

Investigation into benefits, challenges, and solutions in learning business English by English majors at Dong Nai University (DnU)

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ABSTRACT

*This study aims to explore the multifaceted nature of **Business English Education**. While acknowledging significant advantages, such as enhanced career prospects and improved professional relationships, this research delves further into challenges faced by Business English majors, particularly language barriers and demotivation. Language barriers encompass difficulties of grasping specialized terminologies and nuances of business communication, which can impede learners' progress and confidence. Lack of motivation, on the other hand, is often attributed to the absence of immediate application and relevance to students' personal and professional goals, resulting in disengagement. The study then **proposes solutions to overcome these challenges**, emphasizing the need for practical, contextually relevant learning experiences and support systems that align with students' aspirations and learning styles, leading to a more effective and engaging learning environment.*

Keywords: *General Business English, advantages, disadvantages, solution*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, English is considered the most popular language, and it is used in many fields. It plays an extremely pivotal role, especially at the current time of global economic integration. However, the English that people know and use is often general English for everyday survival. This is often not enough for people to use, especially in the professional context, due to the differences in communicative purposes. In order to learn English business discipline, a more academic and business-oriented sort of English should be summoned, that is, English for Special Purposes (ESP) to equip students with knowledge about commerce and the economy.

When it comes to business English, people may automatically think of the business and commerce domain, but it is not really apparent what it is about. For those who know nothing about business English, especially Dong Nai University students (DnU), it is not easy to grasp important information or understand necessary knowledge, so they may be confused at the first encounter with learning this subject.

This research aims to investigate the benefits, drawbacks, and solutions in learning Business English for the third-year majored students – those who study this subject at DnU.

There are numerous definitions of business English, but it merely mentions professional communication skills and comprehension of terms that can be used in a particular field or occupation (Perks, 2023). Business English is considered a type of English, especially used in business contexts. Many domains employ business English, such as banking, international trade, finance, and commerce, among other fields. It necessitates clarification, specific vocabulary, and grammatical structures (Spencer, 2023). Business English has stricter and clearer rules in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Clarity and consistency play a pivotal role in conveying messages to listeners and readers. This type of English creates a common standard that businesses around the world can use (Editorial Team, 2022). According to Nlengl-Rudnikovo (2023), business English is deemed a kind of English communication that is used at work. Regarding good business English communication, there are some factors that you need to abide by if you want to be adept at business English communication: (1) apprehending what you read and hear; (2) writing accurately and properly; and (3) speaking smoothly and fluently.

2. Content

2.1 The search processes

In the search for relevant related studies, three main search engines were used: Google, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. All the searches were done via the Centennial Library website using the following keywords: *business English, advantages, disadvantages, solutions, business, and challenges of juniors*. In addition, other related articles were searched from online journals: Harvard Business Review and The Modern Language Journal.

2.2 Result of the search on the topic

2.2.1 Benefits

In the current era of international economic integration, there are so many reasons why students have to learn Business English. The most important reason is the lack of job opportunities in an international environment. Julia (2022) found that because English is the most popular language in the world, using English competently can open loads of opportunities to gain experience and get a high-paying job, especially in international companies. Nevertheless, language skills are not easy to master. If students want to work for a foreign company, basic knowledge of commerce or business is necessary. That is why students must learn business English. Besides job promotion, Business English can supply a host of vocabulary that learners can employ in business and the working world. Furthermore, it provides learners with forms of operation, production methods, or basic knowledge about business and commerce (New College Group, 2019). Most importantly, according to the British Council, although students have a good background or sound knowledge of the English language, learning Business English can give them more chances to project specialized vocabulary and create new opportunities in their careers. Finally, business English helps students enter globalization, connectivity, and intercommunication. It proves that a common language of communication between commercial relationships, companies, and partners around the world is essential. To put it another way, learning business English is the way to learn how multinational corporations conduct, collaborate, and form professional relationships (Omobo, 2022).

Standing before enormous opportunities as mentioned above, it cannot be denied that business English is a significant course that students of Dong Nai University need to study and master. It is seen as a foundation, a premise that opens up many promising opportunities for them in the near future.

