

Career Intentions of Jordanian Undergraduate Students of English

Turki Ahmad Bani-Khaled

Department of Linguistics,
Faculty of Foreign Languages University of Jordan Amman 11942, Jordan

Abstract: This study aimed at identifying, categorizing and ranking the perceived career intentions of Jordanian undergraduate students of English. A sample of (420) first-year students who were enrolled in English department courses at three major public universities during the first semester (2013-2014) were randomly selected for data collection. The data was collected through a free composition task taken in class time. A qualitative approach was selected for this case study. The compositions were skimmed and scanned by the researcher and every statement or phrase indicating a career intention or an attitude was color highlighted. The results revealed a generally positive attitude to attaining a university degree in English. Nine career intentions emerged from the data. These were categorized and ranked as: (1) pursuing postgraduate study; (2) Business & Finance; (3) Teaching; (4) Translation; (5) Work Abroad; (6) Diplomacy; (7) Media & Journalism; (8) Tourism; and (9) Airports. The results of this study could aid educators and guidance counselors in creating better curricula and career activities for English language undergraduates.

Key words: Career • Intentions • Jordan • EFL • Undergraduate • Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

The need to have a job is a human nature and therefore, choosing the future job in one's life is an important issue. It is important for many stakeholders. Most importantly, it is a vital concern for the individual student who equalizes his/her future with obtaining a degree that can carry him or her to a decent job. Also, deciding on a suitable job is an equally important affair to the whole family of the graduating student. It should also be acknowledged that the decision to select a particular profession can be a very complex process. This is true in light of the many factors that possibly intervene with varying degrees of effect on that choice of a career. Recognizing the vital value of career choice and its possible impacts on society and individuals alike, institutions of higher education can hardly afford to lose sight of the vocational needs of students and should therefore strive to accommodate such needs in their curricula in the general sense. Universities and colleges cannot overlook the necessity of aligning their academic programs with the realities of the constantly changing labor market. This necessity also applies to students themselves as they need to be made aware of their own

career aspirations. It is self-evident that students go to universities for a purpose and therefore they, in principle, should see their personal goals and professional ambitions matched in every course or activity they opt to select. That is why many higher education institutions around the world try to embed career planning within their curricular planning and course development to make sure their students acquire the right knowledge, skills and values deemed appropriate in a particular society.

However, despite the general recognition of the need to integrate labor market needs and requirements within university academic offerings, there is a constant complaint, at least in countries like Jordan, that universities continue to live in 'ivory towers' and lock themselves in too much theoretical content that in some cases may be viewed as irrelevant to students needs and aspirations. On the other hand, in developing countries, foreign investment is highly encouraged and often perceived to be as the sole way out of chronically ailing economies. Career planning, therefore, becomes unavoidable in the selection of university courses and this should be taken as an indicator of quality assurance management. It is a fact now that higher education, Jordan, is no exception, is quite expensive and this is why

Corresponding Author: Turki Ahmad Bani-Khaled, Department of Linguistics Faculty of Foreign Languages University of Jordan Amman 11942, Jordan.

every credit hour taken should be cost-effective. After all, the success of higher education is undeniably a key impact factor in the overall context of national socio-economic plans.

Because of the increasing demand on higher education degrees, Jordan has been witnessing a rise in the number of universities and colleges run by both the public sector and the private sector. As a result, higher levels of unemployment are observed and finding a 'decent' job is no longer an easy task. In addition, more women can go to universities and colleges as an outcome of modernization efforts. This has made job seeking a very competitive process indeed.

Research Problem: Very little research data is available on university students' career orientations especially in the field English language education. The available research tends to focus on issues of language analysis or language teaching methodology. It seems that the topic of career planning or awareness has been left to take care of itself. Perhaps under the wrong assumption that it is not perceived by researchers in EFL as an area within their scope and probably it is assumed that other departments such as business, marketing, or vocational education all under umbrellas beyond the immediate concern of departments of English language, literature, or linguistics.

Not a single is available as a reference on English language undergraduate students' career interests. The career perspective seems to be missing as it is often the case where one does not know clearly what professions these departments prepare their students for. The usual argument is that graduates of English can fit anywhere, so the outcomes of English language programs stay as vague and elusive. In fact, many students and their families find it perplexing to choose a university program that matches with their preferred 'dream' job!

It is also annoying that little knowledge is available as to what the private sector needs in relation to English language specialists. Surveys are not easily found as to how graduates of English departments can fit within the expectations of the increasingly growing dynamic private sector. We also observe a sad fact probably where almost all undergraduate programs are often theoretical, biased to literature studies or descriptive linguistics and actually lack any credit hour as a capstone practicum course. The only exception to my knowledge is the case of the Applied English program at the University of Jordan. Little is also known about the impact of potential factors or variables on the career intentions of English language students.

Purpose of the Study: This study aims at creating more awareness of career intentions in the language learning arena with particular reference to Jordan. It specifically seeks to provide relevant and hopefully useful data on what undergraduate students want to do with their B.A degrees. It also hopes that this study contributes to efforts aimed at curricular planning at university leveling light of labor market needs. This study could perhaps add to our understanding of students' psychological and social and professional needs and attitudes to work, English and to education at large. It finally hopes to create more attention to do further research regarding the problems, factors and recommendations arising from this study.

Questions of the Study: This study seeks to answer the following specific questions:

- What are the career intentions of Jordanian undergraduates in English language programs in Jordan?
- How can these intentions be categorized?
- How can these intentions be ranked?

