EFL University Students' Perceptions of Business English Courses

I- Chen Chen   Hung-Chang Wu

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate university students' understandings, needs, and expectations of Business English courses. This study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative part of this study is a survey questionnaire delivered to 219 participants from Applied English Department and International Business Department. The qualitative part of this study includes interviews with 10 students in the Business English courses. The results of the study indicated that (1) Students believe that Business English is the English which is used in the job markets. In addition, Business English includes both business knowledge and English language knowledge. (2) Students who enroll Business English courses need to improve their English ability and contact with various business-related resources in order to develop their business awareness. (3) Students also believe that their Business English instructors with working experiences are more qualified to teach the course and design appropriate curriculum for students. (4) Students from Applied English Department hope to acquire more professional business knowledge. (5) Students from International Business Department hope to improve English communication skills. (6) Students expect that taking Business English courses can improve their competitive ability in the job markets.

Key words: Business English, ESP, needs, expectations

I- Chen Chen, Assistant Professor of Department of Applied English, Southern Taiwan University
Hung-Chang Wu, master student of Department of Applied English, Southern Taiwan University
E-mail: jennychen@mail.stut.edu.tw

大學生對商務英語課程觀點之研究

陳怡真、吳泓璋

摘要

　　本研究之目的旨在探討大學生對商務英語課程之認識、需求、和期望。本研究方法包含質化與量化，其中量化研究部分則採發放問卷的方式進行(共計二百一十九份問卷)，質性研究部分則是訪談十位參與商務英語課程的學生。　研究結果顯示：一、參與商務英語課程的教師和學生都認爲商務英語文爲企業界所使用的英文，其多半用來進行口語或書信溝通，且包含商業知識在其中。二、選修商務英語課程的學生急須改善他們的英語文能力與廣泛接觸與商業相關的雜誌或新聞等。三、學生們認爲具有工作經驗的商務英語教師較有資格教授此課程，並爲學生設計合適的課程。四、應用英語系的學生希望獲得加強專業的商業知識。五、國際企業系的學生希望增進英語溝通能力。六、學生們期盼此門課程能幫助他們未來的求職路程能更加順遂。

關鍵字: 商務英語、專業英語、需求、期望

陳怡真，南台科技大學應用英語系助理教授
吳泓璋，南台科技大學應用英語系研究生
電子信箱: jennychen@mail.stut.edu.tw

Research Background

English is the most powerful international language, especially in the international business occasion. Companies, enterprises and even government ministries need language experts to deal with professional documents and to negotiate with different experts from all over the world. According to Business Weekly (2007), TOEIC 900 will be the basic standard for one to sit at the international negotiating table. Institutes and universities of technology in Taiwan are aware that it is crucial to cultivate students' English ability as well as improving specific English competence to meet their future needs in the world of high technology and to participate in international affairs.

Facing the changing world, however, we are afraid that general English education cannot cover the field of specific language domain such as Business English and Financial English. We wonder if our country will develop language experts with field specific knowledge in the near future. The training of ESP experts with field specific knowledge has become one of our educational goals recently. ESP curriculum, especially Business English course, is provided in various universities in order to improve students' occupational English ability.

Actually, Business English courses have been designed as part of the curriculum in various universities and colleges for more than a decade (Kao, 1992). Interestingly, Business English courses might include professional business terms, communication skills, and even international trade common sense and it is very different from general English course (Chen, 2001). However, according to Lin (2003), most English learners in the vocational education had a low English proficiency which became a great barrier to these learners while studying professional courses and students. But these students still needed specific knowledge about the industry or they were unable to compete in the global market. Therefore, learners' urgent needs for

language improvement in specific knowledge domains and suggestions for Business English course design must be explored.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to understand students' perceptions of Business English courses. Specifically, this study aims to explore students' understandings, needs, and expectations of Business English courses. To understand students' definitions of Business English is the first step of the study. The learning purposes of the courses would not be blurred if the definition of the term, Business English, is clearly identified. The second purpose of the study is to get an overview of the needs of the learners, including their specific wants, shortcomings and necessities. It provides an overview of learners' needs and examines the practicality of the Business English courses. The third purpose of this study is to discover the essential factors that benefit effective teaching and that correspond to the expectations of the learners. Finally, students are encouraged to offer suggestions of improving the quality of Business English courses. In other words, this study is an attempt to make teachers better aware of the needs of their students and thus to design Business English courses and choose appropriate materials for students.

Research Questions
1. What are students' understandings of Business English?
2. What are students' needs for taking Business English courses?
3. What are students' expectations of Business English teachers?
4. What suggestions do students have for Business English courses?

Significance of the Study

The first and foremost contribution of this study is that it explores the needs of learners of Business English, and it is obvious that without taking into account the real needs of the learners, the course would lose its ultimate goal. In addition, this study helps instructors understand students' expectations of Business English courses. Without knowing the needs and expectations of the learners, curriculum planners will not be able to offer the courses for providing professional and language skills that are indispensable for students to compete in the job market and to further develop their careers. Only when students' needs are addressed will the quality of Business English courses be improved. Furthermore, if administrators can understand the teaching and learning conditions, administrators may arrange the curriculum at a better period and hire more competent instructors for their students. This study is a valuable guideline to instructors and students in Business English courses.