2.2.2 Challenges

General business English is a crucial subject for EFL learners. In fact, almost all English majors have dealt with different types of specific problems in this subject. In the DnU context, difficulties with this subject have long been identified for students, especially students of the English Linguistics batch 11 at Dong Nai University. From what the researcher has observed, those demerits stem from insufficient vocabulary, structural complexity, poor reading skills, and demotivation while reading a long or hard lesson on this subject.

Studies by Thao and Tran (2008) demonstrated that English-majored students in Vietnam often encounter issues related to comprehension like subject complexity and unfamiliar terminology. It is occasionally observed that two common challenges in ESP reading comprehension that students encountered are unknown words and prior knowledge of this subject.

This research endeavors to understand students' perceptions of difficulties in reading English business texts and to discover solutions to English business reading documents.

1. Lack of language inputs

Davoudi and Yousefi (2015) discovered a range of comprehensive issues with EFL learners, including poor reading skills, grammatical structural errors, and a deficiency in vocabulary and prior knowledge.

1.1. Vocabulary challenges and weird idioms

First, it takes more than just general language learning to acquire business English; it is a complicated process. It contains specialist language that is necessary for a variety of fields, occupations, and settings. With terms essential to conducting transactions, negotiations, and other business-related activities, this technical lexicon serves as the foundation for business communication. Nevertheless, comprehension and effective application of this technical vocabulary are frequently extremely difficult for DnU young students. Non-native speakers may face a great challenge due to the intricacy of these terms, which are frequently firmly anchored in particular cultural and contextual foundations (Hazarova, 2019). For DnU students, they do not have the chance to upgrade these technical terms due to the scarcity of business reading materials as well as the inexperience of lecturers in delivering the business lessons to their students.

Second, research in the field of business English vocabulary acquisition emphasizes the importance of corpus-based teaching methods. The study by Nazarova (2019) has shown that such an approach can aid in the acquisition of specialized vocabulary, helping students navigate the nuanced landscape of business communication more effectively. Additionally, the study of idiom variation in business English textbooks reveals that idioms frequently appear in multiple lexical and syntactic forms, which can alter their overall meaning and function within discourse. This highlights the need for teaching materials to reflect the dynamic and variable nature of idioms as they are used in practice.

Finally, the business world is full of idioms, jargon, and acronyms that are widely used in everyday business discussions. These linguistic elements serve as shorthand for complex concepts and processes and enable quick and efficient communication between businesspeople. However, for undergraduates at Dong Nai University, these idiomatic expressions, such as "thinking outside the box" or "low-hanging fruit," can be particularly confusing. For some students, learning idioms becomes even more difficult because there are frequently no direct translations into other languages due to the idioms' metaphorical nature and ingrained cultural quirks.

1.2. Complicated grammar and syntax

The precision of grammar and syntax is not merely a matter of linguistic correctness but a foundational element of professionalism and clarity. Errors in these areas can lead to costly misunderstandings and diminish the perception of competence and credibility. The importance of grammar lies in its ability to structure language in a way that conveys meaning accurately and effectively. Jaya (2023) shows that proper grammar usage ensures that the intended message is delivered without ambiguity, which is crucial in business transactions where stakes are high and misinterpretations can have significant repercussions.

The passive voice can be used to focus on the action rather than the actor, which is often preferred in formal business contexts. Conditional clauses are essential for discussing a common requirement in strategic planning. However, being good at these complex grammatical structures requires a deep understanding of language rules and how to apply them in contextually appropriate ways, which is a challenge for those who are not native English speakers like DnU English students.

Jeffrey Gitomer, an American author and business trainer, made some comments in a newspaper about the grammar usage of certain individuals. She said that the grammatical structure people employed often reflect their own image in a bad or good impression. Therefore, they could totally control their grammar as all their impressions (Dawood, 2018). The complexity of grammar and syntax plays an important role in business contracts, where accuracy is paramount. Missteps in these areas can cause misunderstandings that disrupt business operations or at least create an unprofessional image. Harvard Business Review underscores the instrumental role of good grammar in conveying ideas with clarity, professionalism, and precision (Hoover, 2014). The ability to express ideas clearly and concisely reflects not only individual ability but also the organization's attention to detail and clear communication.