Theoretical Framework: The literature in this field seems to suggest that students in general are usually challenged with a dilemma in making a career choice in their lives (Bandura *et al.* 2001; Cherian 1991, [1], Macgregor 2007; McMahon and Watson 2005; Watson *et al.* 2010), cited in Shumba and Naong (2012) [2]. Interestingly, in most cases, the choice of careers is a 'nightmare' for prospective undergraduate students [1]. In many case, choosing the right the right profession can make the difference between enjoying and detesting the career in the future. The process of making a career choice is likely to be influenced by such factors as the context in which they live, their personal aptitudes and educational attainment (Bandura *et al.* 2001; Watson *et al.* 2010, cited in Shumba and Naong (2012) [2].

In general, motives can be classified into cognitive personal factors on the one hand; contextual or environmental factors on the other. They can exert positive or negative influence on the intended career and often their specific combination and interaction moulds he individual's decision to enter a particular career path [3]. According to research available, there are many factors that enter into the selection of a career. The choices a person makes, the values a person holds, the successes and failures a person experiences, the social class in which a person has developed and the interests,

strengths and capacities of the person all enter into this decision. In other words, career aspiration is a product of heredity and environment and the person's self-concept is vitally important in that decision (Herr, 1970; Hewer, 1963; Super, 1957). The choice of a career is, therefore, not merely a decision of a moment: it is a complex and difficult process that spans a number of years (Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma, 1951), if not a lifetime.

Rapid changes in the job market, the choice of careers and a study of the factors, personal and institutional, which influenced that selection, become even more important (Schwartz & Neikirk, 1983). On the other hand, Fields (1981) found that gender, ethnicity, grade-point average, parents' education, vocational trends and opportunities were important influences on career selection. Two other factors may be critical with regard to gender and ethnicity: prior success in school and self-perception in terms of future aspiration. In their study, Watson *et al.* (2010), cited by Shumba and Naong (2012) [2]. Found that the majority of aspirations were for social type occupations followed by investigative type occupations, with boys aspiring more to investigative and girls more to social type occupations. The same study reported that more than (80 %) of the total sample aspired to high status occupations (Watson *et al.* 2010). Ngesi (2003), cited in Shumba and Naong (2012) [2], found that poor financial base of students from disadvantaged communities deter choices of appropriate educational programs and careers. Such students tend to avoid careers which appear to them to require long period of training their finance cannot support.

Studies have also investigated factors that influence career choice by high school students (Dick and Rallis 1991; Jawitz *et al.* 2000; Mudhovozi and Chireshe 2012; Southwick 2000). For example, in their study of socio-demographic factors that affect career choice among psychology students in South Africa, Mudhovozi and Chireshe (2012) found that the participants who attended rural-situated public schools made delayed career decisions, Shumba and Naong (2012) [2]. According to Haase and Lautenschläger (2011) [3] several prior studies have found that career choices are determined by many, sometimes quite different motives. In this context, some theories for understanding the reasons underlying the decision to begin a specific occupational or entrepreneurial career have been developed over time. As a result, the Theory of Social Learning (Bandura, 1977), the Entrepreneurial Event

Theory (Shapero & Sokol, 1982) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) have emerged as the most promising approaches.

The central element of these theories is the individual's intention to undertake and to put a specific behavior into practice, influenced by motivational elements. In general, the motives can be classified into cognitive personal factors on the one hand; contextual or environmental factors on the other. They can exert positive or negative influence on the intended career and often their specific combination and interaction moulds the individual's decision to enter a particular career path. Haase and Lautenschläger (2011) [3] extracted ten factors reported in the literature:

- The chance of higher income
- Prestige and social status
- Working under one's own initiative
- Realizing one's own business or product ideas
- Making better use of one's own capabilities
- Fun when dealing with opportunities and risks
- Being one's own boss
- Self deciding on working hours and place
- The current situation in the labor market
- Continuation of family tradition [3]

Literature Review: It appears that the medical and health professions received significant attention by researchers on career intentions of university students. Hayes *et al.* (2006) [4] reviewed the literature on the career intentions of student nurses and new nursing graduates and highlighted major findings in relation to the assumed role of nursing education in nurse preparation. They discussed the perceptions of nursing students about the profession. They also wanted to check if the students' perceptions change during their nursing studies and if there had an impact on the preferences regarding the workplace. The authors pointed out that the student nurses join their programs of study having preconceived views of where they want to work after graduation. The review of literature revealed that nursing students favored large urban hospitals over community care centers. They also showed negative attitudes towards working for elderly patients. It was concluded that the initial job selection process may be affected unless these negative ideas change during the study program. The authors suggested curricular provision of educational experiences aimed at promoting positive career outlook among populations of nursing students.

Further research on career aspirations was reported by Burch *et al.* (2011) [5] who presented data on career intentions of medical students trained in six sub-Saharan African countries. They discussed this issue in relation to the deeply felt problem of doctor immigration in this part of the world. The study examined the career intentions of graduating students in order to identify the type of strategies and interventions that might improve retention rates of African doctors in their original countries. The authors surveyed (984) final year medical students attending nine medical schools in Sub-Saharan African countries. The results showed that the majority of the responding students intended to undertake postgraduate training. The study also indicated that surgery, internal medicine and pediatrics were the top three specialty choices respectively. It was also found that the students perceived the factors influencing retention were career options and availability of chances for training. The top personal factors for staying in home countries were viewed as the desire to improve medicine in Africa, social conditions and family matters. Top career-related factors favoring relocating outside Africa were salaries, access to equipment and technology, training opportunities, work environment and health care policies. Relocation outside Africa was shown to be influenced by such factors as personal safety, opportunity for experience in a different environment, social conditions and personal freedom. Burch *et al.* concluded that "The career intentions of African medical students are not aligned with the continent's health workforce needs."

