

Exploring the Characteristic Features of PhD Programs in ELT among Sudanese Universities (Study at Nile Valley University and SUST 2021- 2022)

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Abstract

The motion of holding a PhD Degree among Sudanese EFL learners is increased widely throughout Sudan. Most of PhD candidates prefer to study courses followed by complementary research. This study aims to explore students' views on the PhD in ELT programs by courses and complementary research at some Sudanese universities. The study was conducted to investigate these programs and an attempt to achieve the following objectives: 1- To identify the most prevalent characteristic features of each of these programs. 2- To explore whether the contents of the program satisfy the needs of students or not. 3- To what extent the syllabuses in the programs help to qualify the candidates to become qualified teachers of English language. The study also serves as a needs analysis which was a very important point for the betterment of every ongoing program. The researcher applied the descriptive research method to achieve the study objectives. A questionnaire was used for the data collection. The participants in the study were students enrolled in PhD in ELT programs and graduates who had already graduated from these programs. Then, the data were statistically analysed to evaluate the PhD in ELT programs. The results showed that most participants agree that the contents of the program satisfy the needs of students. Many participants agree that the syllabuses offered in the programs help to qualify students to become qualified teachers of English language.

Keywords: Doctor of Philosophy, English language teaching, Nile Valley University, Sudan University of Science and Technology, Master of Education

1. Background

Language serves as a mirror to reveal the workings of human minds. It sets man apart from many other species of living things. It is a tool that results in communication. People utilize spoken and written language for various purposes. Since people from other nations who need to engage for educational, business, academic research, political, or social objectives began using English, learning, and teaching English has become an essential skill for communication. Learning English is becoming more and more crucial all over the world as it has become a "global language," allowing speakers of various native tongues to communicate with one another in academic and non-academic contexts. English language teaching has become a highly valued profession because of the English language's quick rise in significance. With this growing importance of English, teaching it effectively has become an important concern in the field of education. English language teachers must get the required pre- and in-service training in the subject matter to ensure effective English language instruction. English language has increasingly been used for scientific study, business transactions, and technological development. Many universities and institutions around the world utilize English as their primary language of instruction, and it has solidified its position as the global language of research and publication (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001).

In all countries, including Sudan, curriculum designs now inevitably include English teaching and study. The necessity for trained teachers who can teach English arose because of this circumstance. This demand has led to improve language teacher education programs and training, the establishment of ELT programs within universities, and a rise in the number of ELT programs. There are two types of postgraduate study in Sudan: the first is completed by coursework and some or all research, and the other is completed entirely through research.

PGDs (Post Graduate Diplomas), M.Ed.'s, MA's, and PhD's are the degrees that can be earned. To accomplish their objectives, candidates might pick between these two study philosophies. One of the newest programs at certain Sudanese institutions is the PhD programs by coursework and supplemental research. NVU and SUST are two examples of universities that have started or introduced PhD in Applied Linguistics (ELT) via Courses programs, according to the researcher. A PhD is important for a variety of reasons, including pursuing higher education, improving employment prospects, and keeping up with scientific and technical advancements.

2. Review of Literature

Programme Evaluation has a long history and there have been many attempts to improve programme evaluation. Stufflebeam (2002) as cited in (Liptapallop, 2008: p29) points out that programme evaluation has been developed by many people over a long period of time:

The development of programme evaluation as a field of professional practice was also spurred by a number of seminal writings. These include, in chronological order, publications by Tyler (1942, 1950), Campbell and Stanley (1963), Cronbach (1963), Stufflebeam (1966, 1967), Tyler (1966), Scriven (1967), Stake (1967), Suchman (1967), Alkin (1969), Guba (1969), Provus (1969), Stufflebeam et al. (1971), Parlett and Hamilton (1972), Weiss (1972), House (1973), Eisner (1975), Glass (1975), Cook and Reichardt (1975), Cronbach and Association (1980), House (1980), Patton (1980), Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1981), and Stake (1983).

2.1 English Language at Postgraduate Level in Sudan

The need for English language arose globally with the explosion of technological information. The status of English changed from a language of Britain or America to become a lingua franca of the international community. "The explosion of the technological information in this century which has caused English to become the lingua franca of the international community" [Hitchcock, 1978:9]. English is desired for the purpose of being a natural link within multi-cultural, multi-lingual societies and as a vehicle for international communication. Therefore, it became a global language for interaction. The need for English language competence has become a prerequisite for a successful perception of the world.

