

English for Business Purposes in the Context of Printing Institute Students

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Abstract

This article summarizes the findings of a broader study that has examined the practice of English (Business English) courses in the context of polytechnic students, especially studying printing technology at Sivakasi Institute of Printing Technology (SIPT). This research work aims to assess students' Business English needs in terms of business communication abilities. The informants were 172 undergraduates from SIPT, Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India. The findings imply that existing Business English curricula did not adequately address the learners' actual needs. The findings suggest some improvements that may be necessary to ensure the successful implementation of Business English courses. The Business English courses, in particular, are to be improved and broadened in terms of specialized study abilities to fulfill the learners' diverse academic needs. Recommendations to improve the quality, relevance, and validity of English (Business English) courses have been made.

Keywords: Business English, curricula, academic, learners

1. Introduction

Today's educational credo is to "produce employable graduates who can see beyond the horizon." In order to turn them into marketable workers in the knowledge-based market economy, several efforts are being undertaken to provide them with the English language skills they need (Hariharasudan & Kot, 2018). Tamil Nadu Government's DTETC (Directorate in Technical Education for Twenty-First Century) policy prioritizes learning business English for academic purposes. The government and parties concerned have paid proper attention to the country's lack of subject professionalism in order to meet this long-felt business English language demand (Hariharasudan & Pandeewari, 2020; Priyadharshini et al., 2021).

The Directorate of Technical Education (DoT) in Tamil Nadu has given affiliation to various polytechnic institutes to provide polytechnic programs. Mostly, English is the medium of instruction and is based on national and global needs; English is one of the courses to satisfy the needs of a competitive business environment (Cheng & Liu, 2021). In recent years, several initiatives to enhance English-language education have been undertaken (Barad, 2020). This study aims to assess tertiary-level English-medium education and practical application through research at the national and university levels.

It's clear that university-level business English instruction has crossed the line from general to specialized (Nel & Govender, 2020). Tamil Nadu has an ever-increasing need for English (B2B English) in technical education. To face this new challenge, educational institutions are working hard to update their Business English curriculums. A wide range of professional English is required for various objectives in the higher education, industry sectors, commercial sectors and vocational training (Hariharasudan, 2020; Nawaz, Hariharasudan, Durst & Shamugia, 2020). Many institutions have made Business English or Technical English a prerequisite of their degree programs that all students

must learn and score qualifying marks in English as a second language from the elementary and secondary school itself (Alghazo et al., 2021; Pandeewari, Hariharasudan & Kot, 2021). To earn a technical degree, one must do well in English classes and English exams at the university level.

When it comes to business English courses, Tamil Nadu still stands behind. In order to attain academic goals, many students study English (Business English) classes to enhance their business communication skills (Pandeewari, Hariharasudan & Nawaz, 2021). The highest academic achievers are effective communicators in Business English because academic success is heavily dependent on business communication ability (Alotumi, 2021; Rahiman et al., 2020). As a result, students have a wide range of expectations for how they will be taught English. Their competency levels are likewise at a developmental stage. There is no cohesive group of pupils in the Business English class. It's not uncommon to see several different students in Business English class. There is a wide range of student's approach to learning Business English irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds and positions (Thavabalan et al., 2021). Some of them hail from remote regions where English-speaking resources are quite limited. It's been discovered that academic success and fluency in English go hand in hand (Eisenman, 1969). Taking Business English classes at a polytechnic college has several advantages over other types of English education. It is difficult for students in Tamil Nadu to improve their careers in Business English because of a scarcity of resources. Many colleges have little regard and recognition for English teachers, which deters them from trying new ways (Hariharasudan, Rahiman, Nawaz & Panakaje, 2021). Many English teachers have no innovative idea of how to put their ideas and concepts into practice. Teachers rarely employ effective, relevant teaching approaches. Most teachers deal with whole-class instruction, which puts them under constant stress. Teachers of English at polytechnics have a continuous challenge getting their pupils to learn Business English.