Wiwanitkit (2013) [6] responded to the study of Burch *et al.* (2011) [5] and commented that similar problems existed in many developing countries such as Thailand where the numbers of rural physicians were insufficient. Curricular solutions involving pre-requisite courses for graduation focusing on rural community medicine experiences were reported as a remedy to the problem. The issue to be addressed in that context was how curricula can help promoting more positive attitudes among medical students towards working in rural areas.

Still within the medical context, Naidu *et al.* (2013) [7] explored career intentions among undergraduate students at three South African health care faculties. They maintained that the quality of healthcare services are significantly affected by career choices of medical and health science graduates. The purpose of the study was to describe the career plans non-medical health science students at the three faculties and to identify key

motivating factors. They used a survey to collect data from (816) students. The results indicated that over half of all respondents intended to work after completing undergraduate study but only (38%) wanted to work in rural areas. The most favored choices were private hospitals, tertiary hospitals and private practices. Almost a third of respondents intended to do further study. Interestingly, over half of all students wanted to work in another country motivated by career development, more money and job opportunities. The researchers concluded that the health science students were motivated by multiple factors in making their career plans and recommended national strategies to address misdistribution of these professionals.

Within the British context, pharmacy students also received research attention regarding their career intentions. This was reported by Willis *et al.* (2009) [8]. The study was motivated by the problem of workforce shortages in pharmacy and therefore aimed at exploring the career choices and career plans in order to predict the pharmacist supply. The research used two annual surveys to identify influences on respondents' early career plans. The findings suggested that only two-thirds of the sample intended to go straight into British pharmacy practice after training. The results on preferences "reflected existing occupational segregation" as (41%) of white females wanted to work in hospital pharmacy and (40%) ethnic minority men hoped to work in community pharmacy. The study concluded that a sizable proportion of the students did not want to enter the profession for which they have been trained and warned that existing gender and ethnic segregation in the profession may have occurred as a result of personal choice and that this can affect the professional planning of the workforce.

Similarly, reporting from the American context, Siracuse *et al.* (2004) [9] examined factors possibly affecting the career aspirations among third-year pharmacy students. Using a survey based on literature sources and results from focus groups (509) students from eight pharmacy schools completed questionnaires. The results showed that (71%) of students chose direct patient care as their immediate career preference. Among the factors that were associated with career aspirations were career commitment, educational experience and shared class attitude towards faculty. Other factors such as attitude about work experience, attitude towards the institutions were not associated with any of the career intentions.

From south Asia, we learn about the career intentions of medical students in Nepal. Huntington *et al.* (2011) [10] report the results of research they conducted within the context of the expansion of private medical schools. They indicated concern about where the expanding cohort of new doctors will practice. A survey was used with (496) students in their last two years of medical school at four medical schools in Nepal. A majority (885) said they intended to practice in Nepal and the same majority indicated that they would likely practice in urban areas. It was also found that "those students, who indicated a greater likelihood of practicing abroad came from families with higher incomes, were more likely to think earning a good salary was very important to their decision to become a physician and were less likely to think they could earn a good salary in Nepal. Gender differences were also reported. Students who indicated a greater likelihood of practicing in rural areas were more likely to be male. In addition, economic motivations were associated with an intention to practice abroad.

Moriano *et al.* (2012) [11] investigated the role of culture in the shaping of career intentions. They studied entrepreneurial career intentions by comparing six 'very different countries' namely Germany, India, Iran, Poland, Spain and the Netherlands. The study involved (1,074) students assessing their entrepreneurial career intentions. The results showed that career intentions are affected by culture-driven attitudes and perceived self-efficacy. On the other hand, O'meara *et al.* (2012) [12] were concerned with career intentions among paramedic students. They aimed at identifying major factors affecting career choices among students of this profession. A longitudinal study design, utilizing surveys and a focus group, was employed. The setting of the study was an Australian university. A sample of (508) respondents were asked to nominate their preferences for employment and identify key factors that influence their decision-making. The findings showed that students' career intentions did not necessarily follow their place of origin. The identified influences on student career intentions were personal (53 per cent), professional (20 per cent), organizational (8 per cent) and community factors (3 per cent).

As far as educational careers are concerned, the study by Fontaine *et al.* (2011) [13] reported results on career intentions of new teachers in Canada. The researchers examined the relationship between the reported career intentions and perceptions of preparedness of graduating secondary teachers in Quebec. It was shown that beginning teachers most

concerned with their lack of preparation in the areas of classroom management and assessment of students' learning are more likely to consider leaving the profession. The study concluded with the suggestion that both initial teacher education and employers have a shared responsibility to give greater attention to the ways in which teachers are introduced to and have experience with strategies for the assessment of student learning. A correlation study was reported by Rogers *et al.* (2010) [14]. The career intentions of (179) final year medical students completed an online survey. The factors examined included personality, values, professional expectations, lifestyle expectations and well-being. The analysis showed correlation between these variables and the career intentions of final year medical students. The value of the study can be seen in the fact that it shows how closely related the career expectations to workforce planning in the medical profession.

From the fields of social work and business education, we get valuable insights from the study of Basham and Buchanan (2009) [15]. They surveyed career motivations of students doing master's degree in social work and compared them with those of students taking master's degree in business. It was discovered that social work students were more motivated by a desire to gain knowledge or expertise in their service field, whereas business students differed in seeking greater career advancement and self-sufficiency.

Concannon and Barrow (2010) [16] investigated gender-related intentions of (493) undergraduate engineering students. Their results showed that men and women had one common predictor for their intentions to persist which was engineering career outcome expectations. However, the best socio-cognitive predictor for men's persistence was not the same for women. Men's persistence in undergraduate engineering was predicted by their abilities to complete the required coursework. Women's persistence in undergraduate engineering depended upon their beliefs in getting good grades (A or B). The main conclusion was that women's intentions to persist in undergraduate engineering were dependent upon higher academic standards compared to men.

