

Ensuring a Technology-Enhanced Language Classroom: A Perspectives of Business Schools of Bangladesh

Md. Ashraf Ali¹, Md. Sazzadur Rahman Khan²

¹Department of Business Administration, The Millennium University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

²Department of Business Administration, Stamford University Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Email address:

ashrafupab@gmail.com (Md. A. Ali), tipu06bd@yahoo.com (Md. S. R. Khan)

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Abstract: This research paper aims at illustrating the significance of using technology in the language learning classroom for business education. Business English and business communication has become an integral current trend of academic pursuit for the entire global business world. The current research basically and in general focuses on some of the current practices of Bangladeshi educational institutions in line with the global way-forward. Technology-enhanced language learning for business education is a common phenomenon now-a-days all over the world. Technology aids in the process of language learning in the classroom. The paper focuses on the application of the technology in foreign language learning scenario especially in the arena of business community. At the same time, the present study brings into light the current scenario of technology uses in the language learning set-up of Bangladesh.

Keywords: Technology, Language, Classroom, Business Schools

1. Introduction

The common notion of language has changed over the centuries. Previously Grammar –translated method dominated the whole world. But now it is the age of communicative method, focusing on the uses of languages more than merely learning the rules of grammar and translation. In the arena of language learning one new element has emerged in the global language learning scenario. This is Business English. Many professionals now-a-days use business English for their academic and business affairs. The common reason is that English has become the global language of business world. Owing to the supremacy of English language many companies, large multinational and international corporations are now fully aware of the need and necessity for their employees to have a good command of English language for official purposes.

The application of business English is varied and wide. Business English is an umbrella term which refers to many things. At the same time, it has different dimensions and applications. In a very general sense, business English is a kind of English especially related to international trade and commerce. Many non-native English speakers, in the present time, study Business English with the sole purpose of doing business with the English speaking countries or with

companies which are located in non-native English speaking regions.

Anybody desiring to be successful in the present world should know business English. Due to communication problems one may be a failure in business profit, unsuccessful in meetings and negotiations. Knowing Business English therefore remains as a real obstacle to carry out all manner of international business to many. These disadvantages can very easily be overcome by having the confidence and ability to perform these given tasks in English. From the personal ground, having competent English language skills will give you a preference at an interview, opening up more interesting career prospects for you, and increasing your earning areas and sectors. With the changing competitive world, we witness more and more organizations favoring, and indeed requiring, applicants who are bilingual and who have necessary knowledge in English.

There is another cause of learning business English in the present world. We see that a great deal of literature and research documents essential to the business world, and particularly in business education, is written in the medium of English language. Mastering specific business terminology, therefore, becomes important in order to fully understanding and making sense of the mass of the English business information. Including company reports, company profiles,

annual reports, research papers and economic journals-presented in English language.

The available business information and data on the internet can fully be discovered with a working knowledge of English. Without having the skill to use internet, your world of knowledge would be a very limited one. The influence of political and economic power has made the internet a virtual English language empire and most studies predict that English will continue to dominate the Internet in the future. At present about 70 percent of Internet content is in English, of which business content constitutes a considerable amount. This further highlights the importance of proficiency in business English to be successful in the changing global scenario.

From the standpoint of educational institutions, now- days we find the commencement of business English courses for academic purposes. Following the global demand and perspective, the educational institutions in Bangladesh also introduced the course in the universities of the country. One of the prime focuses of Business English courses is to make the learners fit and competent for the business world. With a view to fulfilling the contemporary demand of the global market, the main focus is now given to the development of communicative competence of the learners. To develop the competence some areas of skills are given prominence such as report writing, presentation, basic language skills development, development of negotiation skills and so forth.

Knowing and Learning how to correspond with the clients, business entities and how to influence the customers is the prominent focusing area of this Business English. Therefore the course curriculum of business English is designed following the learner's opinion and market demand.