Literature Review

The History of Business English

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) indicated that ESP was an ignored area in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language or Second Language before 1960's. We would claim that the development of Business English, a subdivision of ESP, began in 1960's. Wang (2004) indicated that the status of Business English has become more and more important since 1960's. The main reason of the development of Business English is the massive expansion of international business.

However, the education of Business English only focused on teaching specialist vocabulary and terminology in specific business sectors in the

1960's (Cordeanu, et al., 1998). Learners accept different Business English training programs to learn specific Business English and used the language in their workplaces. On the surface, it seems that every learner meets the language requirements of his or her job. Nevertheless, some problems still exist and cannot be solved. For instance, people who serve in different departments or different companies even in different countries may need to communicate with each other to discuss working issues and solve different problems. If Business English training programs only focus on specialist vocabulary and terminology, it is very difficult for learners from different departments to reach the purpose of business communication.

Ellis and Johnson (1994) indicated that functional areas—giving suggestions, showing opinions gradually appeared in the Business English training programs in the late 1970's. Learners have more opportunities to improve their Business English communication ability. In the 1980's, the development of Business English education focused on the various language skills' training. In addition, authentic materials such as business magazines and annual report of a company are provided to Business English learners. St John (1996) pointed out that Business English has become booming since 1990 due to the global trade in business and economics. Nowadays, more and more people around the world are learning Business English in order to meet the trend of globalization.

Needs Analysis in ESP and Business English

Understanding learners' needs and reasons for learning or attending the course would be the primary concern for successful ESP or Business English courses (Chen, 1996; Huang, 2000; Huang & Chung, 2000; Johns & Price-Machado, 2001; Tsai, 1998). According to Lai (2005), "needs" of English learning for specific purposes can be divided into three parts: (1)

Needs refer to students' study or job requirements; (2) Needs are what students would like to gain from the language course; and (3) Needs can be interpreted as lacks of necessity.

Relevant studies have pointed out the fact that different ESP learners have different needs. Lai (2005) also described the strength of needs analysis. First, it can help administrators to arrange appropriate instructors to design appropriate curriculum and take appropriate instruction approaches. In addition, students with similar needs could be arranged in the same classrooms where they might gain more useful knowledge and practical skills. Secondly, if instructors design appropriate curriculum, students might enjoy the learning process more. The purpose of meaningful learning in a flexible, responsive curriculum might be reached within a short period of time. Finally, it aids instructors and students to understand the structure of the curriculum (notional-functional syllabus). On the other hand, students' learning anxiety might be reduced if they understand what the next step is.

Some relevant studies also investigated the needs of Business English learning. Tsui (1992) founded that non-native English speaking managerial staffs, who serves in the Science-Based Industrial Park in Hsin Chu, in Taiwan, desire to improve their Business English communication skills. Tsai (1998) investigated students' needs on the Business English course and discovered that students pay more attention to improving their English ability instead of absorbing Business background knowledge.

In fact, learners' needs may also be influenced by other reasons. St John (1996) indicated that the term "Business English" almost replaced "business letters" because writing letters is almost the only way people communicate with each other several decades ago. People wrote those business letters in order to export their companies' products or import some raw materials. Nowadays, with the growth of computer skills and technologies, people communicate with each other by e-mail, telephone and fax. Because of the changes, people discovered that the four skills, listening, speaking, reading,

and writing, in Business English plays important roles for them to communicate with their business partners. Although some people still write Business English letters now, the form of Business English letters has been changed a lot (Louhiala-Salminen, 1996).

Recently, the skill of listening and speaking is gradually becoming more important because going abroad is not a difficult task anymore. Improving learners' listening and speaking ability have become the primary concern for the instructors of Business English courses. Researchers began to pay their attention to communicative discourse analysis (Firth, 1995).

Business English Education in Taiwan

Business English has developed in Taiwan for more than two decades. Due to cooperation with the industrial policies such as the development of Asia-Pacific Regional Operations Center and the attending of WTO, many universities are offering different kinds of Business English courses. In fact, Li (1980) pointed out the importance of Business English in Taiwan. Huang (2007) indicated that the development of Business English shares the important elements of curriculum design, material selection, teaching technique and teacher training. However, the development of Business English education in Taiwan also produces some problems for discussion.

Before we formally introduce the problems of Business English education, we have to discuss the problem of students' General English ability because Taiwan belongs to EFL country. Students have no opportunities to speak English after school. Students' poor English ability has become their huge barrier when they study professional English documents (Huang, 2007; Lai, 2005; Shie, 1995; Shiu, 1998). Shiu (1998) investigated the reasons why students have so many difficulties to express professional English. The results of the study could be divided into spoken part and

writing part. For spoken part, most students show that they have no confidence to speak English freely in front of their classmates because they are afraid of making any mistakes. In addition, vocabulary is another problem. Students do not have enough vocabulary to explain what they think. For writing part, most students indicated that poor grammar ability makes the structure of their written sentences wired. They cannot make sure the sentence structure is correct or incorrect. However, general English ability is the foundation of study professional English (Huang, 2007; Lai, 2005; Shiu, 1998). How could students study professional English successfully if their General English ability is not good enough?

The discussion of Business English educational problems in Taiwan is separated into two parts: curriculum design and materials, and theories and practice.