Rodrigues *et al.* (2011) [17] studied the role of gender, ethnicity, family and friends as factors that influence student pursuit of science careers. The researchers involved (536) Scottish pupils in the study and asked them about their perceptions regarding intention to choose careers in science. It was found that the pupils thought that science is important and scientific careers are

good. The results also indicated that the pupils had evenly balanced views and attitudes towards science. However, only a minority (38.7%) of all respondents indicated that they were considering a career in science. The major factor influencing pupils' career choices in Scotland seemed to be their perception of whether their parents want them to pursue a career in science.

Pisarik *et al.* (2013) [18] conducted a study with the aim of developing examining a work-related construct. They analyzed undergraduate students' daydream journals using an exploratory qualitative method. The study showed that the work-related daydream phenomenon was a tangible and accessible process that presented fully developed career narratives. The study concluded that within these career narratives were elements of individuals' vocational self-concepts such as work values, aspirations, life roles and lifestyle choices.

Smith and Cooke (2011) [19] investigated the experiences and intentions of undergraduate students of science. They stressed the value of recruitment and training of scientists as an international issue. They also criticized the status quo of UK research being focused on science teaching methods and structure school science curriculum. They argued that "much less attention has been devoted to the undergraduate student experience and the trajectory that learners take which can lead to higher education and into careers as professional scientists and technicians." They reported the findings from a comparative study of the experiences and aspirations of almost (1,000) art and science undergraduates studying at (6) elite British universities. The study found no evidence to suggest that undergraduate scientists are put off a career in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics field, although theirs is arguably a less positive experience than that of their peers who study arts subjects. It was concluded that "most science undergraduates have clear career aspirations which are largely linked to remaining in the field and often involve further study. For many, these aspirations lead them towards the applied sciences and away from a career in "pure" research or academia."

Espinoza (2003) [20] reported a case study on Chinese grade-12 ESL students in a British Columbia secondary school in relation to variables such as culture, parents and course selection. The study involved examination of academic transcripts of (238) students and analysis of responses of (145) students questionnaires in addition to interviews with (26) ESL students and (12) school staff members. The results revealed significant differences between ESL and non-ESL students in

academic courses taken. Cultural and familial influences were found to affect the type of courses selected and their aims about future educational and career aspirations.

Observing that not many undergraduates of Nigerian universities apply to study library and information science (LIS) in the first instance but as a last resort, Issa and Nwalo (2008) [1] researched undergraduate students of library and information science schools in Nigeria in relation to career choice. They wanted to investigate the low preference for library and information science as a first-choice course of study by the undergraduates of Nigerian library schools. A survey collected data from (1,228) students from eight Nigerian university library schools participated in the study. The study revealed that majority of the students did not make LIS course their first choice, but ended up in the library school as a last resort. However, 38.4% who chose the course were influenced mostly by previous library work experience. Available sources of information on the course include parents/relations (29.9%) and peers (9.20%). There are slightly more male LIS students (50.3%) than females (49.7%), indicating its equal popularity among both sexes. The study concludes that despite the evidence of improved popularity of the program among the respondents, it remains largely unpopular among prospective undergraduates in Nigeria, when compared with such other courses as accountancy, medicine and law. The paper recommends that public awareness about the profession and the program be intensified by all stakeholders.

Career choices among (282) undergraduate medical students were also studied in India by Kumar and Dhaliwal (2011) [21]. They conducted a questionnaire-based cross-sectional survey eliciting data on socio-demographic data, first choice of career on the day of the questionnaire and rating of (34) factors influencing choices were recorded. The most preferred career choices were medicine and surgery, followed by orthopedics; 3 students each chose obstetrics and gynecology and anesthesia; none chose community medicine. Significantly, senior students were disinclined to take up surgery preferring orthopedics instead. 'Personal interest' was rated by 80% of students as important in influencing their choice, followed by stability (58%), reputation of the specialty (56%) and lifestyle (55%). The career choices of medical students were biased against some subjects. The study suggested that choices develop during the course. It was concluded that role modeling by faculty during departmental postings could be a factor influencing choice.

Factors influencing students' career choice and aspirations in South Africa were also reported in a study by Shumba and Naong (2012) [2]. A survey method in the form of a structured questionnaire was used in this study. A sample of (133) first and second year university students (77 females, 56 males; age range 15 to 30 years) participated in the study. The study found that the family; the ability of the learner to identify his/her preferred career choice; and teachers were significant factors that influence the career choice and aspirations of students. Furthermore, Career motivations of (645) university students from two German universities were reported by Haase and Lautenschläger (2011) [3]. The findings revealed that the motives can be grouped into the main components 'status orientation', 'self-realization' and 'self-determination'.

Having attempted to provide an overview of the empirical literature on career intentions around the world, it may be possible to make the observation that there is a serious lack of insight coming from the language education field. This seems to be a surprising case of neglect given the importance attached to the subject and the amount of attention paid by researchers and colleagues in other disciplines such as medicine, health sciences, engineering, social work et cetera. As far as the Arab World and Jordan, in particular, are concerned, it can be said here that there is practically no research attention that has targeted this issue. It is hoped that this piece of research triggers the research agenda within the English language-related framework.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

A qualitative approach was selected for this case study. In light of the study questions, it was decided to observe the characteristics of this particular group of language learners. The objective here was to probe deeply the research problem, i.e. career intentions, with a view to making some possible generalizations that may apply to the wider population of such types of students. To this end, a sample of (420) first year undergraduate students were invited to participate in this study. The sample was drawn from three major state universities in Jordan; one from north, one from middle and one from the south.