For higher education to meet the increased demand and challenges of globalization, new research perspectives must be explored (Ingalagi et al., 2021). To tailor a curriculum to the students' basic needs in SIPT, however, in-depth research investigations are required. In order to acquire enough factual information on the students' perceived English-language demands before the start of an English (Business English) course, a need analysis could be used effectively (Kittidhaworn, 2001). Considering this, the present research focuses on polytechnic students at Sivakasi Institute of Printing Technology's need to analyze business communication skills.

2. Literature Review

Literature review is a collective survey of previously published findings on the related study. It helps the researchers to analyze the previous studies and find the gaps for potential future research. English courses, in general, have distinct characteristics and continue to be taught in various colleges and academic institutions (Dudley-Evans & Maggie Jo St., 1998). English courses focusing on English for Business Purposes are mutually exclusive disciplines that are related, interdependent and mutually exclusive (Murray, 2020). They are inseparably linked reciprocally. On the other hand, Business English is a specific need within English courses that fall under specific English Communication. Business English communication has emerged within the specific English courses to assess and improve the business communication skills of students (Whiteside et al., 2017). It is difficult to discuss and analyze students' Business English abilities without assessing their English language abilities. This relationship is emphasized in the context of Business English's historical development as a distinct discipline. It is beneficial to understand the scope of English in order to appreciate the evolution of English (Business English) courses within it. English, in particular, has deserved to be a highly sought-after topic in scholarly forums devoted to the teaching of the English language.

Hutchinson and Waters, the field's pioneers, attempted to define Business English as an approach rather than a skill. They believe that "the fundamental question for English (Business English) courses is why this learner needs to learn a Business English language." They place a premium on the learner's reasons and motivation for enhancing their business communication skills. Additionally, students enrolled in English (Business English) courses are not taught basic grammar but rather how to apply previously acquired knowledge in business communication (Eslami, 2010).

Streven (Strevens, 1998) attempts to distinguish four absolute characteristics of Business English courses from two distinct characteristics. The four main absolute characteristics of Business English includes: the design is tailored to the learner's need; course content is tailored to specific occupations, disciplines, and activities; the language is tailored to those activities in discourse, lexis, semantics, syntax, and discourse analysis; and language is distinct from the general English. Comparing with two distinguishing characteristics of Business English courses are that they should be limited in terms of the business communication skills taught and should not follow any predetermined methodology.

According to Munby (Munby, 1978), "English (Business English) courses are those in which the syllabus and

materials are completely determined by an analysis of the learner's communication needs". Business English courses place a premium on students' goals in business communication and make extensive use of a variety of language resources (Pedrotti & Behlau, 2017). As a result, English (Business English) courses are typically used when the English proficiency imparted is related to a specific job, subject, or purpose (Strevens, 1977). Developing a Business English syllabus and materials entails several critical steps, including collecting initial data, analyzing the basic requirements of the student, and determining a significant approach for the desired course. Business English can be understood by considering the subject's practical application. Business English is concerned with knowledge construction on a social level (Benesch, 2001). The primary components of an English (Business English) course are business communication skills, and it refers to the language requirements for solving business-related problems (Srivani, Hariharasudan, Nawaz & Ratajczak, 2022). Business English education has a range of educational objectives and levels. Business English courses generally provide students with training and language instruction in business communicational activities, which includes business negotiations and business presentations, correspondence, business vocabulary, informal business networking, proposal writing, business report, professional reading and vocabulary (Kittidhaworn, 2001).

Theoretical techniques, register analysis and genre analysis were the major approaches throughout the early phases of Business English. All of these theories focus on some aspect of need. The development of Business English approaches has been centred on need analysis. There must be some alignment between learner desires and curriculum in order to launch a relatively successful English (Business English) study (Eslami, 2010). The following three concepts served as theoretical frameworks for conducting the research.

This research paper is the result of an investigation into the learner requirements and proposing certain measures for improving the business communication skills of polytechnic students at SIPT in Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India. It aims to investigate how learners' pre-existing study skills and needs affect their pursuit of English (Business English) courses.

