training and those who were newly recruited after the graduation showed no difference in their writing ability. Majority of them were very

weak in their writing tasks and the senior officers had to provide continuous guidance in the writing tasks assigned to them, (Subject 1, 3, 6, 7 and 8). This situation according to them is worrying as the senior officers have low confidence towards the newly recruited officers to complete any writing assignments, and many ended up with unnecessary work as it could not be delegated to the new staff. Therefore, this finding shows that the English language writing courses that the students underwent showed very low relevance to the workplace writing demands.

Due to the problems that are obvious in the IT department, a final question was directed to the personnel with regards to availability of in-house training to improve the writing skills in order to overcome the problems mentioned earlier. All ten respondents indicated that there has never been any training on writing as there are other essential trainings that are the priority of the department. Thus, from this statement, it is clear that the only exposure and guidance the newly recruited officers had had to write based on the demands and expectations of the MAF is the experience they gained from the English language writing courses in NDU. Hence, it is crucial for NDU to play the vital roles in providing these

exposure and guidance so that the transition of skills and knowledge from university to workplace is made possible.

From the interview analysis, it clearly presents the need for NDU to look into the English language writing syllabus as there are obvious problems related to writing skills among the students of the Computer Engineering.

4.3   ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRES

This section presents the analysis gathered from the questionnaire distributed to the 20 students in the Computer Engineering Degree Programme of NDU.

4.3.1   SECTION A – GENERAL PARTICULARS

The following section presents the general details of the students. The respondents are from the ages of 20 to 24. All the respondents are Computer Engineering undergraduates in NDU and they have been in the programme for 3 years. In addition to that, all 20 respondents have completed their practical training. All 20 stated that their practical training was in the IT departments in the MAF

throughout Malaysia. 7 did the practical training in IT department in Sg Besi Camp, 3 in IT department in Terendak Camp, 4 in IT department in Seberang Takir Camp and 6 in IT department in Ministry of Defence (MINDEF), Kuala Lumpur.

4.3.2 SECTION B – CURRENT ENGLISH PROGRAMME

For the first question in this section, 100% of the respondents indicated *yes* as they are still doing an English course. This means that the English language course is still offered after the practical training, and it is in the final semester for the undergraduates.

In response to question 2 of this section in which the respondents were required to list down the writing skills learned through out their English Language course, various writing skills were noted by the respondents. The common writing tasks mentioned are summary, essay, short reports and letters. These are the common writing skills which are clear in the questionnaire. None of the respondents have chosen other writing skills besides those above mentioned such as summary, essay and short reports.

The following pie chart shows the breakdown of the responses gathered from this question.

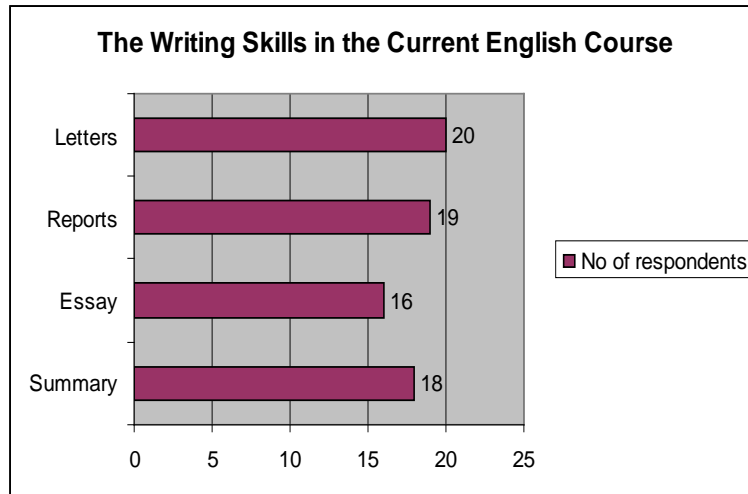**The Writing Skills in the Current English Course**

Figure 4.5 The Writing Skills in the Current English Course

For the following question in this section, it is crucial to find out whether the respondents see the relevance of the current English course in preparing them for workplace writing needs in the IT department. Majority or 15 out of 20 respondents indicated *no*, whereas 3 indicated *yes* and only 1 indicated *not sure.* From these responses it can be summarized that majority of the undergraduates felt that it is vital to review the writing skills in the current English course.

From the questionnaire, it can be gathered that the undergraduates responded high for the importance of English language. 100% of

the respondents believe that as an IT personnel in the Armed Forces, English language is important in the job functions. Therefore, it is evident that all agree to the role of English language in their job functions in the IT department.

