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Transferable skills and English language pedagogy: A contextualized study

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Abstract

This study examines the development and applicability of transferable skills among BA (English Language and Literature) and MA (TEFL) students at Arab Open University (AOU), Bahrain, to assess curriculum alignment with professional demands. A quantitative survey of 56 students evaluated their perceptions of skill acquisition, career aspirations, and curricular gaps. 78.5% of students acknowledged the importance of transferable skills for employability, but confidence varied—69.6% in analytical writing vs. 33.9% in media production. Education and translation emerged as top career paths, though students highlighted the need for more practical training (e.g., internships, digital literacy). The study underscores the need for curriculum enhancements, including experiential learning and technology integration, to bridge theory-practice gaps. Recommendations include structured internships, interdisciplinary projects, and TPACK-focused training to better prepare graduates for careers in education, translation, and media.

Keywords: Applied linguistics, Curriculum integration, Education and training, English language education, Higher education, Practical skill integration, Sociolinguistics, Transferable skills.

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1. Introduction

The modern job market demands versatility, placing a premium on transferable skills applicable across diverse professional fields. Skills such as critical thinking, effective communication, problem-solving, and adaptability hold particular significance for students enrolled in the English Language and Literature and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) program at Arab Open University (AOU) in Bahrain. These students frequently aspire to careers in fields such as education, media, translation, and research, where strong linguistic proficiency and analytical capabilities are in high demand. Yet, as many scholars have noted, a central challenge in higher education lies not merely in imparting these skills but in ensuring students can effectively translate them into practical, real-world applications [1, 2].

This study explores how students at Arab Open University (AOU) in Bahrain perceive their development and application of transferable skills. The data indicates that students generally feel secure in their analytical and written abilities but express

less confidence in areas like media production, translation, and digital literacy. For instance, one participant noted, “*I can write strong essays, but I have no idea how to write for social media or digital platforms.*” This observation aligns with Tomlinson [3]’s assertion about the necessity for universities to adapt their curricula to reflect current industry needs. Similarly, when asked about the extent to which coursework prepared them for translation tasks, another student commented, “*We studied translation theories, but I wish we had more hands-on practice with real texts.*” This echoes [4]’s insights on second language acquisition, which stress the importance of practical exposure for achieving proficiency.

Within English language education, these student concerns underscore the value of learning through experience and engaging with practical tasks. Vygotsky and Cole [5] sociocultural theory posits that interaction and relevant activities significantly improve language acquisition. Yet, many students in this study voiced a need for more collaborative and interactive learning opportunities. For example, one participant remarked, “*I understand grammar rules, but I struggle when I have to explain them to others.*” This resonates with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritizes authentic communication over mechanical repetition. To address these gaps, future English educators—especially those training in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)—would benefit from structured opportunities to practice lesson planning, classroom management, and interactive teaching methods. Such experiences are essential to effectively bridge the divide between theoretical understanding and practical classroom application.

Student feedback also reveals a growing recognition of digital literacy as a vital element in English language teaching and learning. One student proposed, “*Our courses ought to offer more guidance on leveraging AI tools and digital platforms for teaching.*” This observation brings to the forefront the principles of technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, which advocate for the seamless integration of digital tools into educational practices. As Ng [6] contends, digital proficiency has shifted from being a supplementary asset to a fundamental requirement, necessitating its incorporation into teacher training programs.

Overall, this study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the English Language and TEFL programs at AOU in fostering transferable skills and preparing students for the professional world. By integrating theoretical perspectives from cognitive learning theories, second language acquisition, and employability research, the study offers a thorough examination of skill development within these disciplines. A key focus is on the crucial need to close the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring that students graduate not only with a strong academic foundation but also with the ability to effectively apply their skills in real-world professional settings.

2. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative survey-based approach to explore the transferable skills developed by students pursuing a BA in English Language and Literature and an MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at the Arab Open University in the Kingdom of Bahrain. A structured questionnaire served as the primary tool, featuring both fixed-choice and open-ended questions. This design allowed for a comprehensive assessment of students' views on their skill development, the practical application of these skills, and their relevance to diverse career paths. The questionnaire addressed a range of domains, including creative writing, translation, media production, public speaking, problem-solving, and analytical thinking, framed both as skills acquired and as potential career paths. Participants were chosen based on their enrollment in these programs, and data were gathered electronically to promote accessibility and streamline involvement.

2.1. Major Theoretical Framework

This study builds upon several foundational theories that shape our understanding of English language education, linguistics, and cognitive growth. It builds on sociocultural theory, notably [5] the idea that learning emerges through social interaction, emphasizing how engagement with others fosters language acquisition and skill development.

The study also acknowledges [7] functionalist theory, which examines language as a tool for fulfilling various social roles. It also engages with Skinner [8] behaviorist approach, which posits that language mastery stems from reinforcement and environmental factors. Behaviorist principles, such as repetition and reinforcement, are particularly relevant to the development and refinement of practical skills like writing, public speaking, and translation.

2.2. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were thoughtfully prioritized to safeguard participants’ privacy and well-being. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was secured from each individual before any data was collected. The questionnaire itself included clear assurances of confidentiality, guaranteeing that all personal information would be anonymized and securely stored. Participants were also informed that they could skip any questions they found uncomfortable or intrusive. To uphold academic integrity, the study strictly followed established ethical research guidelines, ensuring that the data collected would be used exclusively for research, training, and curriculum development purposes, with no unauthorized sharing or disclosure.

2.3. Transferable Skills in Higher Education

The concept of transferable skills has become a focal point in higher education as universities strive to equip students for a wide range of professional settings. Transferable skills are broadly defined as abilities that can be applied across different fields and job roles, including communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability [2]. Scholarly work consistently demonstrates their vital role in employability and career advancement, especially within fields such as English Language and Literature and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), where graduates frequently enter professions in education, media, translation, and research [9]. Recent studies emphasize the need to embed these transferable skills into

academic programs, with a focus on experiential learning and collaborative projects that bridge disciplines to strengthen students' practical abilities [10].

2.4. The Role of Language Learning in Skill Development

Language learning, especially in the context of English as a Foreign or Second Language (EFL/ESL), is deeply intertwined with cultivating cognitive, analytical, and communicative abilities. Vygotsky and Cole [5] sociocultural theory suggests that language acquisition is a socially mediated process, where interaction and collaboration are key to enhancing cognitive development. Scholarly findings reveal that engaging with linguistics and literature nurtures advanced thinking skills, such as textual analysis, crafting arguments, and mastering rhetorical finesse [11]. Additionally, approaches like English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) prioritize the integration of practical skills with language proficiency, reflecting the growing need for graduates who are equipped to meet the demands of a globalized workforce [12].

2.5. Cognitive and Behavioral Perspectives on Skill Acquisition

From a cognitive standpoint, the process of acquiring skills typically evolves from declarative knowledge—understanding concepts—to procedural knowledge, where those concepts are applied automatically in practice [13]. Research in second language acquisition (SLA) indicates that consistent exposure and practice across diverse situations strengthen skill retention and adaptability [4]. Additionally, the idea that practice, feedback, and positive reinforcement are key to mastering skills like writing, public speaking, and translation aligns with behaviorist principles [8]. Studies also point to the value of metacognitive awareness—that is, students' ability to think about their own learning—as a critical element in successfully using transferable skills outside of the classroom [14].

2.6. The Relevance of Transferable Skills to Employability

Universities are increasingly expected to ensure students are prepared for the transition from academic study to the professional world. Yorke [1] argues that transferable skills should be deliberately embedded within higher education curricula to prepare graduates for the ever-changing nature of professional environments. Research findings indicate that students who participate in interdisciplinary projects, internships, and creative writing exercises develop a stronger ability to tackle intricate career trajectories [3]. Additionally, digital literacy and the ability to adapt to technological advancements are increasingly viewed as essential transferable skills in today's industries [6] underscoring the urgency for updating and modernizing curricula in language and literature programs.

The existing body of research makes it clear that universities need to intentionally integrate transferable skills into their programs, especially in fields that focus on language, communication, and thinking. Theoretical frameworks from sociocultural learning, cognitive psychology, and second language acquisition offer valuable insights into how these skills are developed and applied across different contexts. This study expands on these ideas by examining how students in the English and TEFL programs at Arab Open University view and employ transferable skills throughout their academic studies and professional aspirations.

2.7. Breakdown of Questions and Responses

The analysis of student responses presented here combines statistical findings with relevant theoretical frameworks, drawing connections to the core principles of English Language Pedagogy and Translation Theory.

The survey primarily includes undergraduate students in English Language and Literature, alongside a smaller group pursuing postgraduate TEFL studies at Arab Open University. Fewer than half of these students maintain a GPA above 3.00, possibly pointing to difficulties with academic writing and analytical tasks. Most fall within the 20-30 age range, a pivotal time for skill-building and career exploration. A significant number are currently unemployed, highlighting a pressing need for enhanced career preparation. Teaching and translation emerge as the top career goals, though some express interest in creative writing and media fields. Confidence in creative writing varies widely—only a handful feel truly assured, and roughly half see these skills as applicable to areas like scriptwriting.

Notably, many students engage in creative writing solely for academic assignments, suggesting a disconnect between classroom learning and independent practice. While some feel prepared for roles in media and journalism, a considerable number acknowledge the need for additional training. Reading and analytical skills are generally rated as strong, though some students face difficulties with comprehension. Writing abilities are also viewed positively overall, although a few participants reported discomfort with grammar. Public speaking skills have improved for most, but performance-based skills, such as acting or dramatic reading, remain underdeveloped. Problem-solving abilities are considered moderate, with some students feeling effective in breaking down complex issues. Research skills are developed to a degree, but not universally.

Many students report only slight or moderate improvement in translation skills, and the use of AI translation tools is not widespread, suggesting potential for enhanced technology integration in translation training. Fewer than half feel fully prepared for editing, proofreading, or copywriting, indicating a need for more hands-on experience. Confidence in teaching is relatively high, with many students having experience in evaluating others' writing and speech, demonstrating strong assessment capabilities. While some feel equipped to create educational content, participation in literacy promotion activities is limited. Teaching and translation are viewed as the most career-relevant skills, though not all students believe their training aligns closely with job market demands. Opportunities for internships and real-world practice are scarce, potentially hindering students' transition into the workforce. The most significant areas of growth reported are communication and teaching, whereas translation and research skills require further development. Opinions on the program's balance of theory and practice

are split—some see it as well-rounded, while others call for more hands-on focus. Although many believe their skills can translate across job types, uncertainty lingers for some, and only a few feel highly confident about securing employment. Students frequently request more career guidance and workshops to bolster their readiness. Overall, the program earns positive marks, but strengthening practical training and career linkages could elevate its impact further. Following is a further detailed breakdown of the students' responses:

3. Academic Background

The survey responses primarily came from undergraduate English Language and Literature students (47), with a smaller number of postgraduate TEFL students (8). This distribution reflects the concept of disciplinary literacy [15]. This distribution reflects the principles of disciplinary literacy [15], which highlight the distinct skill sets required across academic fields. The predominance of undergraduate voices indicates that the research reflects perspectives from those in the initial stages of their career paths, potentially contrasting with the views of seasoned professionals.

3.1. Academic Performance (GPA 3.00 or above)

Out of 56 students, only 23 reported a GPA of 3.00 or higher, reflecting a moderate level of academic performance. Research in language acquisition, such as Cummins [16]'s work, indicates that academic success in language-focused disciplines is often linked to cognitive academic language proficiency. Lower GPAs could signal difficulties in honing advanced literacy and critical analysis skills.

3.2. Age Distribution

Most students fall within the 20-30 age range, a period widely recognized as pivotal for cognitive development within higher education. Drawing on Vygotsky and Cole [5] sociocultural theory, this stage is particularly significant for learning through social interaction and guided support, especially in fields such as language acquisition and translation studies.

3.3. Employment Status

A notable number of students, 34 out of 56, reported being unemployed, while only 17 held full-time positions and 3 worked part-time. This mirrors a broader global struggle for humanities graduates to secure employment, as noted by Bridgstock [2]. The high rate of unemployment among participants highlights the importance of incorporating practical, career-oriented skills into the academic curriculum to better prepare students for the job market.

3.4. Career Aspirations

Students most frequently aspire to careers in Teaching (31) and Translation/Proofreading (22), a trend that echoes findings on the prominence of these fields within English studies [17]. The interest in creative writing (15) and media-related fields (12) indicates a growing awareness of content creation as a valuable, transferable skill.

3.5. Confidence in Creative Writing

Confidence in creative writing is varied, with only 9 students feeling "extremely confident." This resonates with theories of writing self-efficacy [18] which suggest that perceived competence influences actual performance. This may indicate a need for more experiential learning approaches in writing courses.

3.6. Transferability of Creative Writing Skills

Half of the participants (24) acknowledge that creative writing skills can be applied to areas such as scriptwriting and playwriting, while another 24 express only "slight" confidence in this transferability. This indicates an underlying awareness of the interconnectedness of writing disciplines, as highlighted by the concept of intertextuality [19]. However, a clear divide persists in confidence in applying these skills across different contexts.

3.7. Use of Creative Writing Outside Academia

The majority of students (24) "sometimes" pursue creative writing beyond their coursework, while 7 "never" do. This reveals a disconnect between what is taught in class and its use in everyday life, highlighting the value of project-based learning to bridge this gap and encourage more consistent, real-world practice [20].

3.8. Preparation for Media and Journalism

19 students feel confident about their readiness for media production, 10 do not, and 27 report feeling only "slightly" prepared for journalism. This indicates that while theoretical foundations may be addressed in the curriculum, there is a clear need to strengthen practical training. These findings align with recommendations for incorporating more hands-on experiences in journalistic writing within English programs [21].

3.9. Analytical Reading Skills

The majority of participants rate their reading analysis skills as "good" (24) or "excellent" (15), indicating a robust connection to literary analysis, a cornerstone of English pedagogy [22]. Still, the handful of "poor" (1) and "fair" (13) responses points to uneven levels of proficiency in critical reading among the group.

3.10. Grammar and Writing Clarity

Most students (40) describe themselves as at least "somewhat comfortable" crafting grammatically sound paragraphs, a vital ability for both teaching and translation work [23]. The 5 who feel "uncomfortable," however, might benefit from additional support to bolster their writing skills.

3.11. Public Speaking and Performance Skills

A significant majority of students (37) believe the program has enhanced their public speaking abilities; however, performance skills lag behind, with 15 noting they "never" received training in this area. This disparity points to a gap in the curriculum, particularly considering the value of performative competence in second language acquisition [24].

3.12. Problem-Solving Skills

A substantial group of students (17) describe themselves as "very effective" at problem-solving, with only 3 feeling ineffective. This suggests a reasonable level of analytical ability, a critical element in translation theory [25].

3.13. Research and Synthesis Skills

Consistent involvement in research tasks (10 "always," 17 "sometimes") shows that students are engaging with academic exploration, echoing arguments that research proficiency is vital in translation and English studies [26].

3.14. Enhancement of Research and Publishing Skills

The impact of coursework on research and publishing skills appears moderate, with 12 students reporting "significant" improvement and 22 noting only "slight" progress. This may suggest a stronger focus on theoretical knowledge rather than applied research practices.

3.15. Translation Proficiency and Use of AI Tools

Only 11 students feel "very proficient" in translation, pointing to potential gaps in practical translation training. Mixed responses regarding the use of AI tools reveal an uneven integration of technology in translation pedagogy [27].

3.16. Preparation for Editing and Copywriting

Many students (24) feel "neither prepared nor unprepared" for editing and proofreading, while only 10 feel "very prepared." Confidence in advertising and copywriting is similarly lukewarm, indicating a potential need for courses that are more aligned with industry demands.

3.17. Teaching Confidence and Assessment Skills

A striking 20 students express "extreme confidence" in teaching English, highlighting the robustness of TEFL training. Additionally, 22 students "always" evaluate others' work, demonstrating strong assessment capabilities.

3.18. Engagement in Educational Content Creation and Literacy Promotion

While 32 students feel equipped to craft educational materials, 8 do not. Likewise, 19 "always" participate in literacy promotion, but 5 "rarely" do. These responses suggest room to deepen practical community involvement.

3.19. Most Applicable Skills and Relevance to Job Market

As shown in Figure 1, 'outreach, educational, and teaching skills' is the most frequently selected skill category (22), aligning with current job market demands. However, only 13 students consider their skills to be "highly relevant" to the market, indicating a perceived disconnect between academic training and employment needs.

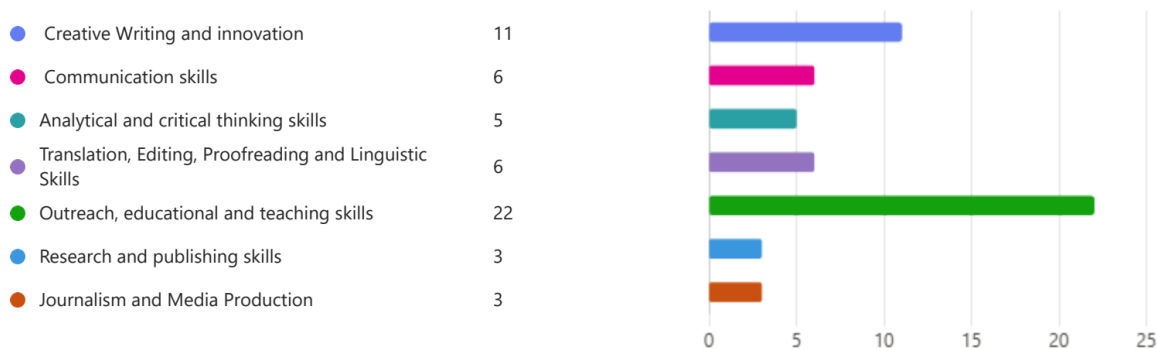


Figure 1. Most Applicable Skills and Relevance to Job Market.

3.20. Application of Skills in Real-World Settings

Only 22 students “always” use their skills in internships, raising concerns about limited practical opportunities. Open-ended answers show some real-world engagement but also highlight the need for more structured experiential learning.

3.21. Professional Growth and Skill Gaps

Figure 2 shows that communication skills (31) and teaching skills (24) are the most commonly reported areas of professional growth. However, students identify translation (21) and research skills (9) as areas needing improvement, suggesting that these require further curricular attention.

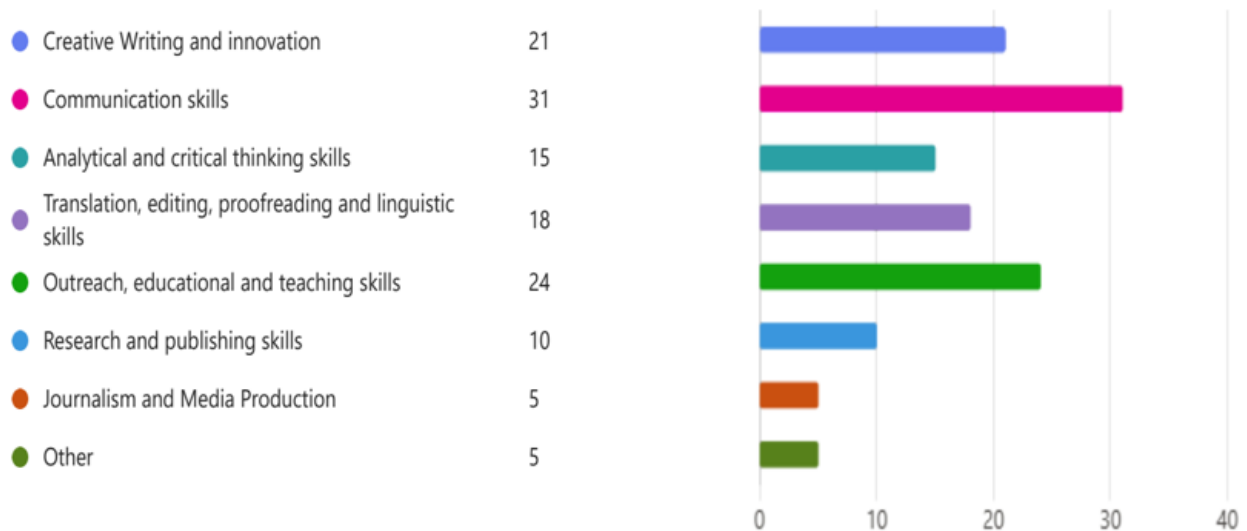


Figure 2.
Professional Growth.

3.22. Balance of Theory and Practice & Transferability

While 10 students believe the program balances theory and practice "extremely well," 23 rate it only "moderately." The perceived lack of clear real-world applications highlights the need for enhanced practical training.

3.23. Confidence in Transferable Skills and Job Security

While 17 strongly trust in their skills' adaptability, 12 are unsure. Similarly, just 12 feel “extremely confident” about landing a job, reflecting concerns about employability.

3.24. Additional Support Needed

Open-ended responses reveal a desire for more career counseling and practical workshops, reinforcing the need to align academic training more closely with industry requirements.

3.25. Most Valuable Skills Acquired

Last but not least, Figure 3 shows that communication (29), teaching (24), and translation (21) stand out as the most valuable skills gained based on the participants' viewpoints, affirming their centrality in English studies and translation careers.

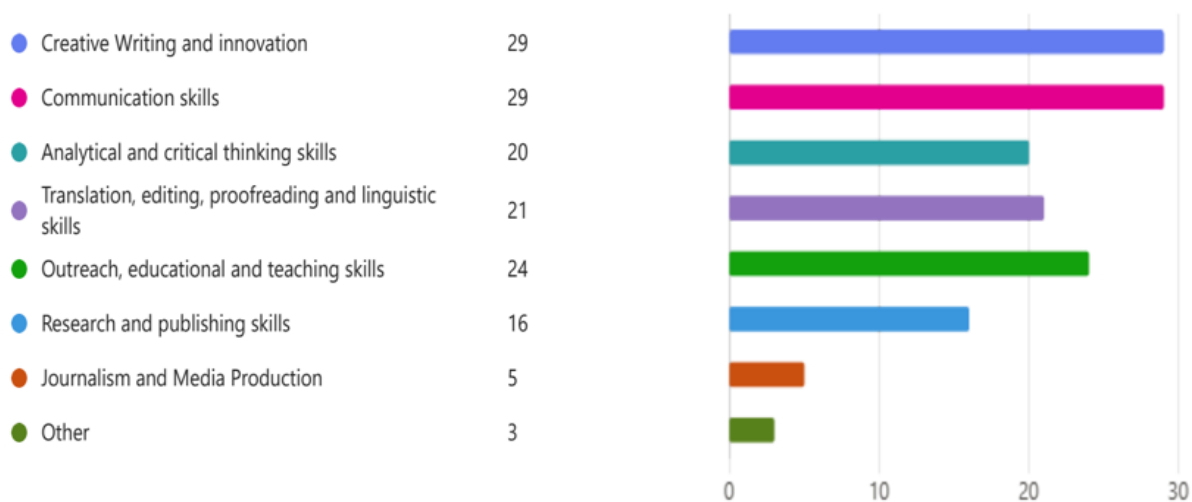


Figure 3.
Most Valuable Skills Acquired.

3.26. Overall Evaluation

With an average rating of 4.21, students view the program favorably but call for enhancements in practical application and career connections to elevate its impact.

3.27. Key Findings of This Study

This paper indicates that students within the English Language and Literature and TEFL programs at Arab Open University are successfully cultivating vital transferable skills, such as critical thinking, writing, and communication, which they recognize as essential for their future professional lives. Yet, a notable number express lower confidence in domains like media production, digital literacy, and translation, indicating that the current curriculum may not adequately equip them for the practical challenges of the job market.

The study reveals that most students, aged 20-30, are currently unemployed, with teaching and translation ranking as their primary career aspirations, alongside some interest in creative writing and media. This reflects a clear inclination toward education and language-focused professions; yet, it also demonstrates the necessity for greater emphasis on practical training, internships, and career support to enable students to translate their skills into real-world contexts. Participants' feedback highlights a desire for more practical experience, improved integration of technology, and stronger connections between their studies and job market demands. While students value their education, they feel it could be more closely aligned with the skills and competencies required in their chosen industries.

This study provides insightful perspectives on how students pursuing a BA in English Language and Literature and an MA in TEFL at Arab Open University, Bahrain, develop and apply transferable skills. Although the majority of participants acknowledge the importance of these skills for their future professional lives, their confidence levels differ depending on the specific area. These observations resonate with established academic theories while also emphasizing the critical role of English language pedagogy and teaching approaches in fostering student capabilities. The findings also highlight opportunities for improvement, particularly in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application in real-world contexts.

3.28. Proficiency in Analytical Thinking and Writing

A significant 69.6% of the students expressed confidence in their analytical thinking and writing abilities. This finding supports [11] the argument that studies in language and literature cultivate advanced cognitive skills. Specifically, when asked to assess their ability to analyze written materials, 66% of the students rated themselves as "Good" or "Excellent." As one student articulated, "I enjoy analyzing texts and drawing connections between themes, but I sometimes find it challenging to express my ideas clearly and concisely."

This observation holds particular significance for English language pedagogy, where critical thinking and effective writing stand as essential skills for both language acquisition and teaching. Vygotsky and Cole [5] sociocultural theory posits that learning thrives through guided social engagement, a principle central to TEFL classrooms where students tackle text analysis, build arguments, and undertake structured writing tasks. Yet, Anderson [13] cognitive learning theory reminds us that moving from initial understanding to practical application demands ongoing reinforcement. This highlights the need for consistent writing practice, peer feedback, and reflective activities in both academic study and teaching environments.

3.29. Challenges in Media Production and Digital Literacy

While students demonstrate confidence in writing, only 33.9% reported proficiency in media production. When asked whether their courses had equipped them with the skills needed for media production, only 19 students (34%) responded "Yes," while 48% chose "Slightly." One student voiced their frustration, saying, "We learn about media theory, but we rarely get hands-on experience in content creation."

This discrepancy highlights the need for English language programs to embrace multimodal literacy, which involves the ability to communicate effectively across various media platforms. Tomlinson [3] emphasizes that higher education must integrate digital skills into curricula to better prepare students for the changing demands of the job market. Similarly, Yorke [1]'s employability framework highlights the value of real-world projects—such as creating podcasts, designing social media campaigns, or producing news reports—in enhancing students' readiness for careers in digital communication. Given the growing role of technology in English language teaching (ELT), teacher education programs should also prioritize technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK), ensuring that future educators are prepared to incorporate digital tools effectively into their teaching practices.

3.30. Public Speaking and Communication Skills

When asked whether their courses had improved their public speaking and presentation skills, 57.1% of students responded, "Yes," while 17 chose "Slightly." This indicates a moderate level of confidence in this area. However, one participant acknowledged, "I understand the techniques for delivering presentations, but I still feel nervous when speaking in front of an audience."

This finding carries significant weight for English language pedagogy, where oral communication plays a pivotal role. Vygotsky and Cole [5] sociocultural theory emphasizes that language growth emerges from social engagement, underscoring the value of activities like debates, role-playing, and group discussions for both students and future English educators. Schraw and Dennison [14] theory of metacognitive awareness suggests that self-reflection and structured feedback can help learners identify and address their strengths and weaknesses in public speaking. Incorporating more communicative language teaching (CLT) strategies, which prioritize interaction and real-world language use, could further strengthen students' confidence and fluency, preparing them for both professional and educational contexts.

3.31. Competence in Translation and Applied Linguistics

Although translation and linguistic skills were frequently highlighted as valuable, only 41% of students felt adequately prepared for translation tasks. When asked to rate their proficiency in translating written texts between English and another language, just 19.6% described themselves as "Very Proficient," while the majority classified their abilities as "Slightly Proficient" or "Moderately Proficient." One student noted, "I know translation theories, but I don't feel confident applying them in real-life situations."

This finding aligns with Ellis [4] research on second language acquisition (SLA), which highlights the importance of applied application and contextual learning for achieving language proficiency. In TEFL and translation studies, engaging with authentic texts and real-world translation tasks is vital for building students' confidence. Furthermore, incorporating computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and AI-powered translation platforms could equip students with skills pertinent to industry demands, preparing them for careers in localization, publishing, and multilingual communication.

3.32. Relevance of Transferable Skills and Employability Concerns

When asked about the relevance of the skills taught in the program to the current job market, 78.5% of students acknowledged their importance. However, some open-ended responses revealed concerns about practical preparedness. One participant commented, "I know these skills are important, but I don't know how to use them in real job settings."

This resonates with Tomlinson [3]'s perspective that universities should play an active role in helping students extend their skills beyond the classroom. Yorke [1] stresses that employability hinges not only on knowledge but also on the capacity to demonstrate skills in real-world, practical settings. For TEFL education, this might involve offering students opportunities to engage in microteaching, peer observation, and experiential learning. These are strategies that enable aspiring educators to connect theoretical insights with real classroom dynamics.

3.33. Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice

A key takeaway from this study is the disconnect between theoretical instruction and practical application. As Ng [6] emphasizes, digital literacy and adaptability to industry demands are becoming critical in education, and students in English and TEFL programs would benefit from greater exposure to real-world professional challenges. To illustrate this point, one student suggested, "We should have guest speakers from industries who can show us how these skills work outside of academia."

This points to the value of increasing experiential learning opportunities, such as capstone projects, internships, and partnerships with professionals. In English language pedagogy, especially within TEFL, task-based language teaching (TBLT) proves effective, as it involves students in authentic communication activities. Extending this method beyond language acquisition to broader skill-building—through project-focused tasks, content development, and community engagement—could better equip students for a variety of career directions.

Ultimately, this research sheds light on both the strengths and shortcomings in the cultivation of transferable skills within English and TEFL programs. Students exhibit assurance in analytical thinking, writing, and certain communication skills, yet they face hurdles in media production, digital literacy, and translation. These observations underscore the necessity for a more practical, skills-focused approach, weaving in experiential activities, digital resources, and cross-disciplinary partnerships. By tying these findings to established theories—such as sociocultural learning, cognitive skill development, and employability studies—it becomes clear that updated curricula, real-world practice, and immersive learning opportunities are vital for equipping students for thriving careers in education, media, and other fields. Looking ahead, further studies could

investigate how innovative teaching methods might deepen the alignment between academic preparation and professional demands.

4. Future Recommendations

To improve these programs, incorporating more hands-on training and practical experience—such as internships, workshops, and project-based learning—would be highly beneficial. Given that many students feel underprepared for careers in media, journalism, translation, and editing, introducing targeted practical courses in these fields could make a significant difference. Creative writing abilities might be further nurtured by encouraging students to write beyond the classroom and connecting assignments to tangible career paths like scriptwriting or copywriting. The integration of technology, particularly AI tools for translation, should be expanded within the curriculum to align with current industry developments. While public speaking skills have shown progress, performance abilities remain underdeveloped; adding activities like drama, debates, and presentations could build students' confidence in these areas. Enhanced career support, including resume crafting, interview preparation, and networking opportunities, would ease students' transition into the workforce. Students also crave clearer illustrations of how their skills translate to professional roles, which could be addressed through case studies or guest speakers from diverse sectors. Forging stronger ties with companies and organizations would provide more job-relevant experiences, helping to close the divide between academic study and employment. Lastly, refining the balance between theory and practice is essential, ensuring students not only grasp concepts but also put them into action in meaningful contexts. These adjustments would leave students more assured, capable, and prepared for their careers.

This study reveals that education and translation/proofreading are the primary career interests among students in the English Language and Literature and TEFL programs at Arab Open University, Bahrain. In light of this clear preference, higher education institutions in Bahrain could benefit from exploring the development of specialized tracks or master's programs in these areas. Such initiatives would directly address the career aspirations of their students while also fulfilling the need for practical, career-focused training in education and translation, which this study indicates is currently underserved. By implementing these programs, institutions would be better equipped to prepare students for the demands of the job market and effectively bridge the gap between academic learning and professional practice.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study examined the development and application of transferable skills among English Language and Literature and TEFL students at Arab Open University, Bahrain. Students showed notable strength in analytical thinking and writing, with 69.6% expressing confidence. However, they reported lower confidence in areas like media production (33.9%) and translation (41%). These findings suggest that curriculum adjustments are warranted, including increased opportunities for practical training, the integration of digital literacy, and real-world experiences such as internships and collaborative projects. Such enhancements would better prepare students for the varied career paths they pursue, particularly in education, translation, and media. Looking ahead, efforts should center on narrowing the divide between theoretical understanding and practical use, ensuring students gain the competencies needed to succeed in a dynamic professional landscape.

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