Initially, (150) first-year students, regardless of gender, were targeted in each university, which makes the target population as (450). These students were approached as sections taking courses rather than individuals as happens in questionnaires. However, each student reported his or her career intentions directly and

freely through the study data collection form which was a composition task. Students who were taking "writing" courses as well as other accessible courses were approached to complete the task.

The data was collected towards the end first semester of the academic year 2013-2014. Some compositions were discarded due to lack of serious content or unclear handwriting, leaving the sample to be (420). The compositions were skimmed and scanned by the researcher and every statement or phrase indicating a career intention or an attitude was color highlighted. Quotations were highlighted for possible insights and to illustrate specific points. It may be useful here to add that the researcher analyzed all statements in the compositions from a functional discourse perspective to understand what students were meaning the communicative function in these statements. The question used as a prompt was: What are you planning to do with your BA in English? The students were required to describe the careers they were thinking of and that they could mention more than one career. The task was completed in an hour time. It was done in class and no intervention from instructors was allowed. They only had to proctor the task. Students allowed to use dictionaries mainly mobiles and electronic. It was found that the majority of the students were females (n= 400, %=95.2). Age of the students was (19) and they almost all came from similar social economic backgrounds.

RESULT

The specific questions of this study were as follows:

- What are the career intentions of Jordanian undergraduates in English language programs in Jordan?
- How can these intentions be categorized?
- How can these intentions be ranked?

However, before presenting the data relevant to each question, it must be said at the outset that almost all students in the sample of this study expressed a positive attitude to university education in general and to having a degree in English language. The findings showed that (97.6%, n= 410) stated in a variety of ways, that they are proud of their major and that their degree in English was a 'weapon' in their hands in the face of life realities. The major theme in the students' compositions was showing a positive enthusiastic tone regarding their future plans.

The following are selective illustrative quotations taken randomly from corpus of statements.

- *"I really love my major."*
- *"I think that any job includes English is an interesting job."*
- *"I think I can do a lot with it."*
- *"I thank God because I study English."*
- *"I think my BA will open a lot of doors and will offer me a lot of opportunities."*
- *"I believe that English is one of the most important specializations."*
- *"Studying is very important to be an effective in our community."*
- *"BA plays the major role in our life."*
- *"Really this question is very important for me*
- *"... because when I get BA my life changing and every day I do ask myself what I do in this BA."*
- *"I believe that my certificate is like a weapon that I can use it to go through the routine of life."*
- *"...being able to overcome the circumstances that I may face in the future."*
- *"I think the BA certificate is very worthy and it is important for everybody."*
- *"After studying and getting this certification it will affect me positively*
- *"...and make me stronger to start look for job."*
- *"This certificate is really good for me."*
- *"Although I have spent a lot of money and time on it, it is worth it."*
- *"I hope to get my BA. I dream of this day."*
- *"I will be holding my BA degree in the most spoken language in the world."*
- *"There are many things I will do with it."*

Clearly, it can be reported that the students taking English as their major in state university in Jordan do show a quite positive attitude to their chosen program of study. It is interesting to observe here that the students employed words or phrases like "a lot; thank God; positively; love; dream; interesting; opportunities; doors; important; major; role; weapon; good; strong; worth." Such content words seem to carry quite a positive semantic load especially when using metaphors such as "weapon" suggesting it is like a battle to find a job using university education as a tool of challenge reflects a rather young dynamic determined desire to work and succeed.

Findings Relating to Question (1): What are the career intentions of Jordanian undergraduates in English language programs in Jordan?

Although it was assumed that all students would have a fairly clear idea about what they intend to do with their English degrees, it came as a surprise that a substantial number of students did not indicate their career intentions clearly. The analysis shows that at least (105) students (%=25) were unclear about their future plans. This came in compositions that used vague or rather very general statements concerning intentions. These students did not mention any profession or a specific plan. They used fuzzy expressions such as the following:

"I will prefer to get a desk for my own on any kind of work that will accept me as their employee."

- *"I am not sure yet what kind of job it will be."*
- *"I will do these things to make money."*
- *"I will work two or three years to collect money."*
- *"I like to work more than studying."*
- *"I like to work in a unique place."*

Based on the previous result, it was decided to exclude the students who expressed no clear intentions from the sample pertaining to the career intentions. Thus, we are left with (315) students comprising (75%) of the mother sample.

Findings Relating to Question (2): How can these intentions be categorized?

The data shows that only nine intentions were in the minds of the students of this study. One intention is not really a career per se as it showed a clear interest in pursuing further postgraduate studies. Having scanned all compositions in relation to this task, it was possible to identify nine intentions. These are listed and also categorized under relevant umbrellas as follows:

- Postgraduate study
- Business & Finance
- Teaching
- Translation
- Work Abroad
- Diplomacy
- Media & Journalism
- Tourism
- Airports

Table 1: Career intentions in ranked order

Rank	Intention	N	%
1	Postgraduate Study	300	95
2	Business & Finance	289	92
3	Teaching	267	85
4	Translation	164	52
5	Work Abroad	138	44
6	Diplomacy	138	44
7	Media & Journalism	113	36
8	Tourism	38	12
9	Airports	38	12
Total	315		

This answers the first and second study questions. No other professions were mentioned in the data.

Findings relating to question (3): How can career intentions be ranked?