3. Methodology

The judgement sampling approach was used to select the sample. 98 males and 74 girls volunteered to complete the questionnaire out of the 172 participants. Male and female first-year undergraduates at a polytechnic college in Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, were all informants. Respondents disclosed their Business English proficiency criteria for various programmes of study. Tamil-speaking participants are also represented in two ethnic communities, namely English and Tamil.

Four respondents reported having a moderate level of language ability. The need analysis questionnaire was used as a source for collecting data from SIPT polytechnic students in the present study. The questionnaire on business communication skills was developed from a report delivered at the annual meeting of the Tamilnadu Educational Research Association. As with ABC, the questionnaire relies on three main components. Part A consists of six questions designed to gather demographic data from respondents. Part B has fifty questions that are intended to ascertain the participants' Business English requirements. Part C has 30 tasks that test a candidate's ability to communicate effectively in business. The questionnaire is comprised of 86 items in total. The coded responses were statistically calculated and examined. The acquired data were analyzed using Mean Score.

Part B contains 50 questions and is designed to elicit data about the students' English (Business English) language needs. It is categorized into four important sub-skills which includes, language structure pattern, rhetorical categories, language functions, and business English-specific language skills. The four fundamental language skills of writing, reading, speaking and listening were evaluated as part of the subskill of business communication. Responses were categorized into four levels of importance using a Likert Scale. The calculated mean values indicate the responses to the questionnaire's questions as: Very important, Significant, Slightly Significant, and Not Significant.

Part C contains thirty questions that assess participants' business communication skills. Multiple question items were used to assess business communication skills. Respondents were tasked with determining the significance of each item. It is divided into four segments: reading comprehension (READCM), memorization ability (MEMORY), test-taking (TSTTAK), and concentration management (CONMGT). READCM is represented by questions 1-8, Memory is represented by questions 9-15, TSTTAK is represented by questions 16-21, and CONMGT is represented by questions 22-30. A Likert Scale was utilized for collecting responses to coding questions. The mean values represent the responses to the questionnaire's questions. Almost always, the majority of the time, occasionally, Nearly never, Significantly above average, Frequently, Above the norm, Below average, significantly below average, Relatively unconcerned, Extremely relaxed, A little nervous and tense, Extremely nervous and tense, Greater than ½ hours of study time, ½ hours of studying time, ¼ to ½ hours of studying time

I am not one of those people who can recite everything they have learned from a textbook. Based on past research' questionnaires, the relevant one was prepared to gather information. Feedback and consent obtained from various subject experts of different disciplines were obtained to ensure the questionnaire's construct validity and reliability. A subject faculty member of the Department of Business English had a glance over the contents of Business English course and provided comments to reaffirm the reliability and construct validity of the questionnaire. Additionally, the feedback and comments from the expert member of Business English faculty members were incorporated into the questionnaire administered to respondents. The specialized lecturers in Business English possess the necessary credentials and extensive knowledge and experience in their respective domains.

4. Results

Table 1. Language Structure pattern

S. No.	Question	Mean Score
1	Utilization of Technical words describing scientific concepts	3.1
2	Utilization of General words describing scientific concepts	3.3
3	Utilization of Technical words in their expertise domain	2.9
4	Proper usage of grammar and sentence structures	3.0
5	Grammatical structures are followed in the scientific conceptual text	4.1
6	Grammatical structures for general communication	3.4
7	Using punctuation marks indicating syntactic boundaries	3.8

The overall opinion among learners is that learning the fundamentals of grammar and language structures is essential or crucial. The learning individuals preferred to become acquainted with the grammatical structures associated with the scientific aspect (question 5, Mean Value 4.1). There has been less emphasis on (question 3, Mean Value 2.9) learning the terminologies of technical aspects specific to their specialized domains.

Table 2. Rhetorical Categories

S. No.	Question	Mean Score
8	Utilization of appropriate connectors for connecting sentences and words (Ex. hence, and, therefore, etc.)	3.2
9	Classification (Ex. dividing into, categorized into, etc.)	3.1
10	Exemplifications (Ex. like instance, likely to be, etc.)	3.5
11	Generalizations (Ex. Representing the concept in precise manner)	3.8
12	Chronological sequence (Ex. first, next, finally, etc.)	3.4
13	Definitions (Ex. called as, known as, etc.)	3.7

The learners' perceptions of rhetorical categories indicate that many learners would prefer learning logical connectors useful for connecting sentences and clauses, including generalizations and other items (question 8-11, Mean Value 3.4). Less importance was provided on learning the scientific concepts dealing with classifications (question 9, Mean Value 3.1).