Curriculum design and materials.   Before designing the course of Business English, we have to consider a problem; that is, is it a Business course or English course? If it is a Business course, an English instructor should not be qualified to teach the course. If it is an English course, is it the same as a General English course (Kao, 1992)?

Huang (2007) defined that Business English integrates English and professional knowledge. Curriculum design should include General English (vocabulary, grammar skills, reading, etc.) and Business English (business terminology, expression of specific areas of business, producing annual report, etc.). Kao (1992) proposed that students study Business English in Taiwan need to concern two problems. One is the language (English); the other is the (Business) knowledge. Shr (1998) proposed that finance and international trade are two essential areas when students study Business English. Shie (1995) suggested that school authority should offer professional curriculum such as economics and international trade theory before Business English courses. Students will have better performances on Business English courses

because they have studied professional programs. Hsu (2006) suggested that Business English courses should be offered in senior class because students' English ability is better and instructors can teach real Business English such as business terminologies and business writing styles. Otherwise, it is hard to distinguish Business English courses and General English courses if these courses are offered in freshman or sophomore classes. On the other hand, most of the senior students are going to enter the society and find their first job. Business English belongs to practical training courses and it is useful and helpful on job hunting for students.

Many relevant studies in Taiwan suggested that Business English courses include Business knowledge and English part (Chen & Li, 1996; Shie, 1995; Tsai, 1998; Tsui, 1992; Wang, 2004). How do instructors design appropriate curriculum for their students? Huang (2007) suggested that needs analysis is extremely important at the beginning of the course. Students from Business College might have studied professional business courses. They may focus on improving their English ability. However, students from the Department of Applied English may want to increase their Business background knowledge. If Business English instructors do not understand students' needs, students' learning motivation might disappear quickly.

Different students attend various Business English courses with different learning background knowledge and learning motivation. We should concern one problem; that is, "what" and "how" to teach the course. We assume that the first problem is the selection of materials. According to Tsai (1998), "the choice of materials will have at least three effects on the process of the class (p. 801)." First, materials will determine what kinds of language skills students will be exposed to. Second, materials will affect students' learning method. Third, materials will affect students' learning motivation. Tsai (1998) also suggested that instructors choose a commercial textbook which provides extensive materials when heterogeneous students attend in a Business

English classroom. Besides textbooks, authentic material is another choice for students because students are from different departments and it is difficult for instructors to find an appropriate textbook to meet every student's needs. The qualified authentic materials should (1) be compatible with the syllabus; (2) provide alternative choice for instructors and students to develop their needs; (3) meet the level of students' language skills; and (4) have good reactions from people who have used them (Tsai, 1998).

On the other hand, Huang (2007) suggested that students with different background knowledge or language ability should be arranged in different Business English classrooms so that instructors can design more suitable curriculum. Tang (2006, p.24) proposed that good teaching materials for Business English may have some of the following features:

(1) Appropriateness – being suitable for a particular group of students or for a special occasions or condition.

(2) Relativity – being closely related to the teaching aim of a particular lesson.

(3) Timeliness – reflecting some latest information or news on Business.

(4) Fun – connecting with something that interests or appeals to students

(5) Multisensory modes, visual or auditory – creating real business circumstance and enhancing the appeal to students.

(6) Challenge – encouraging independent thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Huang (2007) suggested that the widely accepted or adopted textbook is still lacking in Taiwan. In addition, not only one textbook can be suitable for the whole semester. Therefore, instructors should have the responsibility to make suitable materials for their Business English courses' students.

Theories and Practices.   Wang (2003) listed five main reasons to demonstrate that there is a discrepancy existed between the school education and the industry. First, the training period for Business English courses is too

short. Students just learn the basic knowledge. Second, students lack of confidence because of their poor English ability. Third, students are unable to handle the complex environment because school education does not provide the training of cross-cultural awareness. Fourth, instructors cannot provide latest information for students so that students only contact with out-of-date information. Finally, students attend the Business English courses with different background knowledge. Hence, instructors have no idea to provide real suitable training materials.

Shr (1998) investigated the industries' needs of English in Taiwan. The result indicated that reading is the most useful skills in the business companies. However, English communication skill is used most frequently in the working places. In the field of tourism, listening and speaking skills are much more important than reading and writing skills. The study also investigated industries' expectations of English education for university students who major in the Department of Applied English. The results showed that General English training courses such as English conversation, listening and translation were most expected to be offered for students. ESP courses including Business English, Business English conversation, and letters writing were also expected to be offered for students.

We understand the fact that there is a gap between Business English teachers' expectation and business administrators' expectation. How do we narrow the gap to make the education of Business English more effective? Huang (2007) suggested that (1) case study, (2) role play and simulation, and (3) teamwork-tasks are good strategies to narrow the gap between school education and practice. Case study helps students to understand the current situations of business trend. Role play helps students with no working experiences to study various aspects of Business English in a specific working field. Teamwork-tasks provide an opportunity for students to learn

the importance of cooperation. In addition, teamwork-tasks would develop students' communication skills.

Research Method

In order to have a thorough understanding of students' perceptions of Business English courses, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were adopted in this study. The data sources of the study included a survey questionnaire and interviews with students.