2. Literature Review

Business English is English language especially related to international trade. It is a part of English for Specific Purposes and can be considered a specialism within English language learning and teaching; for example, the teachers' organization IATEFL has a special interest group called BESIG. Many non-native English speakers study the subject with the goal of doing business with English-speaking countries, or with companies located outside the Anglo sphere but which nonetheless use English as a shared language or lingua franca. Much of the English communication that takes place within business circles all over the world occurs between non-native speakers. In cases such as these, the object of the exercise is efficient and effective communication. The strict rules of grammar are in such cases sometimes ignored, when, for example, a stressed negotiator's only goal is to reach an agreement as quickly as possible. Business English means different things to different people. For some, it focuses on vocabulary and topics used in the worlds of business, trade, finance, and international relations. For others it refers to the communication skills used in the workplace, and focuses on the language and skills needed for typical business communication such as presentations, negotiations, meetings, small talk, socializing, correspondence, report writing, and so

on. In both of these cases it can be taught to native speakers of English, for example, high school students preparing to enter the market. It can also be a form of international English. It is possible to study Business English at college and university; institutes around the world have on offer courses (modules) in BE, which can even lead to a degree in the subject.

2.1. Development Route and Current Situation of Business

English Based on the theory of Economics of Language proposed by American Marschak (1965), language also possesses the nature of economics, namely language, as an unavoidable tool for economic activities, does have the common feature of economics: such as reduction of costs to optimize value and effect. The macroeconomic value of language application chiefly lies in its position, frequency, linguistic change and people's evaluation of language and linguistic policies used in the economic and social life of different era whereas the micro economic value of language study mainly relies on the relationship of percentage between the investment of language education and the economic return of it. The higher the economic return is expected to be, the bigger the investment cost is needed. On the basis of this theory, the development route of business can be summarized as in Figure 1.

It can be seen from the figure that business English is a necessary result brought by the demand of modern development, the increase of social needs and the expected high economic benefit. Business English, as a part of applied linguistics, has been more and more important in academic study and has been very popular in the mind of learners. It can be said that business English is a necessary selection of language study to minimize investment costs and to maximize economic benefits under the driving force of higher and higher social demand.

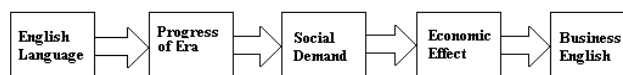


Figure 1. Route Selection of Business English development.

Therefore, it is argued that the study of a second language can be deemed as a phenomenon of economics, and at least it can be said that learners studying a second language are partly impacted by the so-called social and economic factors, namely the consideration of the investment costs and expected returns of language study. Just because the study of business English is expected by the learner to have higher returns, such as the realization of double targets for learning multi-skills including English language and knowledge of particular discipline, there has been an emerging trend of business English study around the whole world. In the West, in the middle 1990s, linguistics changed silently in the wave of economic and social changes, during which researchers stated to concentrate their research focus on the application of languages in various contexts rather than on the regulation of language usages. At this period, ESP, namely English for Special Purpose, came into being. Contemporary business English originates from the Western

countries in this era as a sub-branch of the so-called ESP (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Ellis & Johnson, 1994). It is also a special branch of learning appearing in the background of economic globalization and trade internationalization. Currently, business English is becoming more and more important in academic position and has become the sub-branch of ESP with the fasted development. For example, in the UK, many series of business English books such as BEC and Market Leader, have been widely published and applied in countries like China today.

In China, business English can be traced back to the earliest era of 1950s, when high education institutions started to set the course of Foreign Trade English which mainly included such core courses as English electronic communication, selected readings of the Western paper, and oral English of foreign trade, etc. In 1990s, going along with the globalization of Chinese economy and the rapid increase of foreign trade volume, talents of business English had become increasingly welcome by the society. As a result, business English began to replace foreign trade English. For example, in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, a new school called the School of English for Business specializing in teaching business English undergraduate and postgraduate programs was established with the integration of teachers from Faculty of English Language and Culture, School of Law, and School of International Trade and Economics. Just as what Mo Zhaishu (2006) argued in his paper that business English development in China could be investigated from the basic principle of language economics. On the one hand, China's quick integration into the world economy required the multi-skilled talents educated with business English programs, which had been declared in the 2000 Chinese Higher Education Guideline that the English major of universities should educate multi-skilled talents with good English language and proficient cultural, economic, and research skills. On the other, it had been the expected higher returns from education investment that had promoted the quick development of business English in China in the study of business English could benefit learners in learning some specialized knowledge at the same time of making their language more applicable.