In what follows, I shall try to present the findings in a ranked order on the basis of the number of students who stated that particular intention. The table below shows the nine intentions in a ranking order:

Intention (1): Pursuing Further Study: Following graduate education came as intention number one in the list. As the table shows, it can be noted that the vast majority (n=300; %=95) of the students expressed clearly an intent to pursue further degrees of university study. Having isolated all statements expressing this category of intentions, the following couple of observations can be tentatively made:

- Only a few students said they wanted to study in Jordan. The majority (n=250 out of 300; %=83.3) want to study abroad, particularly in countries such as USA, UK and Canada.
- The majority (n=220 out of 300; %=73.3) of students who expressed this intention are thinking of specializing in subjects beyond their BA major, *i.e.* English (literature or linguistics). Among the preferred subjects were, journalism, human rights, translation, business, international studies, women issues, public relations and even design and interior decoration. The following quotations are given here as illustrative examples:
 - "I will complete my studies in other sector."
 - "I will get my masters degree and I hope to get my PhD degree after that."
 - "My dream is having my MA degree in a university in Britain or America."
 - "I will work hard to get a PhD."
 - "I will continue my studying to get MA in English."

- "I want to take a MA in business."
- "...to get an MA in journalism."
- "I will take the master's degree in design and interior decoration."
- "I will work hard to get the PhD with English literature."
- "I will complete my study while I am working."
- "I still prefer finishing my PhD out of Jordan."
- "I hope to continue to doctorate."
- "I will complete my study by MA and PhD in public relations."
- "If I get the MA from America I will return to Jordan."
- "I will study MA but not in Jordan."
- "I really like to travel to Unites States to improve my English."
- "I am going to study something related to humanity and the human rights or the human trafficking."
- "I hope to study and finish it in Canada."
- "I will work two or three years to collect money because I want to continue my study."
- "I enjoy studying so I don't mind spending more time in the university."
- "I will take more courses in different subjects to expand my chances."
- "I want to get a scholarship to finish my PhD in America or the UK."

Intention (2): Working in Business and Finance: Ranking second in the intended careers was the field of business. Out of (315), the table above shows that (n=289; %=92) students were interested in joining the business and banking workforce. Looking at the statements indicating this intention, it was possible to make some observations. First, the students were joining two intentions together in many cases. For example, some wrote they wanted to do master degree in business and work in business afterwards. Second, almost all students in this category expressed intention to work in so-called 'big' or 'famous' companies. Making money was clearly stated in many examples as the goal of opting to join the business market. Some associated working in business with being an important person in the future. The following are illustrative example quotations for this category:

- "I hope to work in a bank."
- "I hope to find a job in a big company and then I will be fine."
- "...my father's company to get some experience."
- "I like to get my master degree in business."

- "I can work in big company but..."
- "I have many goals. One of them is to work in a big company and be a very important person in it."
- "I will start applying to companies."
- "...in any bank."
- "I will start my own business and open a company"
- "...or any company."
- "I want to work in a famous company."
- "I would like to be hired in a good company."
- "I want to make my own money."
- "I will work in different places like working at companies."
- "Since I was small, I loved to work in a big company."
- "I thought of working at commercial companies as a secretary."
- "I want to take a MBA in business and work in a bank."
- "To be a doctor in the university."
- "I like to be English teacher to help many children English."
- "I don't like to work in government school."
- "I think I am going to look for a job in a teaching career."
- "I hope I will work in a bank but if not available I take a teacher job."
- "I will teach tutorials for school students."
- "I want to be a professor."
- "I will start searching about job relate to English likewise teaching"
- "I will not work in government schools."
- "I will find a good school to work in as an English teacher."
- "... So I can work in university as a doctor."
- "I will probably learn in a private school like the American school."
- "Make to my self languages center to teach people who want to learn English."
- "I hopefully will find a job in the schools because I'd like to be he idol of our next generation."
- "The first work available I guess is to work as a teacher in some school around."
- "The only thing I will never do is working as a teacher."
- "If I don't find a suitable job, I will work teacher in school or private teacher."
- "But I don't like to work as a teacher because it is action classics."
- "All girls work as a teacher and this work have not any kind of pleasure."
- "I will send my CV to all schools."
- "If I don't find a good job, I will try to teach students private at my home."
- "I want to find a job in any school..."
- "I am going to find a job in good school like American school"

Intention (3): Working in Teaching: The third category was teaching jobs. The percentage of students who mentioned this intention as an option for their future career was (85%; n =267 out of 315). This is still a reasonable majority. Upon scanning the statements mentioning teaching-related intentions, I was able to make some provisional notes that seem to characterize this intention.

- Some students were refusing the idea of teaching in schools outright.
- Those who were interested in teaching were clear in that teaching in schools for them was to be considered only as a last resort, if every thing else failed so to speak!
- Students tend to prefer private (and preferably foreign) schools as a working place. Few showed interest in public schools.
- Teaching was considered but most preferred at university level.
- Some students stated that teaching works best for women.

The above observations should be taken with caution of course as there are no clear-cut trends. They can work as excellent hypotheses for further experimentation. Below are quotations from the data to illustrate the point above.

Intention (4): Working in Translation: Coming next to teaching in the hierarchy was the category of translation as a major intention. Just above half of the sample students (% = 52; n=164 out of 315) were favoring translation as the career of the future. Looking closely at the actual statements made by the students, it was possible to make the following initial comments that could be verified by further research:

- Students acknowledge that translation and, particularly, interpretation, are challenging jobs that require special skills and experience.
- Almost all students in this category acknowledged that it would be better if they get further qualifications in translation such as a master degree. The following quotations may illustrate the point above more clearly:
 - "I will try to work in a translation office."
 - "I want to work as a translator. I want to translate books, letters for companies and things like that."
 - "I want to be an instant translator. It's an easy job but you need to work hard to be one."
 - "I want to be a translator because it is not a very tiring job; you just sit home and translate books."
 - "I will complete my studying and have the Master degree in translation."
 - "I would like to work in the field of interpreting but this job needs more experience."
 - "...to translate to big and important people just like diplomats and lawyers."
 - "...working related to outside border especially in translation."