The correct usage of the structure of sentences (such as conditional clauses, passive clauses, etc.) can influence the tone and clarity of business proposals and agreements. Research in cognitive science has extensively studied conditionals, emphasizing their importance in human thought and action, which directly translates to their significance in business communication. The studies and literature on grammar and syntax in business contexts highlight the importance of these elements in ensuring effective learning.

2. Shortage of motivation

Woodrow (2016) provided a picture of current thinking and research in the area of motivation. It considers motivation and its relation to self-beliefs and affection. Learning English for special purposes results in a dual focus: the development of language skills and learning content. In the study of business English, the student improves his or her command of English while also becoming familiar with business-related language and topics. For instance, when an instructor designs their lesson plans, there is a risk that they focus too much on business vocabulary and content but neglect language skill development. Students, as a result, are insufficiently motivated due to being overwhelmed by tons of unknown knowledge.

2.1. Lack of support

The pursuit of skill in general business English is packed with difficulties, the most significant of which is a lack of desire. Motivation powers the learning process, driving the learner's engagement and tenacity. Based on the researcher's experiences and observations, motivation for studying business English is notably strong during early classes, but their self-efficacy, or belief in their talents, frequently falls within a moderate range by the end of these courses. Maintaining a consistent source of inspiration is one of the most difficult challenges they encounter. Woodrow (2016) stated that without the scattered road of unique obstacles that test their will and devotion, the laborious work of acquiring a new particular topic in the English language might become an impossible barrier, resulting in a loss of interest and engagement. This disparity can cause a chasm between acquiring knowledge and using it in reality, eventually leading to poor academic achievement ("The Correlation Between Business English Freshmen's Learning Motivation and Self-Efficacy," 2023).

Support is truly a critical factor that can make or break the learning experience. Comprehensive support from educational institutions, including innovative learning methods and extracurricular activities related to business English, is crucial for increasing interest and motivation to learn this subject among English majors. Furthermore, support from teachers also plays a significant role in promoting the learners' academic process. If learners cannot realize immediate benefits or relevance to their work or personal goals, they might lose interest. When learners fail to see the immediate benefits or relevance of their studies to their professional or personal aspirations, their drive to learn can diminish significantly. This disconnect between the curriculum and the learner's goals can lead to a disengagement that not only hampers progress but also erodes the joy and satisfaction that come from learning something new (Woodrow, 2016).

2.2. Fear of Making Mistakes

The fear of making mistakes is a significant psychological barrier that can prevent English majors at Dong Nai University from acquiring knowledge. This fear often stems from the potential embarrassment or negative evaluation that might follow an error, leading to a phenomenon known as 'language anxiety.' If learners feel so overwhelmed, it can deter them from practicing the language and stunting their progress. A study by Hutabarat and Simanjuntak (1970) on speaking anxiety among English learners identified fear of negative evaluation and

self-inferiority as key factors contributing to this anxiety, which affects their willingness to engage in speaking activities.

Errors in this area can have far-reaching implications, hurting both professional relationships and an individual's credibility. Business communication necessitates accuracy and clarity, and errors can result in misinterpretations or misrepresentations of intent, thus destroying trust and relationships. According to Forbes' research, the ultimate cost of poor engagement is a bad value for both the individual and the company. That is the reason undergraduates avoid applying what they have learned in real life.

Solutions

To go deeply with the solutions for these disadvantages above, there are several things that we can do to revamp students' productivity in the way of learning and understanding business English for English majors—those who study this subject at Dong Nai University.

How to cope with the lack of language inputs

The lack of business knowledge from the beginning, in addition to the interpreting and language use in the general business of Dong Nai University English majors, was also reported as one of the major problems that students encounter on this subject. This problem was found to negatively affect students' academic performance in the program to the most extent that students struggled to cope with lectures and the various activities required of them. To address this problem, each student should apply a plan or a strategy that can help them grasp the definition of terminology in general, pay more attention to the lecture to catch up with basic knowledge first, and then gradually build up a base to develop their sense of confidence to learn by themselves.