4.3.3 NEEDS ANALYSIS

This section highlights the needs analysis in regards to writing skills in the IT department. The feedback from these respondents is valuable as they have undergone the practical training in the IT department in the various military camps.

For the first question in this section, the respondents gave the following scores. 15 opted *yes,* 4 opted *no* and 1 opted *not sure.* The findings indicated that majority of the respondents noted that there is a requirement to use English in written form when dealing with tasks related to Computer Engineering in the IT department.

The following pie chart illustrates the feedback for question 2: the frequency of having to use English in the written tasks.

The Frequency of using English for Written Tasks

Never, 1
Seldom, 1
Sometimes, 5
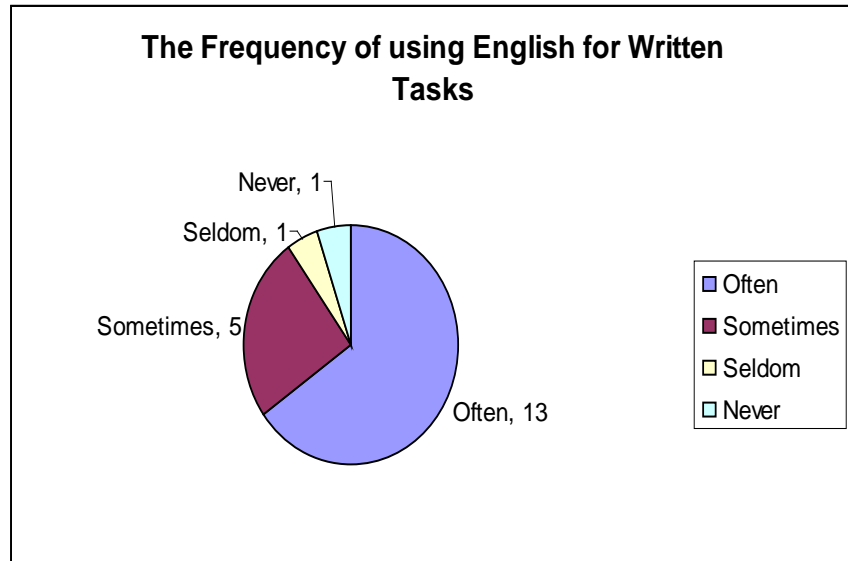Often, 13

- Often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

Figure 4.6 The Frequency of Using English for Written Tasks

From the above findings, it is clear that there is a great demand or needs in using English in the written tasks in the IT department. Majority noted that they often have to use English, whereas only a small number is noted for the other three options; 5 *sometimes*, 1 *seldom* and 1 *not sure*. From the findings, it can be concluded that only a small number among the respondents indicated that they are not required to write in English.

The following question permits the respondents to tick more than one option. This question reflects the respondents' practical experience whereby they are required to identify the writing tasks

that they had to perform during the practical training. The responses are as summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 The Writing Tasks in the IT Department

Writing Tasks	no=20	%
i. Letters		
- Inquiry	8	40%
- Complaint	2	10%
- Reply	7	35%
- Others	0	0
ii. Memo	6	30%
iii. Reports	14	70%
iv. Proposals	8	40%
v. Paperwork	9	45%
vi. Itinerary	6	30%
vii. Fax	4	20%
viii. Other types of correspondence	12	60%
- emails	12	60%

From the responses, it can be gathered that the writing tasks that they are required to write in English are reports (70%), emails (60%), paperwork (45%), proposals (40%), reply letters (35%), memo and itinerary (30%), fax (20%) and complaint letters (10%).

From the findings, it can be concluded that writing tasks in English are common and quite frequent for the IT personnel in the MAF.