Participants

The participants of this study were 219 college students who took Business English courses at a university of technology, including 182 females and 37 males. Participants were mainly from the Department of Applied English (72) and the Department of International Business (143). In addition, there were 4 students from other departments. Around one-fourth (54, 24.5%) of the participants were sophomore students. About one-third (72, 33%) of the students were junior students. More than 40% (92, 42%) of the students were senior students. In other words, three-fourth (164, 75%) of the participants who enrolled Business English courses were junior and senior students.

Table 1
Demographic Information of the Participants

	n	%
(Participants)		
Male	37	17
Female	182	83
Total	219	100
(Department)		
Applied English	72	33
International Business	143	65
Others	4	2
Total	219	100
(Grade)		
Sophomore	54	24.5
Junior	72	33
Senior	92	42
Others	1	0.5
Total	219	100

n= number of participants; %= percentage of participants

Questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) is designed to investigate learners' understanding of Business English and their expectations of Business English courses. Following the suggestions provided by experienced instructors and relevant literatures, the researchers then designed 20 closed questions for the participants. The first part of the questionnaire asks about participants' personal information. The second part focuses on participants' learning motivation, understanding, needs, and expectations of the Business English courses. The 20 closed questions for students include three parts: understanding, needs and expectations of the curriculum. These questions are listed in a Likert Scale column. According to each statement, participants can choose their tendency (strongly agree to strongly disagree) toward the statement.

Interview

In order to realize students' needs, expectations, and suggestions for Business English courses, interviews with students were employed in the study (see interview guide in Appendix B). Ten voluntary students participated in the interviews. Each student was given a unique code: AE1-AE5 are students from the Department of Applied English and IB1-IB5 are students from the Department of International Business. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher described the purpose of the study so that interviewees can understand the direction of the interview. Students are encouraged to show their needs for the curriculum such as what contents or skills should Business English learners study or practice, and what kinds of ability they expect to develop in the course. In addition, expectations from students toward their instructors were also discussed during the interview.

Data Collection Procedure

The procedure of the study comprises five steps. First, the researchers reviewed relevant studies concerning Business English education. Second, the researchers designed the survey questionnaire and interview questions for course participants. Third, the researchers consulted with three instructors to review and approve of the validity of the questionnaire. Fourth, the survey questionnaire was distributed to the 219 students who were taking Business English courses. Fifth, 10 voluntary students participated in the interviews to further explain their needs and expectations for the courses. After the data of the study were collected, the researches then analyzed the data.

Data analysis

The data from the survey questionnaire were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS 12.0). The descriptive results were used to answer researcher questions one to three. As for the analysis of the interviews, the researchers transcribed the recorded interviews at the very beginning of the analysis. After the transcription of each interview, the researcher categorized and analyzed the content of the transcription. Participants' viewpoints and suggestions were picked out to answer research questions one to four.

Results and Discussion

Discussion of the results of survey

The results reported in this section are based on the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire. The 219 undergraduate students from Applied English Department and International Business Department demonstrated their understandings and expectations of the Business English courses.

As for students' understandings of Business English, more than 80% of the students believe that Business English is used by general business enterprises. More than 83% of the students think that Business English is more formal and politer than general English. Around 90% of the students believe that Business English includes some business knowledge. This suggests that Business English learning includes both the training of English ability and the development of business knowledge. More than 90% of the students agree that learning Business English is helpful for job hunting in the near future. This result suggests that students understand the status of English in the job markets. Chen (2009) indicated that English ability is the oxygen

for job-hunters when they find their jobs. Around 95% of the students think that better English ability helps students to learn Business English. Table 2 presents the results of students' understanding of Business English.

Table 2 Students' understanding of Business English

I think that	SA (n%)	A (n%)	N (n%)	D (n%)	SD (n%)
1. Business English is used by general business enterprises	46 (21)	132 (60.3)	23 (10.5)	18 (8.2)	0 (0)
2. Business English is more formal and politer than general English	56 (25.6)	126 (57.5)	32 (14.6)	5 (2.3)	0 (0)
3. Business English includes some business knowledge	75 (34.2)	122 (55.7)	19 (8.7)	3 (1.4)	0 (0)
4. Learning Business English is helpful for job hunting	92 (42)	108 (49.3)	17 (7.8)	2 (0.9)	0 (0)
5. Better English ability helps to learn Business English	101 (46.1)	106 (48.4)	10 (4.6)	2 (0.9)	0 (0)

SA= strongly agree   A=agree   N= neutral   D=disagree   SD=strongly disagree
n=number of participants

As for students' expectations of the Business English courses, over 90% of the students point out that they want to improve their Business English ability. This result indicates that students have intensive learning motivation in learning Business English. Over 90% of the students expect that the course can offer them some business knowledge and no students disagree with this assumption. More than 66% of the students expect the course offers some financial knowledge. Around 70% of the students expect that the course offers them some international etiquette information. Compared with financial knowledge, students seem to be more interested in understanding international business culture. More than 84% of the students expect to learn some international business culture and to understand current situation of international business. Chen (2000) indicated that culture awareness plays a key role in success of multi-cultural business. To understand the current situations and cultures of international business might help students figure

out the differences between school education and real job markets. More than 85% of the students expect that the course help them improve their communication and negotiation ability.