The stages for post graduate education can be considered of three underlying phases. The first phase consists of the formal education in which the students get the fundamentals of the PhD education. In this phase, the students are given courses that will help them get into their field of study. As this stage is the starting point of a long journey to be an academician, it can be considered as the heart of the whole process of PhD education. The learner's attitude towards the area of study is mainly the outcome of this first stage.

The effectiveness of this first step will pave the way to a successful career as an academician. The first stage will help the students to get through the second stage and the final stage more productively and effectively. The second stage covers the period in which the students collect information and try to encounter written sources in determining the dissertation topic. The final stage is the writing stage, in which students are supposed to complete their PhD dissertation.

3. Courses Offered in PhD Programs (ELT) in NVU and SUST

This section is concerned with the contents of courses which are offered in PhD program at NVU and SUST.

3.1 Nile Valley University Courses Components

The courses which students' study at Nile Valley University are twelve courses which are divided into two semesters six courses for each. After that the students prepare their thesis to finish their PhD program.

3.1.1 The Courses of the First Semester

- (1) History of English Language Teaching
- (2) Psycholinguistics
- (3) ELT Methodology
- (4) Foreign Language Learning
- (5) Curriculum Development in ELT
- (6) Sociolinguistics

3.1.2 The Courses for the Second Semester

- (1) ELT and Modern Technology
- (2) General Linguistics
- (3) Discourse Analysis
- (4) Language Testing
- (5) Applied Linguistics
- (6) Research Methods in ELT

3.2 SUST Courses Components

At SUST the PhD program is divided into three semesters. For the first and the second semester the students study general courses and in the last semester students are divided into two groups according to their results. The first group is linguistics and the second one is for literature. Finally, the students prepare their thesis to finish their PhD program.

3.2.1 First Semester

- (1) Research Methods
- (2) Academic Writing Skills
- (3) Applied Linguistics
- (4) Phonetics and Phonology
- (5) Literary Selection (1)

3.2.2 Second Semester

- (1) Modern English Readings
- (2) Stylistics
- (3) Literary Selections (2)
- (4) Advanced Syntax
- (5) Discourse Analysis

3.2.3 Third Semester (Applied Linguistics)

- (1) Issues in Psycholinguistics
- (2) Special Subjects in Linguistics
- (3) Theory in Translation
- (4) Issues in Sociolinguistics
- (5) Voices Science

3.2.4 Third Semester (Literature)

- (1) Issues in the Art of Poetry
- (2) Issues in Comparative Literature
- (3) Issues in Literary Theory
- (4) Special Author or Special Subjects in Literature
- (5) Issues in Storytelling