Question 4 is an open-ended question that gives the options for the respondents to state their needs for the writing skills they need to learn during their undergraduate in order to perform in their workplace. The responses are summarized in the following Figure. 15 out of 20 indicated report writing, 8 indicated letter writing, 11 indicated paperwork, 3 indicated memo and 2 indicated proposals, 2 indicated itinerary.
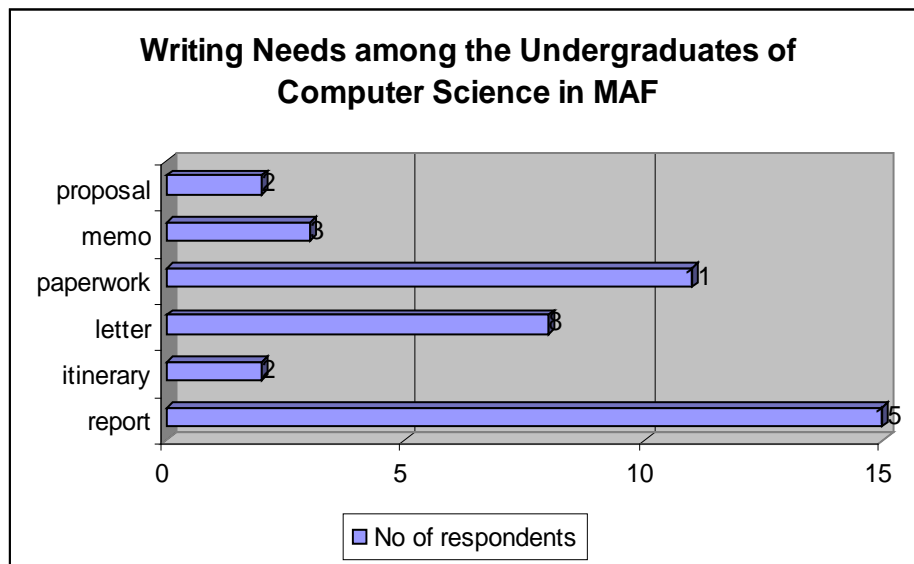

Figure 4.6 The writing needs among the undergraduates of Computer Engineering in MAF

Question 5 shows that 18 out of 20 of the respondents believe that the current English language programme be changed and that represents the majority of the respondents, because only 2 out of 20 respondents stated no as their answer. This shows that there is a high request for a change of English language.

4.4   ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following section relates the findings to the research questions of this study.

4.4.1 R.Q. 1: What are the needs and expectations of the employers' in the technical department of MAF in terms of writing skills in English?

From the findings, it can be summarized for this research question that the employers expect the undergraduates to be able to write in English. This is because there are writing tasks in the IT department that require them to write in English. This can be gathered from questions 1 and 2 of the Section B in the employer's questionnaire. They indicated high percentage to show the importance of writing in English for the IT personnel.

In addition, the findings for question 5 as summarized in Table 4.1 shows that the expectations from the employers are high with regards to the writing needs. This is obvious as out of 10 respondents, all the options indicated above 50%. This means that the employers put high expectations among the undergraduates to perform well in their writing as there is a demand to write in English in the IT department. To further enhance the needs and expectations, the findings for question 6 are significant. From the findings, it shows very clearly that the employers have identified the required writing tasks that need to be written in English. The findings show that all the writing tasks provided as options are required to be written in English which are letter, memo, notices, reports, proposal and paperwork, however, for fax and itinerary indicated low percentage which is below 50% for both. From the analysis, it is gathered that writing task in English is common and show high demand among the IT personnel in MAF. Thus it can be concluded that the needs and expectations of the employers with regards to writing in English are high and significant except for faxes and itinerary.

Furthermore, from the interviews conducted, it is apparent that writing ability and skills are important in the IT department and generally, from past experiences, it was obvious that the new officers were weak and dependent on their superior in the writing tasks assigned to them. Besides

that, they merely depended on the available documents which shows that they were unable to produce original writing work due their limited writing knowledge for IT purposes.

Therefore, the needs for undergraduates to be able to write in English are great and the expectations of employers are also high. The writing tasks expected to be included are letters, memos, notices, reports, proposals and paperworks.

4.4.2 R.Q. 2: What are the expectations and needs of the students with regards to their writing needs in order to function well in the IT department of MAF?

From the findings, it can be briefly stated that the undergraduates are aware of the importance of the writing skills. Based on their practical training experience, they noted that there is high needs and expectations to master the writing skills in English as they are required to perform writing tasks in English from time to time. This can be gathered from question 6 of Section B in the students' questionnaire whereby 100% noted that English is important.

Responses to Question 4 in the similar section reflect that the majority of the respondents stated *no* in terms of the relevance of the current English programme. This is reliable feedback as the respondents have undergone the practical training, thus they are aware of the writing skills which are required in the IT department. This is further supported in the previous section whereby, 100% of the respondents indicated *yes* for a change of syllabus.