On the one hand, the DnU department of English should work closely with lecturers of business subjects to ensure that the design, development, and focus of the courses are maximally relevant. Lecturers can improve their understanding of students' needs by tracking, recording, and/or documenting contents in classes. This allows them to create authentic materials to present to their students. The Internet can be used to provide authentic material as well. The instructors can search for sites that focus on a specific topic, ask questions, and use online dictionaries for meaning and pronunciation. The company websites are also an interesting source of authentic materials, providing the vocabulary practice that students need. Then questions about the content of the website can be prepared so as to make students scan the website for information. The huge advantage is that students can complete the study on their own. The Internet is a great source of authentic materials that are ideal for use in business English classes, whatever the level of students is. Even though some of these materials are clearly intended for native speakers, instructors can adapt all types of activities to suit all levels of students when exploiting these materials. Given that some of the business tasks are conducted in groups, business courses should ensure that students' teamwork and cooperative work skills are developed and enhanced since they are crucial for effective and successful performance on such tasks and in the workplace.

Business instructors should improve the way they structure and transfer knowledge in their lessons to make it more understandable and accessible to students. They can, for example, use a variety of strategies and techniques to prepare and construct their topic material lectures in ways that are both relevant to students' diverse learning styles. Teachers, as language experts, can certainly offer some advice to business instructors in this regard. As previously stated, they can monitor business classes and provide comments on how business instructors create and deliver lessons in more practical ways to improve and help students interested in the subjects.

Solutions for the lack of motivation

Learning motivation can be referred to as intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivational behaviors are aimed at bringing about certain internally rewarding consequences, namely, feelings of competence and self-determination (Deci, 1975). Extrinsic motivation relates to learning behaviors performed to receive extrinsic rewards such as good grades or to avoid punishment (Dörnyei, 1998). Dörnyei (1994) developed a more general framework for EFL motivation to synthesize various issues of language learning. In addition, Williams and Burden (1997) investigated the motivational components related to EFL instruction and constructed a framework with internal and external factors. To deal with these problems following the theory above, DnU students should keep their spirit in the mode of readiness despite the hectic schedule under a lot of pressure and the difficulty in terms of academic terminology, which are always there when they encounter the learning environment.

Through actively asking their professors to understand the correct definitions and obtain the desired outcome with joy and satisfaction, or by discussing with their peers how to view the subject from a different perspective, they can actively cultivate their intrinsic motivation by learning about the fascinating things that come up in the subject. Besides, teacher can provide constructive feedbacks to encourage students and make them feel confident about their study performances and create more involving times for them to do research and give presentations on the material they have learned. These actions will help students advance in the process of turning abstract concepts into relatable, practical knowledge that they can apply in their everyday lives. They will be able to increase extrinsic drive by taking actions that have both comforting and unsettling effects. The most crucial aspect of teaching and knowledge transfer is to give students a sense of participation in the process. Some examples of this include having students conduct real-world research, showing them how businesses operate in the real world rather than trying to explain everything in technical terms, or not trying to push them into a subject by using predetermined definitions.

3. Conclusion

To this end, an investigation into benefits, challenges, and solutions encountered by English majors of Dong Nai University when learning business English underscores the significance played by business English for English majors in their studies in general and for the workplace in particular. The benefits are realized by improved communication skills, employment opportunities, job promotion prospects, increased confidence, among other things. Therefore, it is vital for students of DnU to master this subject thoroughly to succeed in various industries in the near future.

However, it is also frank to look at several difficulties posed by this subject for any of those who are learning this subject for their future job orientation. This in turn relates to poor reading comprehension skills, lexical and structural complexities, and poor motivation by students when learning this subject. Addressing this subject is, therefore, essential for effective teaching and learning by both lecturers and students alike.

Finally, this paper also proposed some methods to help English students of DnU learn the business English module effectively. Concretely, the paper suggested that students should build specific learning plans for themselves, being attentive to class lectures, updating themselves in the field, arousing their own motivation, and learning autonomy as well. Meanwhile, instructors of business English should redesign their curriculum program, paying attention to learners' needs and interests, balancing between knowledge contents and language input, as well as developing career orientation, bringing back joy to the learners.

By recognizing both the benefits and challenges of this specialist subject, both lecturers and learners can work together to create more effective and inclusive learning experiences. This collaborative approach will better prepare learners for the demands of the modern business world, enabling them to be much more successful in the business world.

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