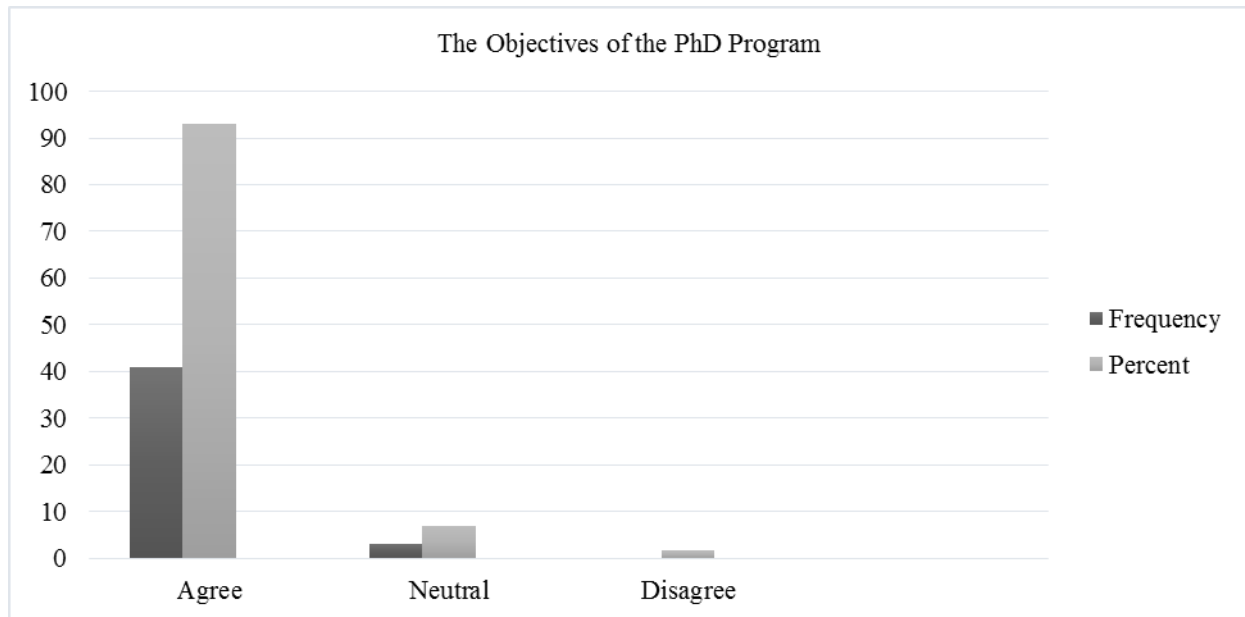
4. Method

This research study has adopted the descriptive analytical quantitative method. The researcher used questionnaire for data collection in this research. The questionnaire is designed for students who part of the PhD by courses at NVU were and SUST to investigate and evaluate the PhD program by courses at these two Sudanese universities. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaire. A total of (44) subjects participated in the study from both universities. The participants of the study were students and graduates of the PhD ELT program from Nile Valley University and SUST. The validity of the questionnaire has been established and the reliability has been computed via Pearson's formula, $R= 0.89$.

5. Data Analysis

Table 1. The objectives of the PhD program are clear and straightforward

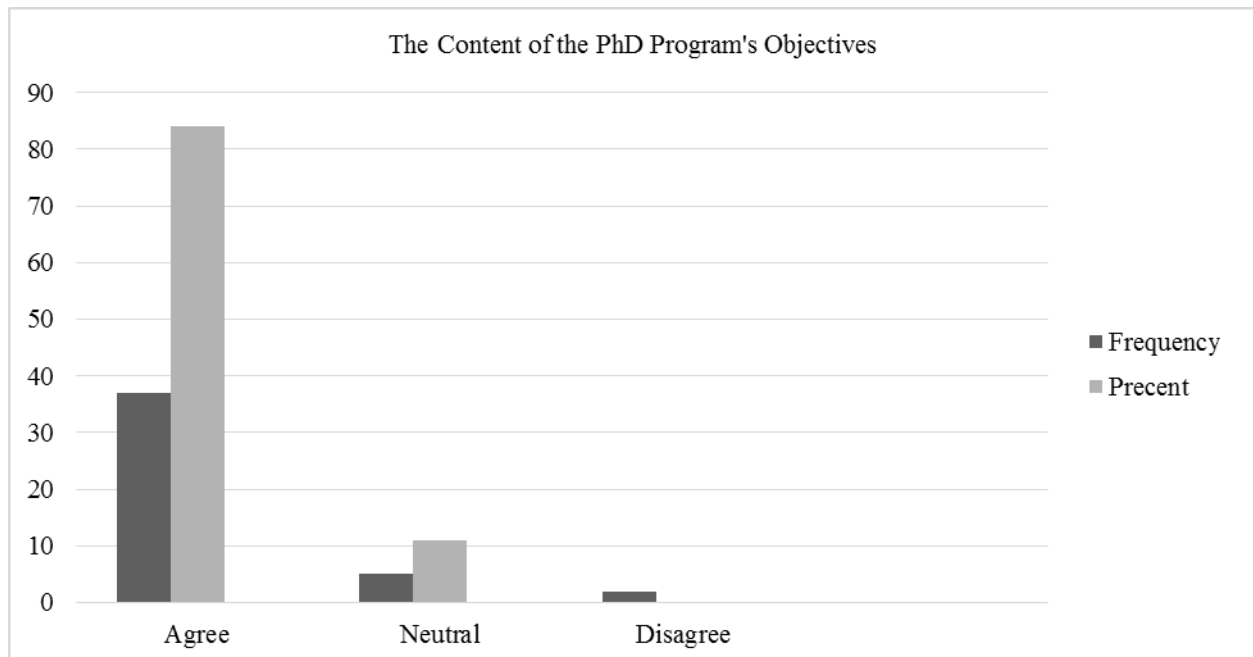
	Frequency	Percent
Agree	41	93%
Neutral	3	7%
Disagree	0	0%



The first statement in the questionnaire is design to figure out whether the objectives of the PhD program are clear and straightforward. Therefore, 93% of the answers are agreed while 7% is neutral, from the previous two results it could be understood that objectives of the PhD program are clear and straightforward, because 0% from the answers is disagreed. Thus, one of the objectives is confirmed.