More than 75% of the students expect that the course improves their presentation skills. This result indicates that students need both communication and negotiation ability and presentation skills to improve their speaking skills. About 90% of the students hope the course can improve their English ability so that they can deal with professional documents. According to these students' perceptions, English ability plays a key role in learning Business English. Around 90% of the students think that this course should introduce some terminologies. This result reflects that students expect to study some business and financial knowledge. More than 80% of the students expect the course should offer them practical training programs. Practical training programs also help students understand the differences between school education and real business environment. In addition, practical training programs help students accumulate their working experiences and increase their competitive ability in the job markets. Around 93% of the students expect to receive useful materials and no student disagreed with this assumption. More than 85% of the students expect to have Business English instructors with relevant working experiences. This result is consistent with the interview result that students believe that instructors' working experiences might help them offer more appropriate training programs for their students. Table 3 presents the results of students' expectations of the Business English courses.

Table 3 Students' expectation of Business English courses

I expect that	SA (n%)	A (n%)	N (n%)	D (n%)	SD (n%)
6. this course can improve my Business English knowledge.	96 (43.8)	111 (50.7)	9 (4.1)	3 (1.4)	0 (0)
7. this course can teach me some business knowledge.	79 (36.1)	120 (54.8)	20 (9.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
8. this course can teach me some financial knowledge.	52 (23.7)	93 (42.5)	69 (31.5)	5 (2.3)	0 (0)
9. this course can teach me international etiquette.	60 (27.4)	93 (42.5)	54 (24.7)	12 (5.5)	0 (0)
10. this course can help me to understand international business culture.	73 (33.3)	112 (51.1)	32 (14.6)	2 (0.9)	0 (0)
11. this course can help me to understand current situation of international business.	82 (37.4)	102 (46.6)	31 (14.2)	4 (1.8)	0 (0)
12. this course can help me to improve my communication and negotiation ability.	82 (37.4)	109 (49.8)	27 (12.3)	1 (0.5)	0 (0)
13. this course help me to improve my presentation skills.	57 (26)	108 (49.3)	48 (21.9)	5 (2.3)	1 (0.5)
14. this course help me to improve my English so that I can deal with professional documents.	94 (42.9)	101 (46.1)	23 (10.5)	1 (0.5)	0 (0)
15. this course introduces some terminologies.	97 (44.3)	98 (44.7)	21 (9.6)	3 (1.4)	0 (0)
16. this course provides practical training programs	83 (37.9)	93 (42.5)	42 (19.2)	1 (0.5)	0 (0)
17. this course provides useful materials	97 (44.3)	106 (48.4)	16 (7.3)	0 (0)	0 (0)
18. the course instructor has relevant working experiences.	87 (39.7)	103 (47)	29 (13.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)

SA= strongly agree   A=agree   N= neutral   D=disagree   SD=strongly disagree
n=number of participants

Finally, students are asked to evaluate their business knowledge and English ability after attending the courses. More than 75% of the students agree that their English ability has been improved. Around 90% of the students agree that their business knowledge has been improved after

attending the courses. According to the results, students believe that their business knowledge and English ability are improved after they attend Business English courses. Table 4 shows the results of students' self-evaluation of their Business English learning.

Table 4 Students' self-evaluation of their learning

After attending the course,	SA (n%)	A (n%)	N (n%)	D (n%)	SD (n%)
19. my English ability is improved.	57 (26)	108 (49.3)	48 (21.9)	5 (2.3)	1 (0.5)
20. my business knowledge is improved.	94 (42.9)	101 (46.1)	23 (10.5)	1 (0.5)	0 (0)

SA= strongly agree   A=agree   N= neutral   D=disagree   SD=strongly disagree
n=number of participants

Discussion of the results of interviews

Students' understandings of Business English.   Among the ten students, five students (AE1 to AE5) from the Department of Applied English believe that Business English is the English which is used in business or working places. AE2 believes that the words or phrases of Business English are more professional. It is different from general English. AE4 believes that Business English includes a lot of business knowledge.

Another five students (IB1 to IB5) from the Department of International Business basically agree with the students from Applied English Department that Business English is the English which is used in business or working places. Hsieh (2001) also suggested that Business English is the English used by office workers to accomplish any business tasks. However, they have some different opinions on the definition of Business English. IB3 believes that Business English is the language which entrepreneurs use for communication. IB4 suggests that Business English is a kind of modified English. He agrees with AE2 that Business English is more formal than

general English. The meaning of the words and phrases are more professional and more complex than general English.

Students from different departments have different understandings of Business English. Students who are from International Business Department tend to believe that the words or phrases used in Business English are more professional. The forms of Business English documents are relatively fixed. Quentin (2007, p.116) also indicated that "Business English is quite a narrow and clearly defined field. The range of transactions that people carry out in their jobs is often quite limited." On the other hand, students who are from Applied English Department tend to believe that Business English includes extensive business knowledge. They believe that one has to have some professional knowledge so as to read the business articles.

Learning problems.   Business major students might have more problems in language learning when they study Business English courses. According to Hou and Yang (2007), university students' English ability is far below the requirement of corporate world. IB1, 2, 3, and 5 indicate that they would try to solve their problems by themselves at first. They would surf the Internet to collect the resources they need when they have language learning problems. IB1 prefers to consult books and dictionaries. If these strategies do not work, they would try to ask the course instructor or classmates for help. IB4 indicates that he does not have language learning problems so far because his Business English material is not difficult for him to understand.