Table 3. Language function

S. No.	Question	Mean Score
14	Describing procedures and processes	3.8
15	Providing directions or instructions	3.8
16	Comparing the information with the other technical sources like scientific papers or texts (Ex. Height, volume, rate, temperature, etc.)	3.3
17	Proposing a summary of results of a project or report or scientific context	3.5
18	Representing the obtained data using graphical illustrations, diagrammatic approach and tabular column representation	3.2
19	Framing certain formulas and equations and understanding the fractions and decimals from the data obtained	3.7
20	Framing certain methodology for understanding the symbols utilized for basic mathematical calculations	3.2
21	Analyzing the technical report or business presentations or planning the technical project	3.4
22	Using language laboratory	3.4
23	Performing the technical research study in English	3.5

From questions 14 to 23, the learners' perspective on functional language is depicted. This was determined to be critical, and the consensus is that they choose to learn both describe the protocols and technical processes (question 14) and provide proper directions or guidelines (question 15). The lowest value was assigned to learning how to summarize data with the help of diagrammatic approaches, graphical illustration, and tables (question 18), including comprehending and understanding the fundamental symbols used for performing mathematical calculations (question 20).

Table 4. Language skills

S. No.	Question	Mean Score
<i>Listening</i>		
24	Subject lectures	3.9
25	English language lectures	3.9
26	Group Discussions	3.4
27	Oral presentations delivered by students	3.2
28	Presentations delivered during seminar or workshop or conference	3.5
<i>Speaking</i>		
29	Group conversations during class hours	3.7
30	Self-introduction	3.4
31	Group project presentation	3.6
32	Proposing ideas or suggestions for language learning	3.3
33	Requesting permission for certain activities requests	3.3
34	Delivering individual oral presentations	3.5
35	Delivering presentations as a group	3.4
<i>Reading</i>		
36	Reading the scientific concepts for comprehension	3.3
37	Reading notices, rules, and alert signals	3.7
38	Instructions to the public in the science field	3.6
39	Reading advertisements in the scientific areas of management	3.1
40	Reading for special activities like scanning, framing ideas/designs, etc.	3.5
41	Reading skills for grammatical English like sentence framing, tenses, etc.	3.9
<i>Writing</i>		
42	Writing a project dissertation	3.6
43	Writing business-related letters	3.8
44	Resume writing	3.5
45	Filling business related applications	3.8
46	Filling project/research related applications	3.5
47	Writing the concepts delivered in seminars, lectures, etc.	3.4
48	Caption writing for annotating diagrams and graphs	3.3
49	Writing examinations for eligibility of award of the degree	3.8
50	Writing research/review articles	3.6

Listening, which falls under the category of language skills, was perceived as a constraint on learning. Generally, students prefer to acquire listening skills through classroom lectures delivered by subject lecturers (question 24). Additionally, they prefer to listen to language teachers explain language (question 25). Students' oral presentations in the class received the least attention (question 27).

Based on the results obtained from speaking practice, responses indicated that the communication between proposing a question and delivering an answer for the question during class lectures or business presentations had become a frequent occurrence (question 29). Additionally, the learning individuals opted themselves to study by introducing themselves under various situations (question 30), including oral presentations in groups (question 34). The minimum mean score indicates that less emphasis should be placed on (questions 31, 32, 33), which included expressing opinions, presenting technical project presentation as a group, and making requests.

The reading responses (question 41) for language analysis received the highest mean value. Reading for scientific or management purposes received the lowest mean score, while reading commercial advertisements received the highest mean score. Writing examinations, writing business letters, and filling out application forms received the highest rating (question 43, 45, 49). Question 48 was assigned a minimum value for representing the information in graphical illustrations, diagram0073 and tables.

