Identification of Communication Needs and Spoken Competence of Business Education Students in English for Specific Purposes

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ABSTRACT

Policy makers and academicians are focusing on designing innovative research areas for professional development of students. Communication skills shape important part of and lead towards successful segment of professional development. The purpose of this study research was to study the communicative needs of business students in English for Specific Purposes context. It further aimed at examining the weak areas in English speaking skill and the spoken competence level of business students. The sample of the study was 160 students of Business Education Program of a university. The sample was selected using convenient sampling technique. Oral Proficiency test and Checklist were used to collect data on grammar, accent, comprehension, coherence, vocabulary, fluency and confidence. The collected data were analyzed in quantitative terms. The results revealed that the students of Business Education Program lacked grammar, comprehension, fluency and confidence regarding using English for Specific Purposes. They were found good at technical vocabulary, accent and coherence. The study recommended measure to improve spoken competence of business education students for ESP.

KEYWORDS: Communication needs, Spoken competence, Business education.

1   INTRODUCTION

English is dominating at national and international level in all domains of life. New learners of English have got much importance because they are required specific English according to their profession and demands of the markers. The language teaching professionals have developed the courses to fulfill the needs of the learners. However, professionals and students are facing problems particularly the students of second/foreign language because the designing of specific course in the ESP context is not fulfilling the needs of the students.

The professional students need to develop English proficiency and the ability in order to execute it in personal and group communication activities in both oral and written forms. The industry, academy, core subject teachers, students and the English teaching fraternity themselves often found that the students ability to produce their own language to communicate in English is fairly feeble and quite incomprehensible.

Apart from specific career selection, one should be proficient to English speaking and formal writing to achieve something in this most demanding world. On the other hand communication has became the lifeline of every organization and organization is a group of people, to flourish and function their organization they have to communicate and exchange information to set rules for making decisions, agreements and contracts etc. (Herbert & Murphy 1997). Speaking skills enhance Communication as well as professional skills, helps in personality development and improves relationships among societies.

In Pakistan, focus is on teaching/learning grammatical structures and vocabulary rather than its usage in varied contexts. Students are often seen tumbling in speaking skill especially when they step into their professional life. This test is concerned to know the proficiency level of business students in order to suggest the ways to improve their spoken to pacify the demands of profession. Speaking is a very important communication skill. This study is aimed at knowing the level of oral communication skills of the sample, as it is essential for survival in professional field where English is the language of communication.

The present study may be useful for:

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- Institutions to provide suitable infrastructure.
- Policy makers to modify the syllabus according to the
students needs.
- Teachers to improve their teaching methodology.
- Students to improve their learning styles.

The study is designed to identify, investigate and examine the communicative needs of business (MBE) students in ESP context.

1.1   Objectives of the Study
1.   To identify communicative needs of the business students.
2.   To examine the spoken competence level of M.BE students.
3.   To suggest some guidelines to improve spoken communication of M.BE students.
1.2   Research Questions
1.   What are the communicative needs of business students?
2.   What is the spoken competence level of MBE students?
3.   How they can improve spoken communication?

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Bovee (2010) states that in 1960's, as General English courses turned into failure to meet learner's wants then English for Special Purposes occurred as a term. To design ESP courses, register analysis was accustomed in commencement; however, to meet preferred results, using just register analysis was unsuccessful and accordingly to meet these supposed failures, novel courses were planned. In ESP course design, Target situation analysis turned into the foremost as the stakeholders and employers required in order to make courses better meet their needs. Dudley & Johns (1998) stated that all over the world, English for specific purposes is demanded.
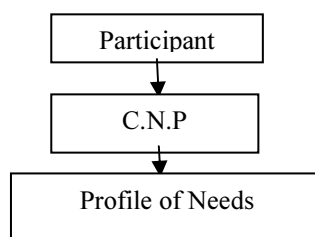**2.1   Needs Analysis: Munby's approach to needs analysis.**
 He proposed his approach to need analysis in his attempt to contribute to syllabus design which rapidly depicted immense interest of syllabus designers, mainly the originators of ESP. His work is summed up in brief that his model contains two stages:
Communication Needs Processor (CNP) and the interpretation of the profile of needs derived from the CNP in terms of micro-skills and micro-functions. Under eight variables, the CNP is commenced that influence communicative needs by systematize them as stricture in a dynamic relationship to each other. By coming across at its 'Inputs'; the foreign language contestants and information regarding the contestant's identity and language.
Jordan (1997) termed Munby's model as 'target-situation analysis' approach, one among many approaches to needs analysis. Jordan remarks Munby's work is considered as a signpost/landmark in the development of needs analysis in ESP and a huge influence on ESP as it offered a novel image on individual needs plus almost certainly the finest recognized framework for target-situation analysis.
Helen (2010) states that needs analysis is referred to a course expansion procedure in ESP. For the learners' current status of knowledge, the language and skills are recognized and regarded that the learners will utilize in their professional workplace in this procedure, plus their needs' insights and the teaching context's realistic possibilities and restrictions. From this procedure, the acquired information is applied in establishing and improving the content and scheme of the ESP course. The needs analysis process consists of: Target situation analysis, Discourse analysis, Learner factor analysis and Teaching context analysis.
McDonough, (1984) says that Munby's representation's heart (model) is called 'Communicative Needs Processor (C.N.P)'. Participant's details as in his/her age, sex, mother tongue etc is provided into the C.N.P which involves numerous sorts and one finishes with a needs' profile after these types have been worked. This profile is construed in order to get information about the learner's language skills