On the other hand, English major students might have more problems in understanding extensive business knowledge. AE2, 3, 4, and 5 indicate that they would surf the Internet to collect relevant resources they need when they face the problem of understanding business knowledge. AE1 said that she would try to study the materials by herself. If these strategies do not work, only AE1, 2, and 5 would ask classmates or instructor for help.

Students' needs for taking Business English courses.   Students have various reasons for enrolling Business English courses. IB1, 3 and 4 enroll the course because English ability is important in job market. IB 2 and 5 enroll the course because they are interested in learning Business English and they want to explore this professional field. On the other hand, AE 3, 4, and 5 indicate that the main reason for them to enroll the course is that they want to acquire professional business knowledge. AE1 and 2 enroll the course because they are interested in learning English. AE2 agrees with IB1, 3 and 4 that enrolling the course is helpful for hunting a job in the near future.

Students who are from the Department of International Business were asked to show what their wants in learning Business English. IB2, 3 and 5 indicate that they want to improve their English conversation ability. They also expect to learn some communication skills. IB1 said that she wanted to write a formal business letter in English. "Of course, I know the fact that communication skills are important for us. However, I believe that the ability of writing a formal Business English letter is more practical for us," she said. IB4 suggests that, according to his practical training experience, communication skills are the most important skill for business major students.

On the other hand, when students who are from the Department of Applied English were asked to show what their wants in learning Business English, they all want to learn more about business knowledge. AE1 mentions that she wants to know the specific meaning of some general words used in business or financial news. AE2, 3, 4, and 5 expect to learn more useful business knowledge to analyze current financial problems. They also hope that these practical business knowledge can solve their working problems in the near future.

Students' expectations of instructors.   All of the students believe that Business English instructors with working experiences are more qualified to teach the course. IB1, 2, and 3 indicate that instructors with working experiences understand the situation of job markets more. IB4 agrees with this point and he states, "I think that working experience is very important for a Business English instructor. Generally speaking, most of the instructors did not have working experiences in job markets. These instructors did not have the opportunity to contact with some specific customs or jargons. However, according to my practical training experience, those stuffs are very important in job markets."

IB5 believes that instructors with working experiences may share their experiences with students when teaching Business English courses. AE1, 3 and 4 agree with IB5 that they enjoy listening to their instructors' working experiences so much. They also point out that instructors' working experiences enable them to elaborate business concepts for students.

Besides working experiences, students have more expectations for their instructors. When students are asked to give some suggestions to their Business English instructors, students from International Business Department tend to give more suggestions on language training part. However, English major students tend to give more suggestions on business knowledge part. IB1 suggests that instructors should provide supplementary materials for students. "One textbook cannot meet all students' needs," she said. IB3 strongly agrees with IB1 that instructors should not teach with one textbook only. "Instructors should adapt the materials in order to meet various students' needs." he said. IB2 expects to read more business articles from magazines or business news. However, IB4 expects to improve his English listening and speaking ability.

Students also expect to improve the relationship between Business English instructors and students. IB1 and IB5 expect that the interaction between instructor and students can be improved. They do not like that the

Business English teacher becomes a one man show. IB5 said, "When the classroom atmosphere and the interaction between instructor and students become better, I am more willing to attend the course."

Since English major students have more learning problems in understanding business knowledge, AE1 suggests that instructors should explain business knowledge with simpler words. Otherwise, she cannot understand at all because she never read those materials. AE4 suggests that instructors should divide a class into several groups and give students some time for discussion during the class. Students would have the opportunity to discuss their learning problems with their classmates. AE2 and 4 expect that the material could be more practical so that students can follow the steps of the society.

When students are asked to express whether they are satisfied with their Business English courses or not, most of them give positive answers. However, IB2 and 4 believe that their Business English courses still have room for improvement. They believe that instructors should adjust the teaching contexts to meet students' needs. They indicate that one textbook cannot meet the needs of all students. As for English major students, they are satisfied with the business knowledge they have learned. AE1, 2 and 5 indicate that the basic business knowledge they have learned is quite practical and they can apply these business concepts to other subjects.

Further suggestions on learning Business English.   Students from International Business Department and Applied English Department have some suggestions to the courses. IB2 suggests that the authority should increase the teaching hours for the courses. IB4 suggests that the authority should invite some executives to teach the courses so that the gap between textbook and job markets can be narrowed. AE1 discovers that there is a gap between school education and job markets. Therefore, she expects that the

authority had better arrange some practical training programs for students. AE4 suggests that the authority should arrange more business training courses for students.

Conclusion

Business English courses are now being offered in different departments in various universities. Students who enroll Business English courses might be from different departments. In this study, most of the students who are studying Business English courses are from Applied English Department or International Business Department. Students who are from the Department of International Business expect to improve their general English ability. They think that writing is the most difficult skill when they learn English. On the other hand, students who are from the Department of Applied English expect to absorb more business-related knowledge. Many students indicate that it is difficult for them to understand business-related knowledge within a short time. They expect their Business English instructors slow down the speed of teaching business knowledge. Finally, all of the students believe deeply that learning Business English will help them find a better job in the near future.