Table 5. Study skills

S. No.	Question	Mean Score
<i>Reading Comprehension</i>		
1	I am actively involved with the available materials for studying	2.9
2	If I read a course and comprehend it, I continue to complete the homework.	2.9
3	I keep taking text notes if I understand what am reading	2.3
4	When studying for an exam, what will be your estimated time spent for evaluating yourself on the course contents in contrast to the utilized time for reading textbooks and written materials?	3.1
5	When you're unable to comprehend what you're reading, do you attempt to decipher it?	2.5
6	I believe that determining the central idea of a paragraph or chapter is straightforward.	2.7
<i>Memory</i>		
7	Do you look for personal significance in technical content in order to help you remember it?	3.1
8	It has been a while since you read something for a class, but you think you understand the vast majority of what was said. In the following period, a fellow student might strike a question on the topic, or you may find that you are unable to recall much of what you have read on your own. How often do you find yourself in this situation?	3.1
9	When something must be memorized, how much time do you spend remembering it?	2.4
10	To help me remember anything, I often repeat it to myself.	2.6
11	To ensure that I remember something, I write it down multiple times	2.2
12	Evaluation scheme for analysing your memory and recall abilities?	2.8
<i>Test Taking</i>		
13	Equipping yourself to be prepared for attending multiple-choice tests	2.8
14	Normally, I attend the test and read the contents in the question paper	2.3
15	I would evaluate my capability in completing the test within the time.	2.1
16	Your memory couldn't recall the answer to the question you know very well. How frequently does this occur?	2.7
17	In the attempt of writing an examination, I am	3.2
18	You study diligently and are confident that you comprehend the content, but when the time comes to take the test, you forget all you learned. How frequently does this occur to you?	2.9
<i>Concentration management</i>		
19	I would evaluate my capability in concentration in comparison to other students	2.9
20	I would assess my ability of distraction occurred while studying	2.4
21	I would assess my ability to place my personal commitments without interfering with my learning.	3.0
22	I would assess my ability to analyze the distractions caused while I am undertaking an examination.	2.1
23	Once I've begun, I find it relatively easy to continue studying for an extended period of time.	2.6
24	I take pleasure in studying. When I'm studying, I'm usually in a good mood.	2.7
25	You are now completing a chapter. The, after few lines or paragraphs, you think that you do not have any idea about the contents which you have read as you were distracted by other thoughts. How frequently does this occur to you?	2.5
26	When other pupils are studying nearby, I have difficulty tuning out background sounds.	3.0

The polytechnic students' reading comprehension skills are tested in the first six questions. A mean score of 4.1 (in question 5) indicates that students devote enough time to preparation for exams. They can question themselves when reading, which indicates that they are involved in the subject study and that they are able to absorb technical information. When it comes to finishing tasks and taking notes, however, they have an extremely low mean value. Mean score (1.9) suggests that pupils either finish activities occasionally or not at all, which is a problem.

The number of questions between 7 and 12 indicates the polytechnic student's memorization capacity. It was discovered that they all possess a strong memory. However, they are inept in imbuing technical materials with personal significance to aid with memory. Additionally, a minimum mean value indicates that learners do not employ memory enhancement techniques.

The range of questions from 13 to 18 demonstrates the learners' competence to take tests. The minimum mean value (Mean value 2.0) was chosen to be less than the average. On the other hand, their greatest mean values reflect their outstanding ability in performing multiple-choice level examinations, mental relaxation during examinations, and long-term memory capacity.

Questions 19–26 pertain to concentration management. Concentration management was rated as having the lowest mean value for (Question 22) distractions during a test. The maximum mean value (question 19, 21 and 26) indicates

a greater capacity to deal with distractions while taking a test and resistance to external noise.