Answers to questions in Section C of the questionnaire show the needs and expectations of the respondents in terms of writing skills which are required. Answers to questions 1 and 2 reflected that there is a high need to write in English language in the various writing tasks in the IT department. Questions 3 and 4 asked the specific writing tasks that are expected to be written in English language. Generally, in the options provided in the Questionnaire (refer to Appendix E), the respondents indicated the importance and relevance of writing skills in English as there is a clear demand to write in English among the IT personnel in the IT department. Among the writing tasks noted are reports, letters, paperworks and several others. Therefore, the respondents realise the significance of writing skills in English.

4.4.3 R.Q. 3: Is there a need for a change or review of the current English writing syllabus?

From the analysis from question 5 of Section C in the students' questionnaire, the respondents all agreed to a change or review of the current English syllabus. Based on this research, there is an urgent need to review the current English language programme as the respondents find it irrelevant to the skills required to function well in the workplace. This is further elaborated in Question 6 of Section C in the students' questionnaire whereby many of the respondents stated that the current English language programme does not help them to achieve the target needs. This is summarized from the responses given in question 6. Among the respondents who responded to this question stated expressions such as "*irrelevant, not helpful, do not help, need to change as it does not benefit and please change, cannot use in my workplace*". From these, it can be gathered that the respondents feel that the current English language programme is lacking in facilitating them to perform well in their workplace.

Furthermore, from the findings form the interview, there is a clear direction that suggests for a change of syllabus as the graduates were not able to perform at the workplace as they are dependent on senior officers

at times when they were required to write. Besides that, the personnel also highlighted the low ability to perform satisfactory writing tasks whenever assigned to the newly recruited officers. In addition, priority for training does not include developing the writing skills as the senior officers assumed that writing skills are taught in the NDU. Therefore, due to the demands and high expectations of writing ability among the Computer Engineering students, there is an urgent need to revisit the English language writing syllabus which is currently offered in the NDU.

4.5   DISCUSSION

From the findings, it is clear that the undergraduates too have a strong opinion that the current English course does not facilitate their transition of skills learned to their workplace functions. In addition, the responses clearly show that the students are not favourable towards the English courses as the skills taught are not relevant and significant and do not have workplace values. This has led to difficulties in managing work place functions during their practical training experience.

In general, according to the findings, there is a need to review the current English language syllabus in order to meet the expectations and needs of the learners. In an ESP context, the desire to meet the needs and

expectations of the learners is the crucial factor in developing the curriculum. Thus, it is fundamental for the curriculum developer and language lecturers of the UPNM to consider for a review to ensure a more enhanced and well-covered syllabus and curriculum.

Based on the findings, though some of the job requirements are covered in the syllabus, the responses reflect that undergraduates may not have had enough opportunity or writing instructions or even exposure to perform other important specific job writing tasks. This may be due to reasons such as time constraint and inexperienced lecturers. The need for the review of the current syllabus reflects the idea that ESP writing syllabus should be adopted as the majority of the respondents indicated that the current English language course is insufficient in preparing them to perform writing tasks at workplace. This is an obvious problem in many jobs these days. With the decline in English, the employers today face problems with ill-equipped students to perform well in their jobs.

Therefore, if the change of syllabus is a success, it would be very relevant, significant and even more beneficial if an ESP writing course which meets the needs of employers and students is designed. This is to minimize the mismatch of the current ESP writing syllabus with the needs and expectations at workplace.

4.6   CONCLUSION

The study has shown that an ESP writing course is relevant to prepare the students before they enter the workforce. However, the students are more interested and it is more beneficial for them to learn skills and tasks that are required and relevant for workforce rather than skills that are not. In the analysis on reasons for the change of syllabus, students express that there are many writing skills such as summary writing, synthesizing and tasks such as essay, summary and paragraph writing which are not relevant for them. This leads to low motivation and also lack of interest to perform the writing tasks. However, if the learned skills are the skill they need, they demand for more time allocated for them to practice in order to acquire the expertise in the specific writing skills. Besides that, they also stated that their writing class has little relation to their job functions, thus they requested that the current writing course should be reviewed to further acknowledge the importance of job-related skills

Thus, ESP is high in demand and the needs and expectations of students as well as employers should be given high emphasis in the design of a writing syllabus as well as other ESP programmes. As the development and challenges today are becoming more competitive and the role of English is given high status, the students realize and are aware of the fact

that they need to equip themselves with a decent level of English in order to survive in the competitive job market. Therefore, language lecturers and curriculum developer should look into various aspects in designing their curriculum as to ensure there is relevance and significance of English language programme in the transition of knowledge and skills to workplace functions.