The administrators of the school programs are encouraged to arrange Business English courses for senior students because senior students usually have better English ability. As Hsu (2006) indicated, the second semester of the fourth year is the best period for students to learn Business English. Generally speaking, senior students enter the job markets after they graduate from universities. Students who enroll Business English courses will learn some practical skills which are basic requirements in the job markets. In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that the administrators of the school programs offer Business English courses in the senior year.

Limitations and Suggestions

Two limitations were acknowledged with respect to this study. First, since the subjects in the present study were students taking Business English courses in the same university, it would be less valid to apply the results to learners in other areas of Taiwan. It is suggested that future studies explore students' needs and expectations of Business English courses in other universities. Second, due to time constraint and limited expenses, only students' perceptions of Business English courses were investigated. It is suggested that future studies investigate teachers' and industries' perceptions of students' needs for Business English courses to make comparison and to further provide a comprehensive analysis of Business English.

References

Anthony, L. (2004). *Defining English for specific purposes and the role of the ESP Practitioner.* Center for language research 1997 Annual review. Retrieve on March 27, 2009, from the World Wide Web Site: http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/abstracts/Aizukiyo97.pdf

Chen, C. C. (2001). *Needs analysis and listening strategies training of English lab course for occupational purposes in colleges — A case study in college of Commerce, NCCU.* Unpublished Master's Thesis, National Chengchi University.

Chen, P. C. (1996). *ESP: A holistic instructional approach for college business English teaching.* Tainan: Fuh-Wen Book Co.

Cordeanu, A., Ivanescu, R., & Stefan, R. (1998). Teaching business English. *Prosper,* 14-18.

Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (1998). *Development in ESP-A multi-disciplinary approach.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, M., & Johnson, C. M. (1994). *Teaching Business English.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Firth, A. (1995). Introduction and overview. In Firth, A. (Ed.), *The discourse of negotiation: Studies of language in the workplace.* Oxford: Pergamon. Hsieh, L.T. (2001). Business English: How and what to teach. *National Pingtung Institute of Commerce*, *3*, 59-70.

Huang, S. C. (2000). *Needs analysis for business English—the perspective of working students.* The proceedings of the 9th International Symposium on English Teaching, 381-392. Taipei: Crane Publishing Co.

Huang, S. C., and Chung, J.M. (2000). *Learning subject matter in a whole English environment—exploring relevant factors affecting student performance.* Proceedings of the 9th Conference on English Teaching and Learning in Republic of China, 14-23. Taipei: Crane Publishing

Co.

Huang, H. H. (2007). Problems and suggestions in business English teaching at institute of technology. *Chungyu Institute Of Technology, 13,* 83-90.

Johns, A. M., & Price-Machado, D. (2001). English for Specific Purposes (ESP): Tailoring courses to students' needs-and to the outside world. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.) *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 43-54)*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Kao, S. W. (1992). Teaching business English in Taiwan: A problem review. *China Junior College of Industrial and Commercial Management,13*, 16-51. Lai, C. Y. (2005). *A study on applied English department students' needs for taking English for specific purposes courses and students' perceptions of an effective ESP teacher*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Southern Taiwan University.

Lin, Y. Y. (2003). *Analysis of Course Design for Applied English Department in Southern Taiwan*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, National Kaohsiung Normal University.

Louhiala-Salminen, L. (1996). The business communication classroom vs. reality: what should we teach today?. *English for Specific Purposes, 15,* 37-51.

Quentin, B. (2007). Letter from Quentin Brand: No.1: Doing Business English. *Manager today, 29*, 114-117.

St. John, M. J. (1996). Business is booming: Business English in the 1990s. *English for Specific Purposes, 15,* 3-18.

Tang, P. (2006). A call for the communicative teaching of EIB. *Sino-US English Teaching, 3*(7)*, 22-25.

Tsai, M. J. (1998). *A course design for Business English.* The proceedings of the 7th International Symposium on English Teaching, 797-808. Taipei: Crane Publishing Co.

Tsui, C. J. (1992). English business communication skills training needs of

non-native English-speaking managers: A case in Taiwan. *The bulletin of the association for business communication, 60(1),* 40-41.

Wang, W. H. (2007). *Insights and perspectives of reading miscue analysis for English-majors and ESP university students in Southern Taiwan.* Unpublished Master's Thesis, National Kaohsiung Normal University.

Wang, Y. C. (2004). *Business English courses at the institute of technology: problems and a tentative model of team teaching.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Tamkang University.

Wu, S. C. (2004). *The vocabulary learning strategies of undergraduate Taiwanese English majors enrolled in a Business English Course: A case study.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, National Tsing Hua University.