At present, business English is highly recognized in the society as one of the most popular disciplines. Statistics shows that the number of universities that have opened business English major courses exceeds 800, and the schooling levels, majors and degrees are more and more diversified. For example, in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, there are already five undergraduate programs and four postgraduate programs. Graduates of business English are very popular in MNCs and other international business enterprises.

2.2. Concept and Scope of Business English

In recent years, there have a variety of ideas concerning the definition and conception of business English, among which three major types include: business English belongs to pure linguistics, business English belongs to ESP, and

business English belongs to cross-discipline.

2.3. Business English Belongs to Pure Linguistics

The scholars holding such a point of view argues that business English and common English are not at all different theoretically because both of them belongs to the range of linguistics, and the former not a special form of language differing from others. For example: Business English is neither a creation of Basic English nor a special type of language, but no more than a unique attitude and view of English language (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Business English is not an independent special language but a form of English language added with a number of business terms. Business English shares the same words and expressions with common English, but they do have some differences in the interpretation and usage of words and terms (Tan Hui-juan, 1999). Business English is a language used by people working in business fields, who selects words and expressions and grammatical structures to communicate in oral and written forms in order to fulfill their purpose of business operation and comply with internal customs and practices (Zhang Zuocheng, 2000; Yang Ling-li, 2003). Business English is a not a special form of language with no clear rules of grammar, but an application of common English in business context (Zhou Yi, 2006).

2.4. Business English is a Sub-Branch of ESP

This concept is fundamentally the same as the above one. ESP itself is regarded as a form of applied linguistics. There are quite a lot of supporters for this idea such as: Business English should be included in the range of ESP as a sub-branch because it shares similar features with ESP, such as the analysis of demand and the selection of language materials. Business English should be considered to be a forth-level of learning branch following English linguistics, applied English linguistics, and ESP (Lin Tainhu, 2004). In 2005, Li Hong argued that in China business English chiefly belonged to EGBP (English for General Business Purpose) in that it aimed to add some common business knowledge in the skills of English language. Similarly, in 2006, Jin Jinghua believed that business English should classified into ESP, which could also be divided into two types such as: EGBP and ESBP (English for Specific Business Purpose), among which EGBP targeted to those learners who were lack of working experience while ESBP was designed to train those professional people who had business working experience. Currently in China, academic research focuses on the field of EGBP.

2.5. Business English Belongs to Cross-Discipline

There are more and more scholars in China who tend to believe that business English belongs to a cross-discipline combining linguistics and business management, for example: Zhang Xinhong and Li Ming (2002), professors of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, argue in their article that business English is a functional transformation of English which possesses unique features with business

knowledge and English language mixed. Mo Zhaishu, et al (2006), professor of Hunan University, argues that business English, based on the foundation of linguistics and applied linguistics, has become a comprehensive cross-discipline absorbing other branches of learning in theory and practice. Zhou Huahao (2006) has expressed a similar point of view concerning business English, who believes that business English formerly belonging to ESP has been enlarged in contents into a cross-discipline concept including international trade, finance, commercial law, e-commerce, and cross-culture communication, etc.

2.6. Development Trends of Business English

In China, business English has its own characteristics in discipline. It has a double target of education, namely to provide students or learners with not only English language skills but also with business management know-how. Nowadays, as a result of its practical applicability and social recognition, it is developing very quickly, and there are some important developing trends which will generate in-depth influence over its future development:

- Business English tends to be regulated or standardized in relevant majors. In 2006 and 2007, The National Education Department had approved the setting of the undergraduate program for business English by two universities as a second-level independent discipline. And it is expected to be month's time to be able to see the setting of a business English postgraduate program in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. The deregulation in business English symbolizes a new page for its development in China.
- Business English tends to be flexible in degree-awarding. Because business English in China can provide learners with both language and business skills, they should be entitled to be awarded with BA in Foreign language or BA in business management, or even B. Sc in economics if they have passed all the related courses required by a particular major. In Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, School of English for International Business now has both undergraduate programs and can award both degrees.
- Business English tends to emphasize the importance of cultivating cross-cultural communication skills. Facing economic globalization, the cultivation of cross-culture communication skills in the teaching of business English is becoming more and more important. Thus, more and more universities have set the course of cross-culture communication as core subject for learners to study.
- Business English tends to be enlarged in concept and content. The narrow sense of business English in the past used to refer to English for business negotiation, import and export trade, etc. However, its current concept has been greatly enlarged in a very wide sense to cover the total of wording, grammatical structure, style and others used in all business contexts such as trade, finance, investment, transportation, economic law,

event management, trade fair, international cooperation, cultural exchanges, etc.

- According to Alan McGee "The globalization of world business, technology and trade has brought about a huge increase in the demand for types of ESP teaching." An important area of focus is the teaching of Business English.

Having a work force capable of conducting business in English is crucial in today's world. The need for top executives to communicate with their counterparts in other countries has been a requirement for some time. Now with the globalization of the economy it is becoming increasingly important for employees at all levels to be able to communicate with their counterparts. Therefore, an understanding and fluency in English greatly increases communicative powers beyond a company's national borders. And as most in the business world know communication is the medium used to inform and persuade. Whether the needs of the company focus on international negotiations or product demonstration for foreign clients English has become an integral tool for success. Example: Madama Oliva, a small Italian company two hours outside of Rome (Carsoli) has recently begun export of its product line. Many of these negotiations are handled by a bilingual employee who is also responsible for assisting the company in starting an English language program for its employees. Their website is also currently constructing an English version making product information available to a much larger market.

2.7. Why Learning Business English is Important

Around the world, there is an estimated 1 Billion people learning English. Many factors point to the reason why learning English has seen exponential growth in recent years, but it all boils down to the English language being the "global language" of business, politics, international relations, culture, and entertainment for so many countries worldwide. And that is just an understatement as in fact, while English is not an official language in many countries worldwide, it is the language most often taught as a foreign or second language.

2.8. Business Leverage

The rapid growth in technology for global communications notwithstanding, there is still many companies and individual professionals who fail in their quest for business or professional success. And oftentimes the failure primarily lies on one of the most basic foundations of making business relations - the language spoken. Undoubtedly, the English language is the global language for business and having a good command of English will definitely give one who is eyeing globally competitive business or career a clear edge. Any communications problem, whether personal or business, translates to losses, zero result in negotiations, incompetence for global business, or will just simply leave you ill-equipped to carry out international business.

2.9. Career Growth

Going down on a more personal level of career success,

having the right Business English communication skills will surely equip you with a liberating confidence and ability to express yourself in the English language. It will surely be an advantage in interviews, thus giving you more opportunities to widen your career prospects. Or if you are not looking for a new job, having the confidence and ability to speak Business English is one way of enhancing your potential for earning by making you stand out for career advancement or promotions. Studies show a steady growth in the number of companies worldwide requiring employees who have bilingual skills.

Internet Proficiency Means English Proficiency.

Research shows that 80% of the amount of Internet web content is in the English language and that content relating to business written in the English language largely comprises this figure. It goes without saying that having a good grasp of business information, data, or terminologies in the English language is very important to have a good understanding of the wealth of business information available on the Internet.

3. Research Methodology

In order to test our hypothesis, we have conducted an empirical study and we have covered 89 firms financed by the Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB) between 1985 and 2005. We first consider 3 models in our analysis. All 3 models composed of same set of independent variables but with different dependent variables.

4. Conclusion

Over the years English language comes up to our aid in our commercial transactions throughout the globe. No language has the global distribution that English has. Most significantly, it is the language spoken in the developed countries like the US, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Newzealand –it automatically becomes the language of choice in the business world. Anyone seeking a worthwhile career in business, industry, government or the professions requires the ability to have good command in Business English. It is the language of the latest business management in the world and most people employed in corporate America are completely sold on the importance of language skills. All over the world every year thousands of employees are denied promotions to better-paying positions simply because they lack the ability to write and to speak accurately. But learning Business English is the way to help the people among the competitive few who can qualify for a top paying position in the global corporate market.

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