6. Discussion

The findings of the survey suggest that employees in the printing sector in Sivakasi are aware that basic Business English proficiency abilities are required for efficient business communication, which is also required for engagement with consumers or clients from other countries. Following the interventional Business English programme, assessments were conducted before and during the training to determine whether the participants' speaking abilities had improved. When compared to the other skills, speaking abilities improved just slightly. The findings demonstrate that speaking abilities must be prioritized. This research is more comparable to Prachanant (2012)'s study of the Thai travel and tourism industry's workforce (Prachanant, 2012). According to the report, speaking is the most critical talent required in travel and tourism industrial sector in comparison with other competencies. The new study also suggests that speaking is a critical business ability. However, some research has demonstrated that speaking skills in English is not always the most significant feature in few settings. Evans (2010)'s study in Hong Kong is one example (Evans, 2010). In Thailand, where the majority of communication between clients and staff occurs via email, written business English is preferred over speaking (Hiranburana, 2017).

Additionally, a study conducted by (Hariharasudan, Gnanamony & Rajaram, 2017) among the engineers at ten multinational organizations found that speaking is the most critical talent in corporate communication when compared to the other skills. Additionally, it was finalized that speaking is the significant skill for all engineers in the workplace. Based on the findings, they have concluded that, engineers who are proficient in English for commercial purposes are more likely to advance their careers on a global scale.

Thus, it is vital to conclude that only the needs of a specific company or industry to decide which English language ability is most significant or important. The current research is being undertaken in a city in Tamil Nadu that contributes the most to the printing sector. The Sivakasi industry contributes 60% of India's total offset printing sector. Not only do we print for domestic consumers, but also for overseas customers. As a result, export is an important source of revenue for the Sivakasi printing sector (Thavabalan et al., 2020). The findings of this study indicate that there are considerable gains in hearing, reading, and writing skills prior to and following interventional Business English training, indicating that interventional training can be advantageous for printing sector personnel. Despite employees expressing a preference for oral communication (speaking) above all other aspects of business English proficiency, no progress was made after the training in this aspect. This is due to the difficulty of self-training and establishing a strong relationship with the client, which is the foremost thing for developing a business.

7. Conclusion

After examining the acquired data and results, prominent perceptual trends regarding the Business English requirements and study skills were clearly identified. There is no correlation between the findings and the actual practice of Business English courses. The primary objective was accomplished when the accurate Business English requirements for study skills were established. The findings indicate that certain modifications to the existing syllabus for Business courses are necessary. As a result of the findings, the following proposal and recommendation can be made.

It is possible that the current course material could be revised to better meet the actual language requirements of Business English students. A need analysis of the language structure items in the planned curriculum has revealed the need for additional lessons on the grammatical structures used in scientific discourse. Neither of those topics nor any others are covered in any of the classes offered currently. There is also a recommendation to add lessons on logical connectors and generalization to the existing Business English syllabus to aid improve student rhetorical abilities. Additionally, learners like specific courses that help them enhance their ability to describe processes and procedures and give instructions and directions. The syllabus describing the available lessons are insufficient to suit the student needs.

There is no single listening lesson in the current syllabus to help the polytechnic students enhance their listening abilities. As a result, additional classes will be prepared to help learners improve their Business English listening skills. Special listening activities to be planned by subject lecturers during classroom lectures. Language instructors should plan listening courses to demonstrate the language. Students enjoy developing their speaking abilities through the process of asking and responding to questions during conversations. Additionally, people want to practice speaking by introducing themselves in a variety of scenarios. Additional things should be added to the syllabus to encourage students to conduct individual oral presentations. As a result, there will be more opportunities for students

to engage in real-world business English practice. Courses in reading comprehension that emphasize linguistic analysis will be added to the current curriculum. This trait was found to be overlooked in current reading lessons. The current curriculum will be supplemented with additional fresh features to reduce the influence of previous examinations and test preparation. There was no consideration given to this element until now.

Some of the discovered study skills items should be added to the present syllabus to create an effective one. Getting students to finish their tasks on time should be a top priority for teachers. Assigning personal importance to technical information can help students remember it better. To improve their scores, they must be taught how to take examinations more successfully through hands-on practice. A one-of-a-kind lesson will be devised to help the student improve their memory skills. They should have more chances to practice taking notes from texts. Business English courses will benefit from addressing proposed learner demands in terms of study skills combinations, since this is expected to improve their relevance, quality, and validity.

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