王娉婷 (2003)。專技校院英語系商用英語課程設計之困境與突破。第十二屆中華民國英語文教學國際研討會論文集。台北：文鶴出版社。頁 578-587。

李靜桂 (1980)。對商用英文的認識。台中商專學報，12，頁 97-111。

吳怡萱 (2007)。多益九百分才夠格上國際談判桌。商業周刊，1037，2008 年 11 月 2 日 取自

http://www.businessweekly.com.tw/article.php?id=28422&p=3

侯曉憶、楊吉慶 (2007)。技專校院學生英語能力分析：以樹德科技大學為例。長榮大學學報，第十一卷，第一期。頁 107-123。

陳璧清、李元墩 (1996)。商用英文課程設計與教學規劃。英語教學，第二十卷，第四期。英語教學雜誌社 發行。

陳美琪 (2000)。了解最合宜的商務溝通模式：國際商業文化。能力雜誌，第五百三十六期。頁 129。

陳 免 (2009) 。保飯碗 ABC 成職場必備能力打敗菜英文。今周刊，637，2009 年 11 月 27 日 取自

http://www.nownews.com/2009/03/07/320-2417238.htm

許蔚農 (1998)。專業英文表達困境之探討。第七屆中華民國英語文教學
國際研討會論文集(第一冊)。台北：文鶴出版社。頁 441-447。許
正義 (2006)。離開大學前的最後一門必修課：商用英文寫作。敦煌
英語教學　電子雜誌。取自　http://www.cavesbooks.com.tw/e_
magazine/e_magazine_article.aspx?language1=0&sn=181

謝玉娥 (1995)。如何提昇商專商用英文課程及教學效能。技術及職業教
育(雙月刊)，29，頁 42-45。

Appendix A

Questionnaire

本學術研究問卷乃是針對正在修習商業英語文的學生所設計的，目的在
了解您的學習情況與需求，您的填答內容將僅適用於學術用途，請您安
心填答，最後感謝您撥冗填寫本問卷！

請圈選最合適的答案

1. 性別： 1. 男生   2. 女生

2. 年齡： 1.小於 19   2. 20-21   3. 22-23   4.24-25   5. 25 以上

3. 年級：

A. 二技部　1. 一年級　2. 二年級　3. 延修生

B. 四技部　1. 一年級　2. 二年級　3. 三年級　4. 四年級　5. 延
修生

4. 主修科系：

A. 人文學院：1.應用英語系所 2.應用日語系所

B. 商管學院：1.國際企業系所 2.行銷與流通管理系所 3.企業管
理系所

其他系所_____

	非常同意	同意	尚可	不同意	非常不同意
(我認為…)					
1. 商務英文就是一般商業界所使用的英文。	5	4	3	2	1
2. 商務英文比一般日常生活所用的英文正式且客套。	5	4	3	2	1
3. 商務英文會包含些許的商業知識在裡面。	5	4	3	2	1
4. 學好商務英文這門課對日後的求職會有幫助。	5	4	3	2	1
5. 有良好的英文基礎能讓商務英文的學習更加順利。	5	4	3	2	1
(我期盼…)					
6. 我想增加自己對商務英語文領域的認識。					
7. 這門課能傳授我有關商業相關領域的知識。	5	4	3	2	1
8. 這門課能傳授我有關財經相關領域的知識。	5	4	3	2	1
9. 這門課能教導我國際商務禮儀。	5	4	3	2	1
10. 這門課能讓我了解國際商場文化。	5	4	3	2	1
11. 這門課能讓我了解國際間的商業現況。	5	4	3	2	1
12. 這門課能讓我增進職場上的溝通談判技巧	5	4	3	2	1
13. 這門課能讓我增進我的商務簡報技巧。	5	4	3	2	1
14. 這門課能讓我增強處理專業文件的語文能力。	5	4	3	2	1
15. 這門課能介紹常見的專業字彙。	5	4	3	2	1
16. 這門課能提供學生到校外實習的機會。	5	4	3	2	1
17. 這門課的老師能提供比較實用性的教材。	5	4	3	2	1
18. 這門課的老師最好有實務上的工作經驗。	5	4	3	2	1
(修完這門課後…)					
19. 我的商務英文能力有所提升。	5	4	3	2	1
20. 我的商學專業知識有所進步。	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix B

Interview Guide

1. 請您跟我們分享一下為什麼會參與這門課程呢?
2. 就您個人的認知來談,您個人如何定義商務英語這個名詞呢?

(請同學依實際情形 3.4 題擇一回答)

3. 身為語文領域的學生,學習商務英語課程時難免會遇到廣泛的商業知識,當您遇到無法理解的商學專業領域時,請問您如何克服其中的困難呢?
4. 身為非語文領域的學生,學習商務英語課程時難免會面對語言理解上的障礙,當您遇到無法理解的文字或句型時,請問您如何克服其中的困難呢?
5. 在商務英語這門課當中,您個人認為學生應該學到哪些內容或技能呢?為什麼?(請您詳細地描述)
6. 身為一位學習者,您期盼此門課程的授課教師具有怎麼樣的專業背景,您又期望教師採用怎麼樣的指導方式指導您所修習的商務英語文呢?
7. 您認為具備實務上的工作經驗對於一位商務英語科的教師來說重要嗎?
8. 就一位學習者的角度來衡量,您對於您所接觸到的教材或學習到的知識內容滿意嗎?為什麼?
9.最後請問您對於商務英語文的養成教育是否有其他的補充意見呢?

以下為受訪者的個人資訊:
請問您的主修科系為?
請問您學習商務英語文相關課程的時間大約是多久?
請問您選修或必修過的商務英語文課程的科目名稱?
對於畢業後是否有打算投入相關領域的工作呢?

性別: 男   女

年齡: