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## **The use and needs of English in the workplace context of Catalonia**

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## **Abstract**

This investigation explores the English language use and needs of L1 Catalan and Spanish professionals across different fields in the workplace context of Catalonia. Informed by studies in the fields of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF), a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used to gain insights from the language users into both language specific as well as affective factors. Findings included that participants most commonly used reading at work, especially through technology and media, but were most eager to improve their speaking and conversation skills. While some participants were not specifically motivated for their current work, many had personal motivations and there appeared to be overall positive attitudes toward English use and learning. The diversity of responses suggests a range and complexity of English language use and needs in the Catalan workplace that merits further investigation into both language and affective factors, and has potential. The present needs analysis implies a first approach to the use of English in the Catalan workplace context and may have relevant implications for ESP teaching and facilitation of workplace communication as functions are carried out in English.

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## **1. Introduction**

The use of English in today's world extends far beyond classrooms. It is spoken by more non-native speakers than native, and can be found anywhere from street corners to office buildings. In the past decades research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has developed to better understand this real world communication, with emphasis placed on the importance of context, the language user, and interactions that take place; however, there is still a great need for study in naturalistic settings outside the classroom (Firth, 2009).

The workplace is one such context. English is now widely considered to be the *de facto* language of use in many industries. Investigation into workplace English has mostly been conducted in two areas of research, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF). ESP is an older field with the goal of identifying the needs of a specific group to direct teaching to best fit their purposes and ESP has traditionally focused on language needs such as reading, or technical vocabulary. Whereas ESP could apply to any context, including the workplace, according to Kankaanranta & Planken (2010) BELF pertains to the world of business, often internationally. A primary concern of BELF research is to better understand how communication happens in those settings, often investigating affective factors or pragmatics rather than language skills or tasks. That said, studies in both fields often carry out needs analysis and use similar instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, and document analyses. While studies in both ESP and BELF have provided important insights into either implications for language pedagogy or understanding English usage in business, they cover different ground. There are workplaces that may lack investigation or may benefit from needs analysis covering content generally covered only in one framework or the other.

One such context is the Catalan workplace. Catalonia is a multilingual region where English use in the population is increasing (Idescat and the Ministry of Culture under the General Directorate for Language Policy, 2013) and many industries use English. Studies related to English use in the Catalan workplace are current but pertain to a specific profession, methodology, or international business. There is a gap in understanding the English use and needs of the broader Catalan workplace by asking about factors highlighted in both ESP and BELF.

## **2. Review of the literature**

This section presents research on the broader context of how English is used in the world today and in the narrower context of the workplace. Section 2.1 presents background on ELF; sections 2.1 provides an overview of English in the workplace and background on ESP and BELF followed by sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 with a review of relevant literature in ESP and BELF. Finally in sections 2.3 and 2.31, information and current studies pertaining to English in Catalonia or the Catalan workplace are reviewed.

### **2.1 English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)**

Speaking and learning English has traditionally meant in comparison to a native speaker standard. English is taught in schools with a focus on form, grammar, and vocabulary, and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has often been classroom based in formal settings (Firth, 2009). However, in today's world, English use happens most often outside the classroom, as a lingua franca, with the primary goal of effective communication. The term English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has been used to describe this use. As O'Regan (2014) summarizes, its main characteristics are non-native speaker interactions that are dynamic and dependent on the cultures, languages, and situations of the individuals involved. Therefore there is no single ELF. The goal is communication and any variety of ELF is acceptable and should not be compared to a native speaker standard.

The idea of one flexible language that accommodates all users is appealing but there are criticisms. According to O'Regan (2014), the danger in this idealized perception is that it may ignore major differences between non-native users, or that very real challenges still exist in communication. For example ELF may not take into account diversity such as academically educated English speakers or English users who have learned it in naturalistic settings. Rogerson-Revell (2007) argues that a definition that excludes interactions between native and non-native users of English is unrealistic. Additionally, as Firth (2009) reminds, while a movement away from native-speaker standard and emphasis on communication may be positive, it does not necessarily exclude need or demand for English instruction.



## **2.2 English in the workplace: English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)**

International trade and commerce has often been a driver for the development of lingua francas in the past (see Rogerson-Revell, 2007) and today, whether it be in an office, a hotel, or vendors on the street, English is the common currency. It has been acknowledged as the language of global business and also has become by default, necessity, or in some cases by policy, the language of individual fields and workplaces including trade, finance, banking, science and technology (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2007).

Investigations into ESP and BELF are two branches of research that address the use and needs of English in the workplace. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 8) ESP is “an approach to language teaching that aims to meet the needs of particular learners” that began in response to the English needs of workers in international trade and commerce after World War II. Traditionally ESP focused on language use later began to include learner centered factors such as learning styles or motivations.

The study of BELF investigates English use, which may include needs, but it is within the particular workplace context of business and without necessarily a goal of improving teaching. BELF research examines the use of English as an international contact language in Business, a context “characterized by its goal oriented (inter)actions, drive for efficient use of such resources as time and money, and an overall aspiration for win-win scenarios among business partners” (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010, p. 381). The goal of BELF is effective communication to carry out business, which may not be dependent on correctness of language use. Critiques of BELF are similar to those of ELF, that while BELF is often characterized as more equal playing field among non-native speakers without expectation of a perfect English, the reality for many is that they do interact with and compare themselves to native speakers or encounter other challenges (Ehrenreich, 2010). The following studies show how research into ESP and BELF can be similar in terms of methodology and their use of needs analysis, but that the questions they choose to ask cover very different aspects of English use and needs in the workplace.

### **2.2.1 ESP**

In a clear example of the ESP model, Wu & Chin (2010) looked at the specific English language needs of Banking and Finance professionals in Taiwan where

general English courses were inadequate. The study explored language skills and tasks as well as learner's past experiences and learning modes. Documents (e.g. annual reports) were analyzed, a questionnaire was used to collect data from 241 domestic banking and finance employees, and interviews were conducted with 16 professionals from different financial institutions working across a range of departments (e.g. risk management, human resources) with different levels of experience. The interviewees, in almost all positions, felt that reading was both the most important and most used skill as many of their tasks included analyzing reports or financial and legal documents. Speaking was the skill least used in general at the workplace, and the skill that employers said was weakest among their employees, but it was the area that respondents were most interested in practicing. The goal of this study was to gather information that would be useful in improving teaching. For that purpose the needs analysis was targeted on skills and the learner. While perspectives about individual roles were gathered in the interviews, affective factors were not covered.

With a similar ESP goal to improve teaching, So-Mui and Mead (2000) explored the English communication needs of textile and clothing merchandisers in Hong Kong. But whereas the language provision for the financial professionals in Taiwan had been too general, So-Mui and Mead believed the instruction materials for the merchandisers were also out of date. Specifically, they were interested in how changes in technology were affecting English language use and needs of the learners. A questionnaire was used to gather data from 150 merchandisers. Semi-structured phone interviews were conducted with 18 participants, in Cantonese, the L1 of both the interviewees and interviewer and 15 brief interviews with supervisors were also carried out. Additionally, the researchers analyzed writing samples and visited both an administrative office and factory setting. Important results that they translated into updating curriculum were that merchandisers would be expected to interact with international customers in English, Fax was the most used technology for communicating (see the year of the study), common tasks included written descriptions of products and order status, and that written samples often showed errors in both presentation and construction. The participants themselves were more concerned with grammatical accuracy whereas supervisors were more concerned with the correct tone when interacting with clients because of potential negative consequences including legal repercussions. This study was consistent with the

previous one in terms of sample size, methodology and data collection, and with ESP in emphasizing language specific use and needs to improve teaching. Perhaps the most important take away however, is that needs are not only specific to a population but also to a point in time.

In contrast to studies on unique professions, Shahrniza (2016) investigated English needs in the general Malaysian workplace. There was still the defining ESP goal of improving language provision to best meet demand, in this case, rapid growth of English business in Malaysia meant that better use of English would allow “Malaysian employees and businesses to improve staff performance and develop a competitive economic advantage in the global economy” (Shahrniza, 2016, p. 1380) but there was an additional aim of raising awareness of needs analysis as an important tool. The study used a quantitative, closed question paper survey to investigate the English needs of 50 higher management workers in different fields. The questionnaire covered sections such as language background, skills and some tasks. Similar to the previous studies reviewed, speaking continued to be an area of need and desire for improvement. One overarching result was that the demand for improvement in many areas came out of the desire to negotiate, and the pressure from interactions with peers or higher ups from other cultural and language backgrounds. These are opinions that relate more to pragmatics and may not have been elicited had they not been asked about or given opportunities to discuss. While this study did not always have clear questions about tasks and skills, it demonstrates the value of gathering information from a wide cross section of a population as well as giving participants opportunities to provide additional information.

If the previous study demonstrated the usefulness of information gathered from a wide cross section of a population, Mordaunt, Kulik, & Aurimas’s (2009) case study of 5 non-native English speaking engineers in the United States, shows how examining the needs of even the most specific of contexts can prove equally informative. Participants were employees at the same engineering firm but came from several different cultures and L1’s and ranged in age from 25 to over 60 years old. Interviews and an extensive questionnaire were used to investigate participants’ problems with communication, and techniques they used to address those challenges. A language background section in the questionnaire revealed differences in English acquisition, learning styles, and experiences. For example, some were bilingual before learning English, some had more classroom instruction than others, and they had lived

in the United States for time periods ranging from months to 30 years. Despite that, they were all well-educated, and valued academic English. Interestingly, while they expressed preference for instruction with a focus on grammar, all but one ranked listening to be the first or second most important skill, as well as it being the most challenging. All had a positive attitude toward English and learning and interacted with a variety of media including TV, radio, and news and believed English should be learned in an English speaking country. In terms of challenges and needs, the 3 older participants had difficulty learning and using informal English and code switching. They all found English to be more difficult to learn than other languages but also more relaxed in connection to American culture. It was reported that they were able to transfer language learning skills from their other languages but how this data was collected was not clear. This study was different than the others in that it was in an ESL context which presents its own needs. The researchers asked a wide and important variety of questions covering learning and affective factors, but how data was collected and analyzed was not clear. As with the previous study, the methodology highlights both the pitfalls and benefits of how design, instruments and the focus of their content can affect the information elicited. Here, the case study allowed for rich in-depth perspectives that came out of questions covering affective factors as well as language skills and use. These studies show clear implications for language provision in a variety of settings; however, as will be seen in the following section, not all English language users or contexts have instruction as their primary need or interest.

### **2.2.2 BELF**

Whereas affective factors may sometimes be secondary in ESP studies, they are often a focus of research into BELF. As stated by Lejot (2017) the complicated nature and high stakes of the business world create many opportunities for miscommunication, conflict, tension, or more. This also creates opportunity for investigation. According to Ehrenreich (2010) specific areas of interest have been age, perceptions and attitudes toward BELF, and continued expansion into different cultures and fields. In a case study, Ehrenreich (2010) investigated the perception of upper management of employees about the role that English and other languages played in a German multinational corporation in the tech sector. The company had 14,000 employees around the world, the researcher spent more than 30 days at the German headquarters and collected 24 interviews, observations of meetings and

dinners, shadowing and recordings of phone conferences and meetings. The participants in these interactions were primarily upper management and German however up to 20 other nationalities were identified at some events. She found that in this unique context English is perceived as necessary, an expectation that all staff gain language skills to meet the demands of their position. Native speaker abilities were not desired but rather communicative competence in their business setting. Aside from perceptions, findings seemed to show that learning was happening in these communities of practices where people from different language backgrounds were working to communicate with each other. Importantly, the worry that English as a Lingua Franca would eliminate or water down other languages was not the case here, German, the primary language of the company and surrounding culture maintained a significant role.

In a similar research design and context, Rogerson-Revell (2006) also carried out a case study in an individual European business organization. The research was part of a larger study into international business meetings with the goal to improve future communication. The goal of the case-study was to add information about the type of challenges and issues that might be encountered in these international business meetings within a specific organization. While the number of people at meetings varied, an English questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data about language use and background from 47 participants. Open ended questions were also used to elicit opinions about communication, and an internal report was used for additional information about meetings. The participants were mostly non-native English speakers from a wide range of countries. These participants in particular felt that they were slightly less proficient at speaking than other skills, were less comfortable in larger meetings, and generally found native speakers easier to understand although it was often qualified by how clearly or slowly someone spoke. Understanding someone who spoke too fast or quietly was noted as a challenge by several participants. Although the aim was to identify challenges, a positive finding was that many of the native speakers showed sensitivity to how non-native speakers might feel and described strategies such as avoiding certain vocabulary that they used to facilitate communication in meetings.

As BELF by definition is happening in relationships or groups, pragmatics is an important feature to understand. Pullin (2010) suggests that identifying types of interactions and understanding similar situations in different settings can provide

great insight and that successful workplaces are dependent not only on communication to pass information but also to build team and relationships. She found that small talk, an interaction often disregarded, is essential for building those connections and can help in negotiating potential issues in intercultural business situations (Pullin, 2010). Whereas the implications here may not be as clear cut as with ESP, this might be important for companies intent on creating a healthier workplace environment. When there is conflict and miscommunication business does not succeed. As Ehrenreich (2010) found in her case study it was often the pragmatics of a situation that drove communication more than other factors.

Kankaanranta & Planken (2010) were interested in the perceptions that business professionals had of BELF being used in their context and what they thought made for successful communication. Although they were exploring affective factors not language skills or needs per se, the needs analysis methodology and instruments was very similar to those seen in ESP and others into BELF. They used an online questionnaire which allowed them to reach 987 participants and then conducted 27 in-depth interviews. In contrast to participants in the ESP studies reviewed who had goals toward improved language skills, Kankaanranta & Planken (2010) found that the business professionals were unconcerned about correctness as long as communication was clear. They interacted mostly with other non-native speakers and often used their native language as well. Being able to use the right terms and manage relationships with people from other cultures were seen as important factors.

These studies have investigated BELF in several business settings using different methodology and instruments. In contrast to the studies seen in the section on ESP, the area of interest of study was the nature of English communication. As these studies have a different purpose than ESP their outcomes cannot be directly compared, but they serve to show that English language use and needs in the workplace extend beyond a demand for instruction. The following section reviews information and current studies that have begun to describe and examine English in the specific workplace setting of Catalonia.

### **2.3 State of English language use in Catalonia**

Catalonia has two official languages, Catalan and Spanish, with much of the population being bilingual if not multilingual (Idescat and the Ministry of Culture under the General Directorate for Language Policy, 2013). That multilingualism

extends to the Catalan workplace which plays an important role in Spain “...the metropolitan region of Barcelona, generates around 20% of the Spanish gross domestic product” (Huerta et al., 2006, p. 140). Much of that comes from international business. In a 2006 study of trainings in workplaces in Catalonia, they found that languages and office automation represented 9.6 percent of trainings delivered, concluding that this supports the clear belief that strong foreign language abilities are essential to compete in an international workplace.

According to the most recent Survey on Language Use of the Population 2013 (Idescat and the Ministry of Culture under the General Directorate for Language Policy, 2013), which investigated the language use of Catalan citizens 15 yrs. and older, more than a third of the population can understand and read English, and 30% know how to speak and write it. Only 0.4% are native speakers of English but since 2003 English has been reported as the best known foreign language with above both French and German. This was based on a sample of 7,492 questionnaires distributed online and through computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI). However, the self-reported nature does not give an indication of proficiency or in what contexts. Concerns about the growing use of English can be countered by the fact that Catalan knowledge is increasing as well. Catalan was reported to be the most commonly used language in the workplace followed by Spanish. This however does not give a clear indication of how commonly English might be used at the same time in any given setting. In a similar survey by IDESCAT in 2012, there were significant differences in English language ability by age category. While 26.5% of the Catalan population could have a conversation with someone in English, it was the youngest population that was the most skilled, with 50.8% of teenagers aged 15-19 having a good knowledge of English. While this bodes well for improvement, for adults already in the workplace, English may still present a challenge for many who did not have the same education or opportunities for exposure.

In terms of English education the situation is mixed. A law was passed in 2013 stating that university students in Catalonia beginning in the school year 2013-14 had to pass an English or other foreign language exam at the B2 level (English First Certificate) to be able to graduate (“Accreditation of foreign language knowledge,” 2014) Although emphasis on English in primary and secondary contexts in Spain has increased, provision of English for vocational or specific purposes is still lacking. “Students in these and other areas typically have little or no English language

instruction available to them other than what they seek out through private schools or individual tutoring” (Reichelt, 2006, p. 7). The Spanish government does fund Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas for adults which offer English among their language classes. However, these are not specialized to specific contexts (Reichelt, 2006).

### **2.3.1 English in the Catalan workplace and international business**

The surveys from the previous section give a clear indication of the complexity of multilingualism in Catalonia. However, little research has been done on English in the workplace within the Catalan context. The few studies that have been carried out providing a strong foundation but also emphasize the importance of continued investigation.

Gilabert (2013) described a project on the analysis of English language needs for tasks carried out by journalists in Catalonia with the additional purpose of evaluating the use of multiple sources and methods in needs analysis. In terms of data collection, structured and unstructured interviews were conducted along with a questionnaire that included observations and collections of task samples (e.g. emails). While useful and guiding information was collected, in support of the idea that language users themselves should be the primary source, the richest insights about tasks were elicited by listening to the journalists thoughts and opinions in the unstructured interviews. Although the focus was on English needs an example of the specific nature of the Catalan context is that tasks were often carried out partially in other languages.

Mancho-Barés & Llurda (2013), carried out a three-fold needs analysis to help inform Business English syllabus planning at a Catalan University. While the context and participants were at the university, it is specific to English needs of Catalans entering the workforce. The perspectives of business people were also taken into account. Triangulated data collection was used, information from the university, a self-report questionnaire, and focus group to collect opinions of representatives from local businesses that might employ such students in the future. They found differences in expectations for English use between the university and employers. Some important results they found were that the representatives for local businesses valued oral comprehension and technical vocabulary as significant for business communication. Aside from aligning teaching with the goals of the business rather than the institution they also address the role of affective factors and that a positive attitude should be encouraged. Although the study is looking at an ESP context they



stress the importance of insights and perspectives from BELF, keeping in mind that comparisons should not be drawn with native speakers but a greater goal of communicative competence.

Malicka, Gilabert, & Norris (2017) studied the English language use needs of hotel receptionists in Barcelona, Spain with aims of better understanding the tasks used, their complexity, and how knowledge of how the receptionists managed task complexity could be translated to better teaching practices. Data was collected from 10 receptionists, novice and experienced, through observations in the workplace and semi-structured interviews. It was found that English was commonly used and most tasks were carried out orally although more experienced receptionists identified written tasks as well. The most frequent tasks included greetings, providing information and directions and making recommendations. Small talk was observed by the researchers but not mentioned by the receptionists. Although having specific vocabulary was identified as a need, knowing how to be polite and interact well with clients was seen as a priority. Based on their manipulation of an “Overbooking” task scenario, it was suggested that for teaching purposes frequent and easy tasks might be better introduced early and more complex tasks later. However they acknowledge that in reality any task has the potential to increase in complexity given a range of factors.

Also within the Catalan context, but specifically within business, Lupiáñez (2016) carried out a case study of BELF to gain an accurate description of English usage among Catalan employees working for Catalan companies with an international presence, and who were using English to perform their jobs. That reality was then compared to broader definitions of BELF. An online questionnaire of 20 questions in English was used to collect data from 27 participants, both men and women between the ages of 25-60. They worked in fields such as transportation and technology and roles ranging from secretary to sales. Findings included that written communication was used more than oral communication. Reading and listening were not asked about but were perhaps considered to be necessary components of writing and oral communication. Low proficiency was self-reported for both vocabulary and pronunciation. Participants suggested that both of these areas were essential for good communication, but in the questionnaire other aspects of communication were not asked about. Only about half of the participants (56%) had encountered problems with intelligibility but reasons why that may have been the case were not further explored. Participants related English most to British but in practice they used

English most commonly with non-native speakers, the group they also perceived as easiest to communicate with in English. Although participants were accepting of errors in English usage, they had a desire to sound and use English like a native speaker. This study provided important insight into the English language use and needs of one segment of the Catalan workplace, which may overlap with other professions, but further research needs to be done to capture the larger picture.

In light of these findings, the following research question is posed for the current study: What are the English language uses and needs of L1 Catalan and Spanish professionals across different fields in the workplace context of Catalonia?

### **3. The study**

#### **3.1 Context**

This study took place in Catalonia, an autonomous region in Spain with two official languages, Catalan and Spanish. Universities have an additional foreign language requirement for graduation (see “Accreditation of foreign language knowledge,” 2014), and much of the population is multilingual in practice. The capital, Barcelona, is an international and multicultural city (Idescat and the Ministry of Culture under the General Directorate for Language Policy, 2013).

#### **3.2 Participants**

The final sample of participants was 54 from an unknown sample that was reached online. As can be seen below in Table 1 the participants in the study were L1 native speakers of Catalan, Spanish or both. Three of the 54 participants additionally reported using English growing up. It was decided to include them as they were still native Catalan and Spanish speakers, and expressed English language needs related to work. Two participants also used German and Czech respectively.

There were close to equal number Men (57.4%,  $n = 31$ ) and Women (42.6%,  $n = 23$ ). All except one were between 20-60 yrs. old. Their jobs were mostly in business covering industries such as Pharmaceuticals and Informatics and roles ranging from receptionist, to administration, to management and sales. Other fields represented were engineering, education, and health care (see Appendix B for full list of professions).

Almost all had some academic English in elementary school through university and a majority had additional study outside of school. Approximately half had received certification of some kind. A smaller percentage (20.4%, 11) had lived

abroad in an English speaking country, the most common of which was England/UK (14.8%, 8). This is a self-selected group, and SES was not asked about, but the level of English education and exposure to English also emphasizes that the workplace may have English language use and needs distinct from the greater population.

*Table 1. Participant profile and language background*

<b>Gender</b>			<b>Age range in yrs.</b>		
	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>		<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>
Male	57.4	31	20-30	24.1	13
Female	42.6	23	31-40	35.2	19
			41-50	24.1	13
			51-60	14.8	8
			61 and older	1.9	1

  

<b>Years of English studied in school (elementary-university)</b>			<b>Years of English studied outside of school (e.g. language institute, private classes)</b>		
	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>		<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>
0	5.6	3	0	18.5	10
1-3	13.0	7	1-3	37.0	20
4-6	18.5	10	4-6	31.5	17
7-9	9.3	5	7-9	1.9	1
10-12	25.9	14	10-12	5.6	3
12 or more	9.3	5	more than 12	5.6	3

  

<b>English levels or certification</b>			<b>Have lived in an English speaking country</b>		
	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>		<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>
N/A	44.4	24	No	79.6	43
A1	1.9	1	Yes	20.4	11
A2	3.7	2			
B1	1.9	1	<b>Length of time lived abroad</b>		
B2	11.1	6		<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>
C1	14.8	8	0-3 mos	11.1	6
C2	3.7	2	3-6 mos	1.9	1
FCE	11.1	6	6 mos - 1yr	9.3	5
CAE	1.9	1	1-2 yrs	5.6	3
IELTS	1.9	1	2 yrs or more	3.7	2
Advanced level	1.9	1	N/A	68.5	37
English philology	1.9	1			

From the participants who provided contact information, five focal participants were selected to follow up on areas of interest that had arisen in the questionnaire, especially around individual differences. The participants represented a diversity of gender, age and professions. Participant M was a woman between the ages of 51-60 yrs. and did not use English for her work in administration for La

Generalitat de Catalunya. Participant G was a male between 20-30 yrs. old and did all his reading and writing in English at work as an academic computer scientist. Participant D was a male between 41-50 yrs. old and used English daily for calls and other tasks as a director of sales at an American multinational laboratory product company. Participant X was a female Montessori teacher between 41-50 yrs. old who did not use English for work but had an English assistant in her classroom. T was a female receptionist and sales clerk between 31-40 yrs. old who used English daily mostly for speaking with guests.

### **3.3 Instruments**

This study used two instruments, an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Structure and content of the questionnaire were informed by or adapted from sources on needs analysis methodology and available questionnaires. West's (1994) state of the art paper on needs analysis suggested sections on goals and constraints in addition to needs. Long (2005) has argued both that tasks be the target of needs analysis as well as methodology using triangulation, multiple sources and multiple instruments, but the language user's perspective is the most important (see also Kavaliauskiene & Uzpaliene, 2003; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Many studies did not include their full questionnaires, two examples of papers that did were Sothan (2015) and Wettergren (2005).

#### **3.3.1 Online questionnaire**

A questionnaire was developed and distributed online (see Appendix A for English version) as well as semi-structured interviews carried out with focal participants (see Appendix C.1 for guiding questions in English). Fifty-seven questionnaires were returned, 2 were eliminated as they were not native Catalan or Spanish speakers, and 1 was a duplicate response. The questionnaire had 37 closed and open-ended questions and took approximately 7-10 minutes. All questions were required with the exception of a few that stemmed from previous questions that may not have been applicable.

The questionnaire had sections addressing interlocutors, usage of skills and tasks, challenges, needs, study, and attitudes toward English and English learning. Open ended questions provided several opportunities for participants to include personal experience that may not have been covered.

The questionnaire was initially written in English by the author of this thesis but translated into Spanish and checked by 3 native Spanish speakers. Having a Spanish version was essential as it allowed the questionnaire to be taken by participants with low English reading proficiency. Only 6 questionnaires were returned in English, 2 of which were eliminated for not being native Catalan or Spanish speakers. The questionnaires also included a consent form with a clear explanation of the project, what participation would entail, and how the data would be use. The questionnaire was anonymous with an option to enter an email address if willing to be contacted.

### **3.3.2 Semi-structured interview**

Guiding questions were developed based on responses to the online questionnaire. Of particular interest to explore further were affective including age, motivation, attitudes toward learning, and the ways in which challenges were addressed, as well as the topic of the role of technology and media.

### **3.4 Data collection**

The online questionnaire was piloted in both English ( $n = 8$ ) and Spanish ( $n = 3$ ) with individuals known to the researcher. They shared a similar profile to the final participants but not all were native Catalan or Spanish speakers or currently working in Catalonia. Feedback was received regarding the phrasing of the questions, additional content, length of the questionnaire, formatting, technical issues, and comprehensibility. The final questionnaires were emailed and/or texted to the sample of participants. A standardized message was used that summarized the nature of the project and included links to both Spanish and English questionnaires. The message was written in Spanish first and then English to make the questionnaires accessible to anyone who might be interested. The consent statement, complete description, and instructions, were again included in the questionnaire itself.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher in Spanish (the L2 of the researcher and L1 of the participants) although English was offered as an option. Because of participant availability, comfort, and recording constraints, two interviews were in-person and recorded; one was conducted in-person and not recorded, but notes were taken; and two were conducted by phone with notes. Content from both the questionnaires and the interviews that was elicited in Spanish was translated to English by the researcher who is fully accountable for any errors.

### **3.5 Analysis**

Answers were quantified by means of excel. Open ended questions from the questionnaire, as well as the semi-structured interviews, were analyzed qualitatively by categorizing responses into common groups and identifying themes.

## **4. Results**

Findings will be presented first for the online questionnaire followed by those from the semi-structured interviews.

### **4.1 Online questionnaire**

#### *Language use at work*

A large percentage (74.1%, 40) reported using English at work. The remaining ( 25.9%, 14) reported not using English for work purposes but went on to indicate they carried out tasks in English or had a desire or needs for English improvement. Almost all (87%, 47) used both Catalan and Spanish in combination with any other languages. The majority (79.6%, 43) were expected to use English when they began their job (including 6 who said they did not use English for work purposes) with over 70% saying at an intermediate (38.9%, 21) or advanced (37%, 20) level.

#### *Interlocutors*

There was no individual group of English speakers that was reported to be the most difficult to understand, but when combined, a majority (29.6%, 16 British; 29.6%, 16 American-Canadians) reported native speakers to be the most challenging. Fewer participants (13%, 7) had problems understanding non-native speakers, and the rest did not notice a difference. This is consistent with the response that most participants (40.7%, 22) used English with native speakers of Catalan and/or Spanish than with native speakers of other languages (24.1%, 13) or native English speakers (20.4%, 11). This order remained the same when combined with frequency of interactions on a weekly basis. Participants used English most frequently on a daily basis with co-workers/employees (16.7%, 9) customers/clients (13%, 7) and employers (9.3%, 5), However, on a weekly basis, interacting with guests/tourists (16.7%, 9) was as common as with co-workers/employees.

### *Frequency of use of academic skills*

Reading was the most frequently used skill on a daily basis for a large number of the participants (47.5%, 25) followed by writing (34.2%, 18). Fewer but similar percentages used listening (20.9%, 11) and speaking (17.1%, 9). However, for skills used several times a week, listening was the most common (41.8%, 22). Considering the frequency of use both daily and weekly, reading was most common, followed closely by listening and writing with speaking being the least used. Consistent with those results, reading was reported to be the least problematic area (24.1%, 13 of the participants said they never had problems and 0 said they always had problems).

### *Frequency of tasks by academic skill category*

Discussing work related matters, a general activity that could be applied to any situation, was the most common speaking task carried out on a daily basis. Even so, it was still not carried out by many with only a small percentage of responses (17.1%, 9). When considering tasks carried out several times a week, greeting people became slightly more prevalent (24.7%, 13). Considering both daily and weekly frequency of speaking tasks greeting people had the most responses. Searching on the internet and writing emails were writing tasks carried out daily for many participants (36.1%, 19 and 30.4%, 16 respectively) followed by a slightly smaller percentage (24.7%, 13) saying texting. These were also the most commonly reported tasks carried out several times a week. Reading email (41.8%, 22), websites/social media/journalism (38%, 20), and signs and labels (24.7%, 13) were the most frequent reading tasks carried out, as well as being done daily by more participants than the common speaking or writing tasks

### *Perceived challenges and areas for improvement*

Reports of additional challenges with English at work varied greatly but some answers in common referenced situations or interactions with multiple people (e.g. meetings, resolving conflicts and giving presentations or trainings) or with technology. Teleconferencing and telephone calls were noted for causing problems when they had poor sound quality, especially when it exacerbated hard to understand accents. Two responses were about interpreting technical language.

Participants believed they needed to improve their English the most for work purpose, had more commonalities and fell into clearer categories, many around skills.

Speaking was clearly the most perceived area of need for improvement, there were 20 mentions of speaking (including conversation, dialogue, and fluency) whereas the next most mentioned (11) area was vocabulary. Other categories with similar emphasis included listening, grammar, and interacting with specific people. Reading was only mentioned once and 10 participants indicated they did not need to improve their English for work.

Half of the participants (50%, 27) reported never having a negative consequence for the way they used English. If they had, the most common consequence reported was miscommunication (24.1%, 13); equal numbers had been told they needed to improve their English (14.8%, 8) and had been embarrassed or frustrated (14.8%, 8). Other consequences such as losing a job opportunity, or the potential for a misunderstanding to lead to safety issues affected few participants.

### *Studying English*

The majority of the participants, (51.9%, 28), reported wanting to improve their English for work purposes (the rest did not 31.5% (17) or were uncertain 16.7% (9)). For those that wanted to improve, 32 responded with clear short term objectives that could be grouped into themes. Speaking was again the most common goal with at least 9 explicit mentions of fluency, conversation, speaking with people, and pronunciation. Certification, travel abroad and personal interests, classes, and vocabulary and writing, were also common with similar number of responses. With that in consideration, it is not surprising that most participants felt that either general English (37%, 20), covering everyday situations, conversation, and travel, or academic English (27.8%, 15), with a focus on grammar, vocabulary, and writing, would be the most useful type of class for them. There was less interest in business or vocational English classes.

While there was interest in improving, a high percentage (51.9%, 28) said time was a barrier. When asked later about how many hours they spent studying per week the largest percentage (42.6% , 23) said they did not have the time but would like to and for those that did spend time studying the most (14.8, 8) said only 1 hr. per week. This finding should be taken in consideration with the response that after work was the best time to take a class for a high percentage (46.3% , 25) of the participants, with the weekends also being a good option for many (25.9%, 14). The second greatest barrier to improving or learning was motivation (14.8%, 8).



Interestingly, very few (3.7%, 2) said cost was a primary obstacle. Three of the answers that were written in referenced not having opportunities to practice with native speakers, not having enough conversation in most classes and that immersion is the only way to improve.

An important teaching implication was that a majority (68.5%, 37) reported that they did not currently study English. Equal but fewer numbers took classes offered by their workplace/employer (11.1%, 6) or outside of work (11.1%, 6). Interestingly while the set choices focused more on instruction including classes, tutors, or self-study, those that wrote in answers emphasized additional input such as internet, television, series in VO, reading, and listening to music and reading the lyrics. This may be connected to the result that while many participants said they did not study English, a large percentage (81.5% , 44) participants had previously said they watched movies or television in English and most commonly (48.1% , 26) watched with English subtitles (closed captioning as opposed to Catalan, Spanish, or no subtitles).

In written answers, then categorized, the areas that were seen as least useful to study or had been frustrating in the past, were grammar, academic vocabulary, and lack of time to either practice or continue a class. Each category was mentioned at least 7 times. Other comments included classes being too casual, or not being applicable or specific enough, and lack of motivation or money. Perspectives on what else would be useful to improve English language use at work varied, but answers touched on themes such as having better access to languages classes, the use of technology, and wanting language that is both realistic and specific to the needs of a changing job.

### *Attitudes and Motivation*

Most seemed to have a positive belief about their ability to learn English (61.1% (33) disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was challenging to learn English and 18.5% (10) were neutral). Additionally, the majority (64.8%, 35) said they agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed practicing or learning English on their own, and even more (74.1%, 40) were motivated to practice, learn, or use English more often. Two beliefs that almost all the participants shared were that English is necessary for most professions here in Catalonia (81.5%, 44 agreed or strongly

agreed) and that it is the most important language to know for work purposes (85.2%, 46 agreed or strongly agreed).

#### **4.2 Semi-structured interviews with focal participants**

Guiding questions of the semi-structured interview were extended from information gathered with the online questionnaire; to gain more in-depth perspectives about English use and needs from several individual workers in Catalonia.

##### *Expectation and demand for English*

All the focal participants believed that expectations around English use and proficiency have increased in their personal careers. D said that at his company a new employee used to be able to just say they spoke English and they would be fine. Now, to get a job, tests are used for evaluating language proficiency. Participants also expressed their own expectation for English use, that it was a necessity, especially due to globalization. And X felt that in the Catalan context everyone should really be trilingual, with English being the most useful third language (in addition to Catalan and Spanish).

##### *Age*

Almost all the focal participants agreed that age affected learning but it was not age per se, rather factors such as having less time or more responsibilities which made it challenging to study, take classes, or go abroad. Profession, job requirements, and the individual, were also suggested as being more significant factors than age in learning English. D and T commented that sometimes older people learn more because they are motivated by opportunities that they may lose otherwise. X was unique in saying learning a language younger was easier, citing her observations of students. However, she still felt the most important factors were exposure and enjoying it.

##### *Work vs personal motivation*

D and T were motivated most for work purposes. They differed in gender, age and profession but both saw English as a way toward advancement, opportunities, and

self-improvement. The other three participants were more motivated by personal reasons. G felt he had a high enough English level for work but wanted to continue improving his English for his relationship. M and X did not use English for work but had specific personal goals to travel abroad independently and understand a Shakespeare play in English. All the participants described need as being a primary motivator for anyone learning English, they believed without it people did not have a reason to improve for work or otherwise.

### *Opinions on language study abroad and classes*

The participants agreed study abroad was the best way to learn English but it was not always realistic. There was not consensus that classes were the next best alternative as they were not all effective. G felt that at a high enough level, classes did not help much. X said classes were useful but she could better meet her goals with self-study. M attended a general English class for adults with more focus on conversation than grammar. D was taking business English classes after work at a British English school. M was happy with her class and felt that it met her needs and goals to become a better speaker and D was satisfied but felt that the class lacked review of the fundamentals. T had interest in studying but lacked time.

In reflecting on the usefulness of a needs analysis, D was the only participant who had had a needs analysis in his Business English course. Others could see potential benefits but mentioned that students should not be the only factor in determining the direction of a class. They suggested the teacher was there for a reason and might have a better idea of what is needed, especially at lower levels or younger age, and that covering fundamentals are as important as interests.

### *Technology and media*

As the online questionnaire indicated that many participants used technology and media as a frequent part of their English use it seemed important to ask more about other types of English input. Most of the focal participants watched movies or TV series in either English or English with subtitles. Participant D additionally listened to podcasts and radio in English, and T loved listening to music and looking up the lyrics. X would have liked to read more but lacked time.

While almost all the participants had media as a source of English input, their opinions on technology's role in language learning were mixed. D suggested Skype

might be beneficial for older students short on time but wanting speaking practice. M said apps like Duolingo could be helpful and that vocabulary related to technology was easier to learn because of its similarity across languages and devices. X thought that technology might be useful but that we were too dependent on it in general, and T felt that technology was detrimental to language learning. She believed it took away from thinking through information, and from more important human interaction.

#### *Other languages and cultures*

Participants said they did not have strong feelings of any kind about one English culture more than another but then made comments regarding their perception of American and British English speakers. All except T thought Americans were more difficult to understand because of how fast they spoke and their accent, or simply that British English was easier to understand. Both D and T said Americans were more casual and appreciative of anyone making an effort to speak English. G and T perceived British speakers to be more demanding of correct English use and it was suggested by most that British English was the better or more academic English. Situations that were seen as challenging were related to some of those perceptions. G felt that native speakers analyzed or judged him when he spoke. D said teleconferences with many people speaking quickly or with different accents was difficult and could be uncomfortable if he misunderstood or could not reply correctly when meeting with native speakers.

#### *Strategies and attitude in the face of challenge*

This topic was included as it was not directly asked about in the questionnaire. Most participants said they were comfortable using English even when they encountered challenging situations or miscommunication and described how they handled those moments and accompanying feelings. For example M said any person speaking fast was challenging to be able to listen and understand, but she would not be embarrassed about clarifying. Strategies other focal participants mentioned were writing things down when trying to explain something, using basic or invented words, gestures, doing whatever is needed to be understood. Two of the participants, X and D, indicated age playing a role, they said they were more comfortable and less embarrassed now that they were older.

## 5. Discussion

This study set out to explore the English language use and needs in the workplace context of Catalonia by analyzing a cross-section of Catalan professionals and gathering information from their perspective. In relation to this particular group of participants, the findings describe diverse use and needs of English. By using two instruments, an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, it was possible to gain both a broad overview as well as deeper insights into individual experiences.