Intention (5): Traveling to Seek Work Abroad: A sizable, though not a majority, proportion of the students reported an intention to travel and find a job outside Jordan. Less than a half of the students (%=44; n= 138 out of 315) has this intent. Scanning the actual statements cited in the students' compositions revealed seems to suggest that:

- Students realize that finding a good job inside Jordan is difficult.
- Students prefer to go to countries like USA, UK, Spain, Italy, Turkey and UAE (famous Dubai!)
- The expressions of the students in this category were almost fantasizing rather than practical well-thought career intentions. Here are some exemplifying quotations:
 - "I wish to work abroad because my country does not give a lot of money."
 - "I am going to travel outside Jordan to work better."
 - "I think to find a job in Jordan is difficult."
 - "If I get a chance to travel to another city like London or New York, I will go."
 - "If my family allows to go abroad, to work in USA I will be very happy."

- "I want to go to the USA just have a little experience in a lot of things."
- "I want to travel the world especially I want to visit Italy."
- "My dream is to visit Spain I want to know everything about it."
- "Find better job outside like working in Dubai."
- "Travel to Turkey and Britain."
- "I will take a rest for one year traveling the world. See new places."

Intention (6): Working in Diplomatic and International Agencies: Similarly, the same number of students stated an intention to join international agencies and work in embassies. Out of the (315) students in the sample, (44%; n=138) wrote they wanted a job in this field. Although not a majority, this intention received a big portion of the interests. Interestingly, the students here show a clear awareness that working in this field provides real opportunities for using English where the language is used as a truly international language. Consider the following examples:

- "I hope to work in embassy"
- "I want to work in a diplomatic or political office like at the United Nations or at embassy."
- "I want to work in the UN because I will practice English."
- "...work at the embassies without waiting role for having a government work."
- "I will try to have a good job in the British embassy."
- "...maybe in policy."
- "I will work in different places like working at any embassy."
- "I am going to search for a job and this job must be suitable for my specialization like working in international agencies."

Intention (7): Working in Mass Media and Journalism: Just above a third of the sample students (36%; n=113) expressed intention to work in mass media and journalism. Some students mixed working in journalism with studying for a degree in that field. Some also expressed interest in working with local English-medium newspapers such as the Jordan Times.

- "To work in media."
- "To get a MA in journalism."

- *"I may also start writing for an English newspaper-such as the Jordan Times."*
- *"...my dream job is being a broadcaster in a famous TV."*
- *"I would be a translator working for websites and newspapers."*
- *"I hope to work translator in some website like my cousin that is the best work for me."*
- *"I would apply a job for Jordanian newspapers or magazines."*
- *"...to get an MA in journalism."*

Intention (8): Working in Tourism: Only a small minority of the students indicated interest in tourism as a career intention. Just over a tenth of the sample students (n=38; %=12) were interested in the field of tourism. Not much is revealed as meta-text to provide deeper insight. This remains to be investigated further so that observations can be made. Only one student provided a reason for that choice by saying that tourism provides opportunities to travel. This is shown in the following examples:

- *"I love working in the field of tourism because I love travel so much."*
- *"I am thinking to work as a tourist guide."*

Intention (9): Working in Airports: This is also a low ranking intention. The number of students indicating an intention to work in airports was (38) with a percentage of (12%). No further insights were available in the data.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research should be seen as part of the general field of language education at tertiary level with particular reference to the Jordanian context. It is worth noting that despite the obvious importance of research on careers choices of prospective university students, English language programs at university level, at least in Jordan have, sadly, been left rather untouched. It is lamentable that little knowledge is available on what, why and how undergraduate students of English select their future careers. The research agenda should be put forward to provide useful feedback to curriculum planners concerned with language education programs. This should be considered a valid illegible activity of applied linguistics as it is naturally lending itself to an interdisciplinary perspective.

Perhaps the immediate contribution that this study makes is in bringing the issue of career intentions to the surface and calling for more awareness among stakeholders. It is acknowledged here that the process of planning for a future career is quite complex as it involves a host of interrelated factors. The present study aimed at illuminating the major career intentions by a group of undergraduate students in three major state universities in Jordan. It sought to categorize the students' statements about career perceptions into some kind of taxonomy. It may be surprising that around a quarter of the sample students avoided stating a particular career intention. One can contemplate about this and think of possible reasons for this striking result. Perhaps this shows that students do lack any input on relating a student's specialization to some specific careers.

It was possible to identify nine intentions. These were ranked by order and it was found that the students were focusing on completing academic achievement at the postgraduate level. It is clear from the findings that English language students on their vast majority want to pursue postgraduate learning, probably hoping that this is the best way to increase their competition capacity in the job market. What is particularly interesting is that the majority of students want to go beyond their English language curricula and think of doing programs in non linguistics / literature fields.

It is also evident from the results that the student's show business-minded orientation as to their perceived career plans. Perhaps this is the way out as there is decreasing hope to get employed in the public sector. The fact that foreign investment is highly encouraged in Jordan provides strong drives to English language students to go for business opportunities.

The teaching profession seems to be in tact as a desired career. But, it is observable here that public schools are avoided. International and or private schools are preferred. However, the most preferred job in teaching English is "being a doctor" in a university. Possibly, this is also the motive behind the desire to do MA and doctorate degrees by many students in this group. In fact, Jordan has witnessed a significant expansion in the number of higher education institutions, particularly those run by the private sector. This could be the motive to become a university professor as the profession is still appealing and reasonably stable and relatively prestigious.

Translation seems to be still attractive. It came on fourth rank. However, it is seen as a hard and highly technical job. The profession in Jordan is quite unregulated. Anybody can claim to be a translator and therefore it may not provide a stable career. Also, there are no practical professional translation programs as the majority are no more than academic theoretical ventures usually run by faculty members with no or little training in actual translation.