Table 2. The content of the PhD program is in line with the program objectives

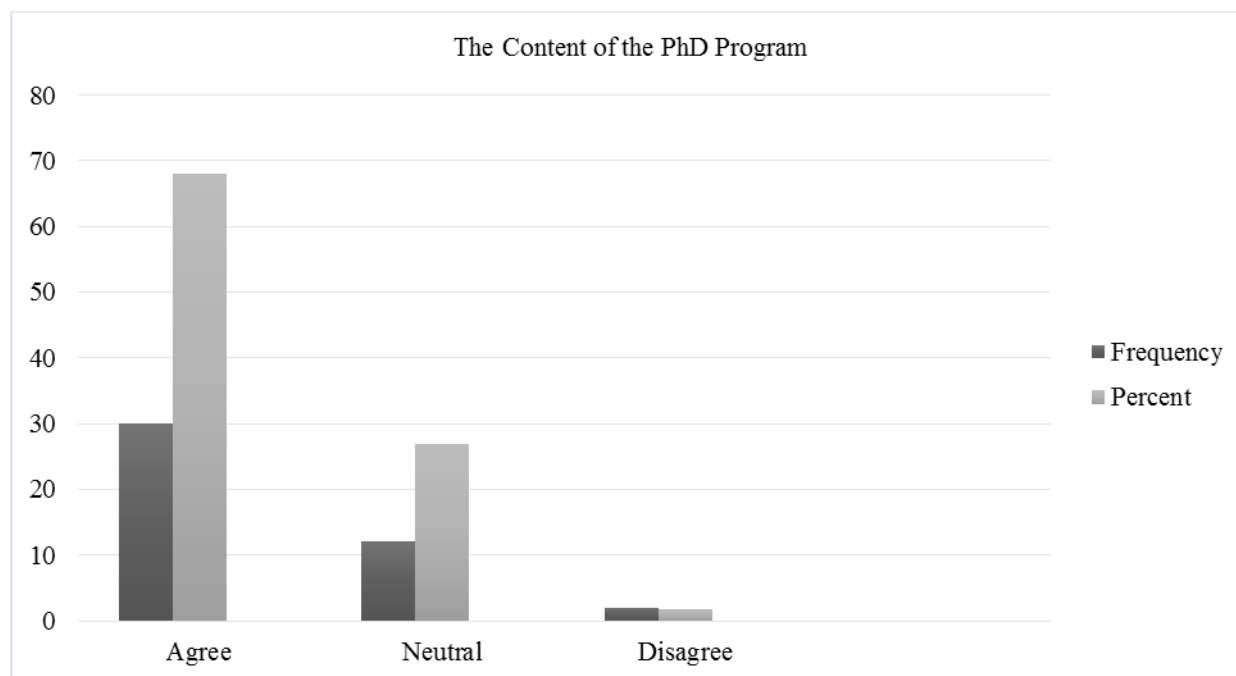
	Frequency	Percent
Agree	37	84%
Neutral	5	11%
Disagree	2	5%



The second statement is (The content of the PhD program is in line with the program objectives) 84% is agreed, 11% is neutral and 5% is disagreed. The researchers understand that the content of the PhD program is in line with the program objectives. Thus, one of the objectives is confirmed.