One of the most prominent themes that emerged was around speaking and conversation. It was seen as both the greatest weakness and the greatest need or desired area for improvement and at the other end of the spectrum, reading was seen as least challenging, more frequently used, but less desired for improvement. Interestingly, although the contexts and populations studied were strikingly different, this opinion was generally also shared by non-native engineers in the US (see Mordaunt, Kulik, & Nauseda, 2009), workers in Malaysia (see Shahraniza, 2016) and finance professionals in Taiwan (see Wu & Chin, 2010). While this belief that speaking is a less practiced but critical skill seems to be widespread, it was in direct contrast to the experience of hotel receptionists in Barcelona, according to Malicka, et al. (2017). This was supported in turn by focal participant T whose strength was speaking; she enjoyed it and used it daily. Clearly, factors such as particular job requirement and personality, also play a role in use and needs. This highlights the difference between, and value of, information gained in cross-sectional and more focused studies, and between the wider questionnaire and interviews. All are needed to gain a full picture of this context.

If an ESP needs analysis is to improve and direct teaching, there is an initial assumption that instruction is wanted. Having questions in the online questionnaire about interest in study revealed that many participants did not want instruction for work purposes and others said they did not want to improve for work purposes. This could be interpreted as unmotivated, or having a lack of interest in English, but other responses indicated otherwise. Most chose to watch series or movies in English, saw English as essential for work in Catalonia, and had a positive attitude toward English use and their ability to learn.

While many participants in this study did not work in business, much of their English usage appeared to be consistent with the BELF usage found in the Catalan international business context (see Lupiáñez, 2016). Both groups used English most

with other Catalan and Spanish speakers and native speakers were the most difficult to understand. The participants in this study also reported having few communication issues, a finding also reported by Mancho-Barés & Llurda (2013). One reason could be that they mostly interact with people from their own language background, and that correctness is not critical, a defining feature of BELF (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). If this is the case, and they can already communicate as much as needed for their roles, then a lack of interest in instruction makes sense.

Although the group, and particularly the focal participants, appeared to have a generally positive attitude toward English (seen as essential to success in business according to Mancho-Barés & Llurda, 2013), when they did express discomfort or self-criticism it was often in regards to native speakers (see similar findings by Rogerson-Revell, 2007). Even comments such as wanting more conversation with native speakers, or that study abroad is the best way to learn, while positive, may still indicate a perception that native English is the better English. This supports Ehrenreich's (2010) opinion that the idea of BELF as equal for all is unrealistic.

Regardless of their interest in improvement, this group and especially the focal participants appeared to have little doubt in their ability to learn. The multilingual nature of Catalonia may mean that they are more relaxed about moving between different languages. As focal participant X said "as a bilingual I know brains are plastic". Not everyone may have her vocabulary to express the concept but as using multiple languages is the norm in Catalonia, her belief might be shared.

One theme that emerged in several of the findings was technology. Internet, email, and texting as frequent tasks as well as the large numbers of participants that watched TV, indicated that technology and media were central to English use in this context. This is consistent with what So-mui & Mead (2000) found in Hong Kong, 17 years earlier. As language use is dynamic, for needs analysis to be useful, they should be ongoing (Kavaliauskiene & Uzpaliene, 2003). Needs not only change with context and population, but also change over time. Technology plays an enormous role in all areas of our lives. The very fact that the questionnaire for this study was distributed through email and text message and taken online, perhaps on a phone not even a computer, is indicative of how rapidly it has changed all fields and its enormous influence. However, there appeared to be a discrepancy between frequent use of media for English and opinions about the role of technology in English learning. It would be interesting to explore these uncertainties further.

In terms of applications for these findings, perhaps the clearest is teaching. As over half the group wanted to study there is need for language provision. But with barriers and frustrations of time, motivation, and for some money, a first step would be increasing access. This could be important for both government and businesses alike that want to increase the English competence of their population. By providing classes after work or during the workday, times that were best for participants, it might make them sustainable. Appropriate training might encourage their advancement and ability to perform task, while reducing cost and benefitting the business overall, according to Shahrniza (2016). Considering implications for content or design of classes, information about task use is an area with potential. While Malicka, et al. (2017) indicated there is still uncertainty about knowing how to translate tasks to teaching and syllabus design, having an initial sense of what tasks are most common could provide data for that process.

As instruction was not desired by many participants then other applications and implications must be considered as well. As studies of BELF emphasized, understanding common concerns and use of this population could allow for policy changes or shifts in companies. While this was a needs analysis of English in the workplace, many responses were about personal goals, and as one participant wrote in, there is not always a difference between the two. In exploring the question further with focal participants it became even more evident how much goals outside of work affected motivation and learning, something that could be encouraged in ways beyond the classroom.

Finally, the questionnaire itself has potential use. Many of the studies seen did not make their instruments available and none of the focal participants had had a needs analysis. This tool could be given to teachers or business to modify as needed or to continue to gather data from the same participant pool. The online format makes it easy to distribute and adapt.

### **5.1 Limitations and further research**

While needs analysis theories and examples were looked at generally for guidance in developing the instruments for this study, a more in-depth literature review of needs analysis theory and methodology would have provided additional grounding for the data collected. Additionally, better use of available resources, such

as reaching out to other researchers and professors should have been done initially. Keeping a clear overview of the research design and time frame, while carrying out tasks in order, was one of the most challenging aspects of the project. In terms of procedure, an oversight was that the questionnaire itself did not ask participants to further distribute it. Only the initial participants known to the researcher were asked to pass on the questionnaire. It was a missed opportunity to reach more participants which would be important in continuing to expand the view of the Catalan workplace.

The format of some of the questions, in particular those regarding frequency of task use or interaction with interlocutors, or those that allowed for selecting as many options as applied, made them difficult for analysis. In terms of content, questions about learning strategies, personal motivations, and reasons for study abroad, were all areas that could have been better addressed in the online questionnaire. Important continuations of this project would be to do fine grained analysis of the existing data by subgroups, and further investigation into the questions and themes that were raised by the group responses and focal participant interviews.

## **6. Conclusion**

This project set out to answer the question of “What are the English uses and needs of L1 Catalan and or Spanish professionals in the workplace context of Catalonia?” It is a question that cannot be answered by one study, let alone several, but hopefully the findings of this study illustrate that the Catalan workplace context comprises diverse professional roles, complex language use and needs, as well as some common experiences and beliefs, all of which merit ongoing study from different perspectives and multiple instruments. Schutz and Derwings’ (1981 as cited in West, 1994, p.1) comment “it would seem that most language planners in the past have bypasses a logically necessary first step: they have presumed to set about going somewhere without first determining whether or not their planned destination was reasonable or proper” is just as relevant today. Clearly, before any next steps, a more in depth investigation of this population would need to be done, or further data collected, but by performing a needs analysis hopefully those steps might be taken with appropriate direction for the unique use and needs of English in the workplace context of Catalonia.

*(Words 9,998)*





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**Appendix A - Full questionnaire in English**  
(due to limited space the Spanish version was not included)



## Appendix B - Full list of participant professions

Reception	Receptionist
	Hotel receptionist
	Receptionist and Clerk
Administrative	Administrative (n = 3)
	Public Administration of Catalunya
	Quotations Assistant
	Human Resources
Sales/Marketing/Communications	Sales Director
	Marketing
	Marketing/Business sector mobile video games
	Communications
Management	Project Manager (n = 4)
	Product Manager & Startup Founder
Laboral	Security Guard
Naval/Maritime Industry	Project Manager Naval Sector
	Boatman (Marinero)
	Royal Maritime Club Barcelona
Pharmaceutical industry	Pharmaceutical industry (n = 3)
Informatics/Mobile/Technical	Informatics
	Informatics programmer
	Mobile Developer
	Technical Service
Automotive Industry	e-Mobility Assistant, Volkswagen Group España Distribución
Engineering	Electronics Engineer
	Software Engineer
	Engineer, Automotive Sector
	Field Engineer
	Technical engineer
Architecture	Architect (n = 2)
Health Care	Psychologist
	Doctor

	Nurse
	Diagnostic Specialist
	Laboratory Technician
Research-Science	Research ( n = 2)
	Senior Scientist
Education	Teacher
	Secondary School Teacher
	Cultural Center
	Career counselor
Consulting	Consultant
	Business Consultant
Journalism	Radio News
Sports	Press Manager Sports Events
	Graphic Designer, Coach and Receptionist at the Olympic Canal of Barcelona

## **Appendix C.1 - Guiding questions for semi-structured interview in English**

(due to limited space the Spanish version was not included)

### **Age**

- Are there more expectations now for level of English at work then when you started?
- Do you think your age plays a role in your interest in English? In how well you use English?
- In your ability/motivation to learn English?
- In general, do you think age plays a difference in how easy or difficult it is to learn English?
- Why do you think that is?

### **Motivation**

- Are you more motivated to learn English for work or for personal reasons?
- Do you see a difference between the two?
- What specifically motivates you the most in learning English?
- What type of English input do you get in general (Work, TV, internet, music, books, talking with friends?)
- If you use subtitles, why?

### **Affinity and other languages**

- How do you feel about English speakers in general?
- Do you have strong feelings, good or bad, toward any English speaking culture?
- Was your English education (if any) with British speakers or American/Canadian speakers?
- How difficult do you find English compared to other languages?

### **Strategies for challenges and learning/pragmatics**

- What do you do when you encounter a difficult or uncomfortable situation using English?
- Are there people you feel more or less comfortable using English with? Why?
- How do you use technology with English? Do you find it helpful?
- If you're trying to learn or improve your English what do you do?
- Are there ways you like to learn or study or practice?

### **Obstacles to learning/classes**

- Would you take classes if they were free (either public education or offered by work)?

### **Classroom vs naturalistic settings**

- Do you think classes are important for learning English?
- Would you prefer a study abroad or just interacting with English speakers?
- If you had the money to go abroad or to take classes, which would you choose? Why?

### **Skills**

- Many people described reading as their strongest ability and speaking as their weakest.
- Would you agree with that for yourself?
- In general would you prefer to focus on improving your strengths or areas that are weaker?

### **Opinions about needs analysis**

- Have you ever been asked questions like these before in any of your classes?
- Do you think it would be useful if they did?



## Appendix C.2- Summary of Focal Participant T's Interview

T is a female participant between 31-40 yrs. old who works primarily as a receptionist but also a second job as a sales clerk. The expectations to use English for work are much greater than when she first started. She believes age does play a role in interest and motivation as the older one is there are often fewer opportunities, therefore you have to be better prepared than someone who is younger.

*Younger people still have opportunities to learn and as they are just starting out people are a little easier on them. But when you're older the expectations are higher and you can't get away with as many gaps in your knowledge. Older people often want to learn more because they see opportunities closing to them but others might not care because at that age they have a stable job. It happens to more people who get comfortable. It is different than kids who want to learn and are like "I want to learn I want to learn". The ability to learn really depends on the person. You retain more information when you are older, but there are older people who learn more quickly or more slowly than someone younger.*

She thinks you learn more when it is needed, someone not motivated to learn English probably has a job that does not require improvement. She has some personal motivation to interact socially but her primary motivation is to be successful at work. As a receptionist she uses mostly spoken English to answer questions, use the phone, give directions, etc. Occasionally she has to answer emails but rarely reads. Outside of work her main English input is listening to music and then looking up the lyrics because- *Otherwise I could be singing anything!*

She often tries to resolve English miscommunication using basic words. If she does not understand she always asks or double checks with what she thinks she has understood to see how the other person responds. Additionally- *At work in case they don't listen I write things down. No me quedo con la duda.* She doesn't like to have something left uncertain or unclear either for the guests or herself. She will then go look up what she did not understand. She says *it always about communication and I am trying to give correct information.* She is a verbal and outgoing person so even if she makes errors she likes to talk because then people correct her which is good for her.

She does not feel strongly one way or another towards an entire group but her perception is that British people are a little more closed off and they also expect you to speak better English to them. They do not accept as many errors, they want perfect English. Americans are a little more understanding as are people from other countries who are not native speakers. If taking a class it wouldn't matter to her whether she learned from British or Americans. She speaks Spanish, Catalan that she learned later, and some French, Italian, and bits of Portuguese and a few words here and there of Japanese or other languages. She has not found English harder to learn than other languages.

She feels strongly that technology is detrimental to learning *que hace daño porque no aprendes- you write something down and then you forget it, you don't do the work to actually learn, you aren't thinking you're just transcribing. You're not trying to assimilate the information.* She prefers to interact with people. If she had the opportunity, going abroad might be the best way to learn useful colloquial phrases, but she wants to practice reading and writing because she believes them to be the most important skills. Her belief was that *with speaking you can get away with errors but when you write you should write correctly.* Correct for her means without spelling errors, with good pronunciation. She believes that is what languages "should be". She thinks a needs analysis of this sort would be useful before a class.