Maybe because of felt levels of unemployment, many students are thinking of leaving the country in search for possible jobs abroad. This intention was expressed by nearly half the group and it was found that they prefer Western Europe as well as North America as their target. A similar percentage expressed intent to work in international agencies and embassies in particular.

Journalism, tourism and airport work came at the bottom of the scale. This can be explained by the fact that these jobs can be hard for students especially women as it is expected to require much mobility and travel. Or it may be the case that such careers are not sufficiently clear to language students. Lack of career guidance is most probably the reason for the low ranking given to these professions.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study could aid educators and guidance counselors in creating better curricula and career activities for English language undergraduates. This study could also be important for education and public policy makers, as well as university administrators, as they seek to improve educational delivery in this country. Recommendations on the basis of this study could include:

- Career guidance to be made intensive in English language programs.
- Career days to raise awareness of a variety of career opportunities.
- Practicum courses to provide actual experiences on language use in relation to professional needs.
- Field trips to relevant job environments.
- Invited guest speakers from various professions.
- Revisiting curricula content and outcomes to align with market demands.
- Further research on under explored areas.

Limitations: This study is a qualitative survey. Therefore, it is natural that many issues will remain unanswered. The study did not include students from private universities and also excluded senior English language students. The sample here was mainly composed of women students and therefore, it would be difficult to make generalizations about the male students. The study also did not explore factors that potentially affect the selection of careers. This can be done in further research.

REFERENCES

1. Issa, A. and K. Nwalo, 2008. Factors affecting the career choice of undergraduates in Nigerian Library and information science schools, *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science*, 8(1): 23-32.
2. Shumba, A. and M. Naong, 2012. Factors influencing students' career choice and aspirations in South Africa, *Journal of Social Science*, 33(2): 169-178.
3. Haase, H. and A. Lautenschläger, 2011. Career choice motivations of university students, *International Journal of Business Administration*, 2(1).
4. Hayes L., C. Orchard, H. McGillis, V. Nincic, L. O'Brien-Pallas and G. Andrews, 2006. Career intentions of nursing students and new nurse graduates: a review of the literature, *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship*, 3(26).
5. Burch, V., D. McKinley, J. Van Wyk, S. Kiguli-Walube, D. Cameron, F. Cilliers, A. Longombe, C. Mkony, C. Okoromah, B. Otieno-Nyunya and P. Morahan, 2011. Career intentions of medical students trained in six sub-Saharan African countries. *Education for Health*, 24(3): 614.
6. Wiwanitkit, V., 2013. Career intentions of medical students, *Education for Health*, 26: 68.
7. Naidu, C., J. Irlamand and P. Diab, 2013. Career and practice intentions of health science students at three South African health science faculties, *The African Journal of Health Professions Education*.
8. Willis, S., K. Hassell and P. Noyce, 2009. Career intentions of pharmacy students, *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, 13(2): 45-51.
9. Siracuse, M., S. Schondelmeyer, R. Hadsall and J. Schommer, 2004. Assessing career aspirations of pharmacy students, *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 68(3): 75.

10. Huntington, I., S. Shrestha, N. Reich and A. Hagopian, 2011. Career intentions of medical students in the setting of Nepal's rapidly expanding private medical education system, *Health Policy and Planning*, 27(5): 417-428.
11. Moriano, J., M. Gorgievski, M. Laguna, U. Stephan and K. Zarafshani, 2012. A cross-cultural approach to understanding entrepreneurial intention, *Journal of Career Development*, 39(2): 162-185, ERIC Number: EJ956946.
12. O'Meara, P., V. Tourle, V. Madigan and D. Lighton, 2012. Getting in touch with paramedic student career intentions, *Health Education Journal*, 71(3): 376-385, ERIC Number: EJ966110.
13. Fontaine, S., R. Kane, O. Duquette and L. Savoie-Zajc, 2011. New teachers' career intentions: Factors influencing new teachers' decisions to stay or to leave the profession, *New teachers' career intentions, Alberta J. of Educational Research*, 57 (4):379-408, ERIC Number: EJ958647.
14. Rogers, M., J. Searle, P. Creed and S. Ng, 2010. A multivariate analysis of personality, values and expectations as correlates of career aspirations of final year medical students, *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 10(3): 177-189, ERIC Number: EJ905062.
15. Basham, R. and F. Buchanan, 2009. A survey comparison of career motivations of social work and business students, *Journal of Social Work Education*, 45 (2):187-208, ERIC Number: EJ871521.
16. Concannon, J. and L. Barrow, 2010. Men's and women's intentions to persist in undergraduate engineering degree programs, *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 19(2): 133-145, ERIC Number: EJ875840.
17. Rodrigues, Susan, D. Jindal-Snape and J. Snape, 2011. Factors that influence student pursuit of science careers; the role of gender, ethnicity, family and friends, *Science Education International*, 22(4): 266-273, ERIC Number: EJ962814.
18. Pisarik, C., P. Rowell and L. Currie, 2013. Work-related daydreams: A qualitative content analysis, *Journal of Career Development*, 40(2): 87-106, ERIC Number: EJ1007390.
19. Smith, Emma and Cooke, Sandra, 2011. I was told it was going to be hard work but I wasn't told it was going to be this much work: The experiences and aspirations of undergraduate science students, *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education*, 9(2): 303-326, ERIC Number: EJ918492.
20. Espinoza, V., 2003. Culture, parents and course selection: a case study of Chinese ESL students in a British Columbia secondary school, <http://hdl.handle.net/2429/14369>.
21. Kumar, R. and U. Dhaliwal, 2011. Career choices of undergraduate medical students, *The National Medical Journal of India*, 24(3): 166-9.