Table 3. The content of the PhD program is up to date

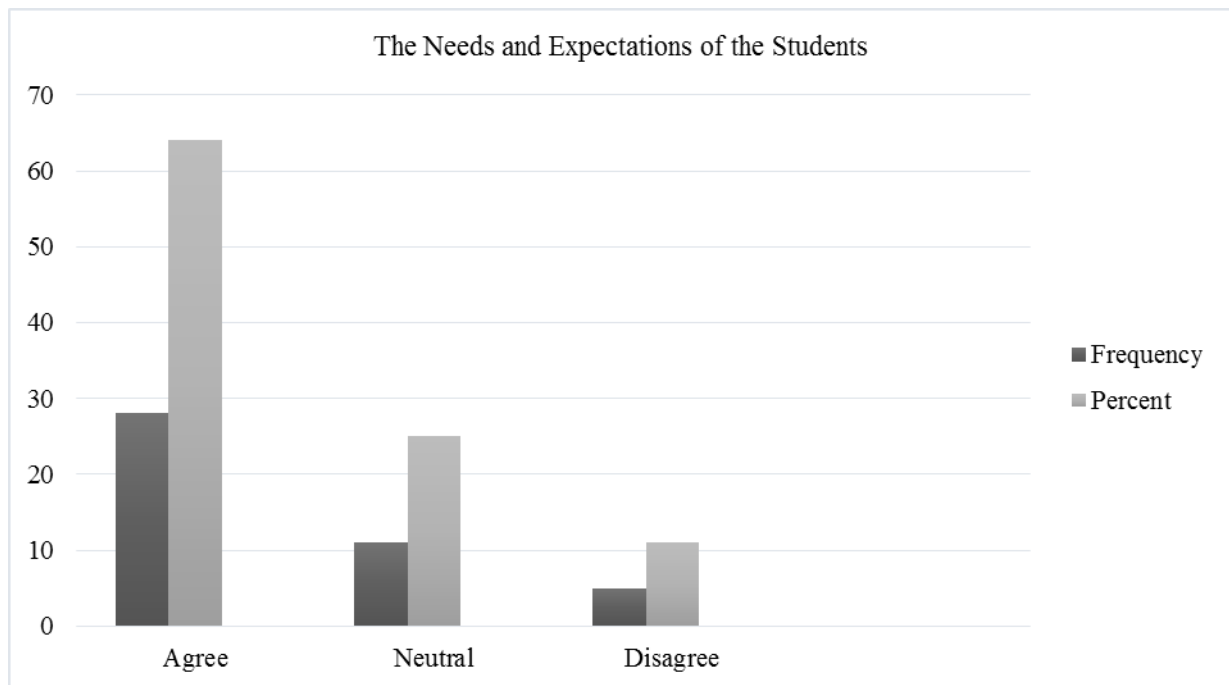
	Frequency	Percent
Agree	30	68%
Neutral	12	27%
Disagree	2	5%



The third statement is (The content of the PhD program is up to date). The percentages of this statement are: 68% is agreed, 27% is neutral and 5% is disagreed. Therefore, one of the objectives is confirmed.

Table 4. Program courses consider the needs and expectations of the students

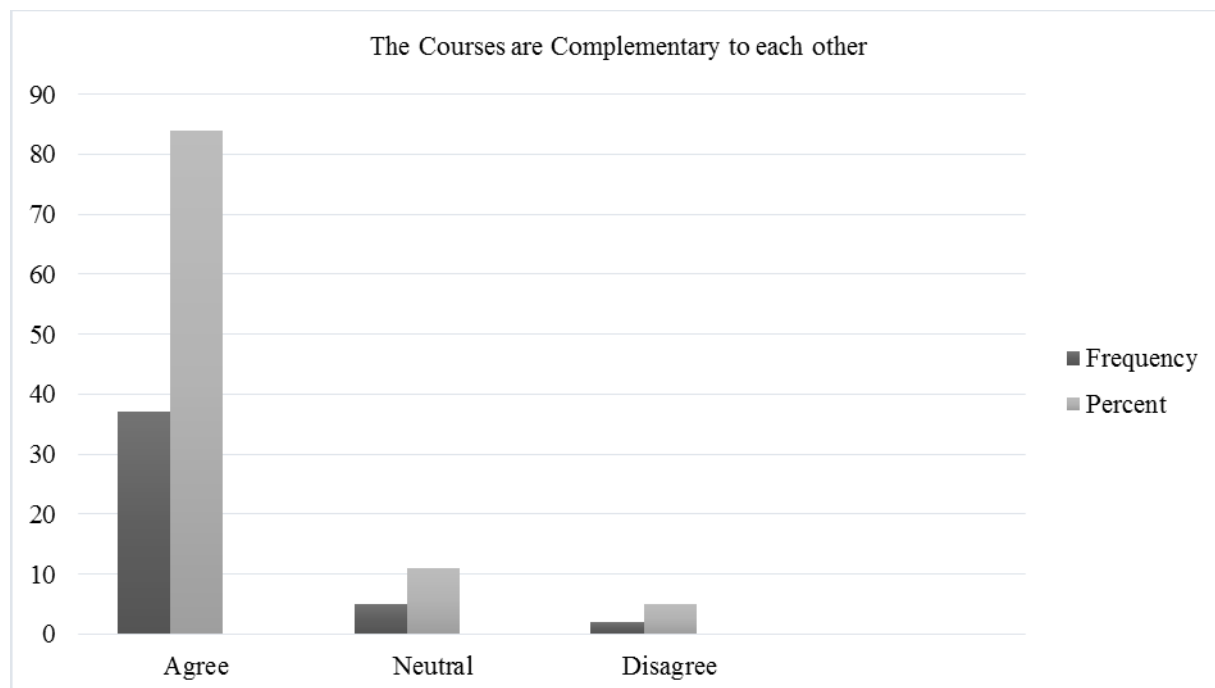
	Frequency	Percent
Agree	28	64%
Neutral	11	25%
Disagree	5	11%



(Program courses consider the needs and expectations of the students.), that is the fourth statement. The result shows that, 64% is agreed, 25% is neutral, 11% is disagreed. Again, this result shows that this statement confirmed on of the objective.

Table 5. The courses in the PhD program by courses are complementary to each other

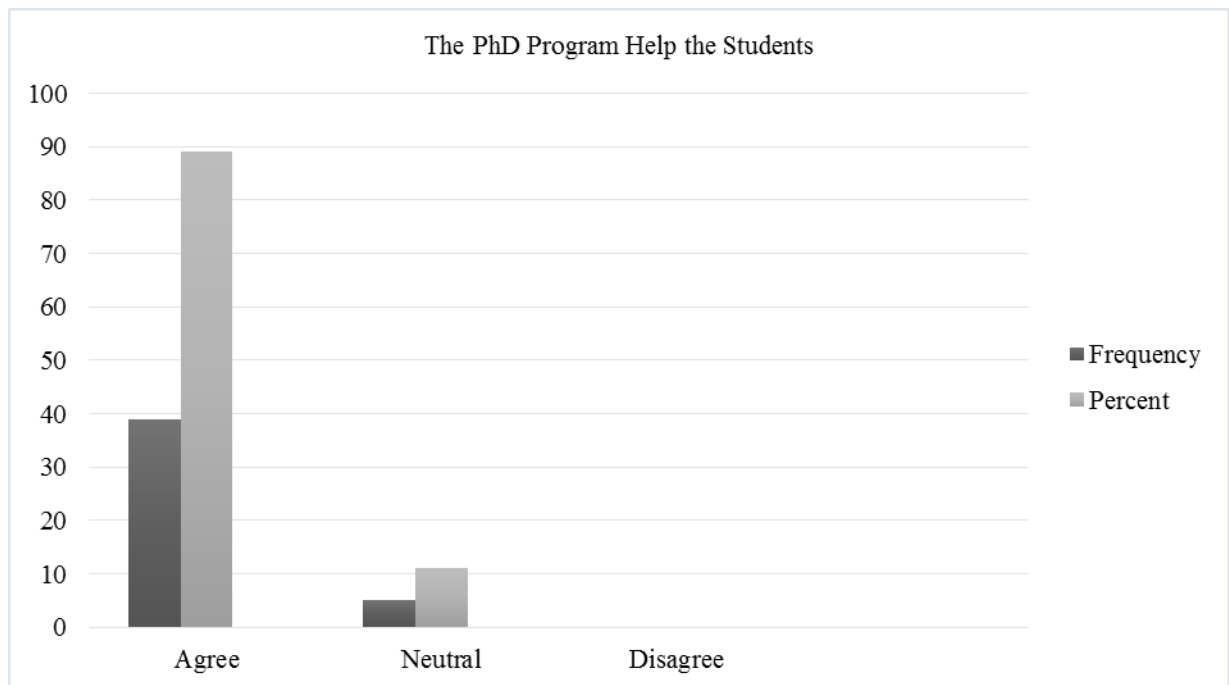
	Frequency	Percent
Agree	37	84%
Neutral	5	11%
Disagree	2	5%



The fifth statement is that (The courses in the PhD program by courses are complementary to each other.), its results are 84% is agreed, neutral is 11%, 5% is disagree. Therefore, it is not one of the objectives.

Table 6. The courses of the PhD program help the students to become qualified academicians and teachers

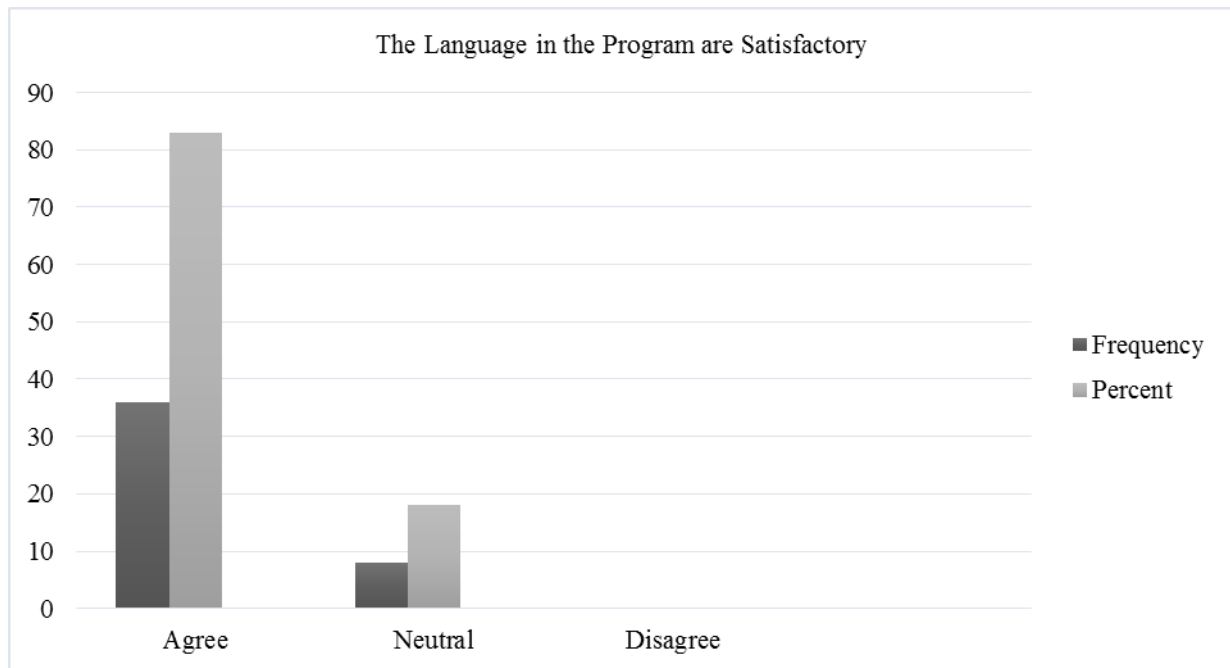
	Frequency	Percent
Agree	39	89%
Neutral	5	11%
Disagree	0	0%



(The courses of the PhD program help the students to become qualified academicians and teachers.), this is the sixth statement therefore, 89% is agreed, 11% is neutral, and 0% is disagreed. From this percentage it could be understood that PhD candidates become qualified academicians and teachers. Thus far, one of the objectives is confirmed.

Table 7. The skills I have gained in the PhD program are satisfactory

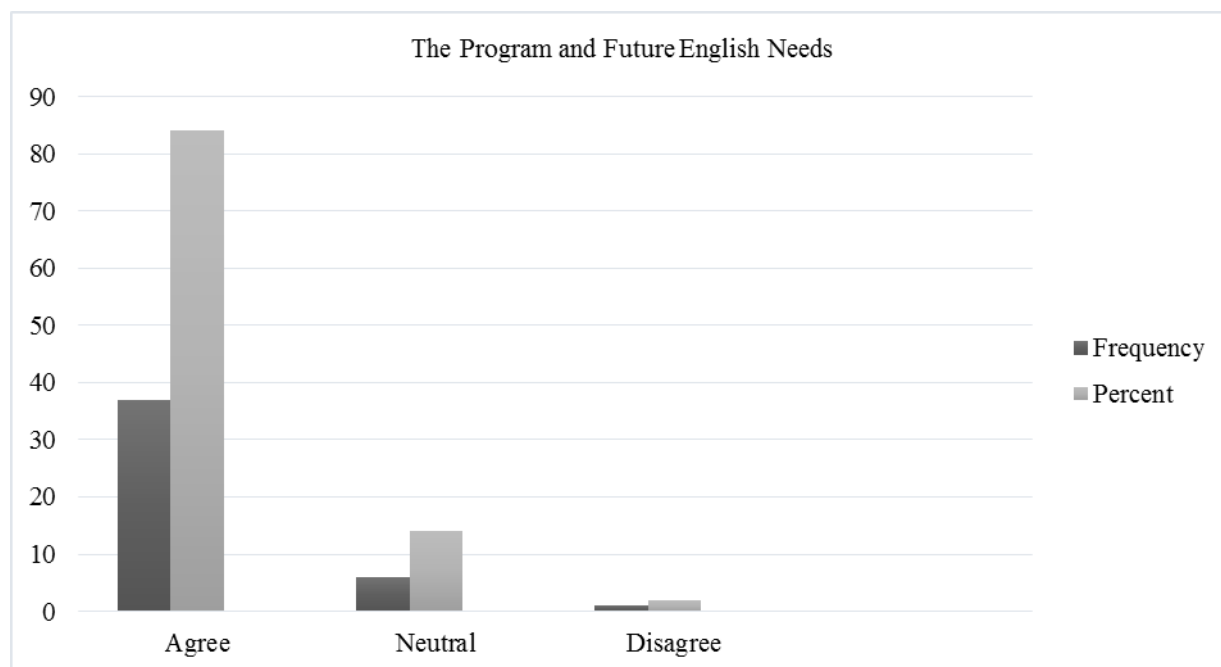
	Frequency	Percent
Agree	36	82%
Neutral	8	18%
Disagree	0	0%



The seventh statement is (The skills I have gained in the PhD program are satisfactory.) 82% is agreed, neutral is 18%, and 0% is disagreed. Based on this result, it is important to know that PhD candidates are satisfied about the PhD program, so one of the objectives is confirmed.

Table 8. The program has provided a basis for my future English needs

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	37	84%
Neutral	6	14%
Disagree	1	2%



The eighth statement is (The program has provided a basis for my future English needs.) the percentages are: agree is 84%, 14% is neutral, and 2% is disagreed. Thus, one of the objectives is confirmed.

6. Findings

According to the analysis of the questionnaire with PhD candidates at Nile Valley University and Sudan University of Science and Technology; it is imperative the key findings of this paper are outlined in a manner that will highlight the major concerns of the paper which are:

Most participants agree to the characteristic features of each program - in general, and the most statement gathered their highest agreement are A- The objectives of the PhD program are clear and specific. B- By the end of this program, I feel/felt competent enough to do research on ELT.

Most participants agree that the contents of the program satisfy the needs of students - in general, and the most statement gathered their highest agreement are A- Overall, I am quite satisfied with the quality of my learning experiences at the ELT department. B- I have developed the knowledge and the necessary skills required for my chosen career.

Most participants agree that the syllabuses offered in the programs help to qualify students to become qualified teachers of English language - in general, and the most statement gathered their highest agreement are A- The courses of the PhD program help the students to become qualified academicians and teachers. B- The program has provided a basis for my future English needs.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

In the light of the research findings the following recommendations can be made.

The PhD English language programs by courses should be evaluated periodically.

The University stakeholders and policy makers should design an evaluation model that could be adapted and applied for the English language teaching program.

At the end of each semester there should be a collection of feedback from students and lecturers on the value and worth of the program.

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Appendix A

Table A1. The following table shows the questionnaire's statements

No	The Statement	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
1	The objectives of the PhD program are clear and straightforward.			
2	The content of the PhD program is in line with the program objectives.			
3	The content of the PhD program is up to date.			
4	program courses consider the needs and expectations of the students.			
5	The courses in the PhD program by courses are complementary to each other.			
6	the courses of the PhD program help the students to become qualified academicians and teachers.			
7	The skills I have gained in the PhD program are satisfactory.			
8	The program has provided a basis for my future English needs.			

Appendix B

Table B1. The following table shows the statements, frequency, and the percentage of the questionnaire

No	The Statement	Agree		Neuter		Disagree	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	The objectives of the PhD program are clear and straightforward.	41	93%	3	7%	0	0%
2	The content of the PhD program is in line with the program objectives.	37	84%	5	11%	2	5%
3	The content of the PhD program is up to date.	30	68%	12	27%	2	5%
4	Program courses consider the needs and expectations of the students.	28	64%	11	25%	5	11%
5	The courses in the PhD program by courses are complementary to each other.	37	84%	5	11%	2	5%
6	The courses of the PhD program help the students to become qualified academicians and teachers.	39	89%	5	11%	0	0%
7	The skills I have gained in the PhD program are satisfactory.	36	82%	8	18%	0	0%
8	The program has provided a basis for my future English needs.	37	84%	6	14%	1	2%

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