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┌─────────────────┐
│   Participant   │
└─────────────────┘
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         ▼
┌─────────────────┐
│      C.N.P      │
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         │
         ▼
┌─────────────────┐
│ Profile of Needs│
└─────────────────┘
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English for specific purposes means English for particular group in a specific situation and to achieve these purposes. Dudley and John (1998) explain stages of ESP process as needs analysis, Course design, teaching methodology, assessment and evaluation. There is no single one most prominent but equally essential as well interdependent. These stages develop a cycle in which each stage provided bases to its next as needs analysis provide bases to collect and product material and according to material methodology are selected and methodology directed toward specific type of assessment.

Stages in the ESP process
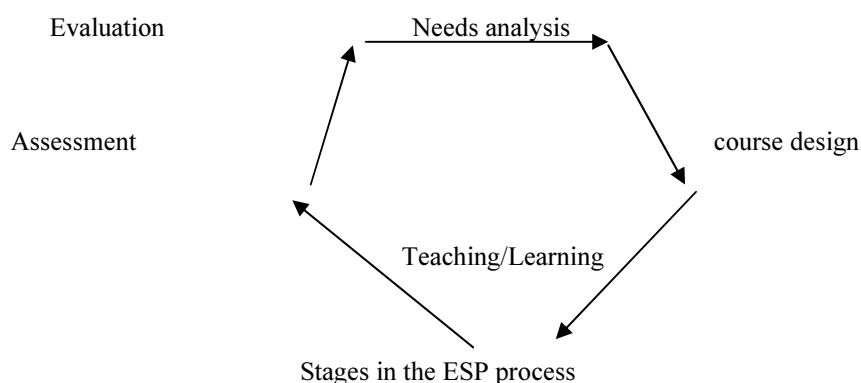
2.2   Business Communication

Communication involves conveying or expressing ones thought and ideas in a useful or effective manner. The main objective of communication is to enhance one's performance in professional and social life. A business communication is how you communicate in your line of work. Good business communication is elemental to meet the demands of the business environment. This is the fact that with skillful communication one's has good and effective business. In business, mainly we deal with the oral and written communication. So, verbal or oral communication is as important as written. Many people or even professionals lack aptitude and confidence to make oral communication. Strong Business Communication skills are decisive to the success of any organization irrelevant its size, geographical location, and its mission. The organization has to frequently altered and adopted the ways of effective communication processes for its well reputation and development. This global environment forces us to think about communication issues against the backdrop of culture, technology and competition, which continually raise legal and ethical concerns. Eventually, any organization can achieve its objectives or targets within both internal and external environment with the augmentation of good business communication skills. (Murphy, 1997 & Bovee, 2010 & Pearson - Nelson, 1991).

2.3   Business English in Pakistan

Azra Ahmed, (2012) states that in Pakistan, accompanied by numerous regional languages more than sixty languages are spoken hence Pakistan is a multilingual society. More than 75% of Pakistanis comprehend Urdu, the lingua franca, because it is the national language of Pakistan but English is the official language and utilized for official business, government and legal agreements purposes further English which is spoken now in Pakistan is recognized as Pakistani English having local dialect like the Indo English etc. In business communication, English and Urdu are the languages which are used most frequently and in Pakistan, English is normally applied both for peripheral being as a dominating language, that is, for in-company usage every sort of information is

intended, work in partnership, systematize, plan, etc., and, for planned ideas anterior communication is utilized, communication by the exchange of letters expected at organization's transmission and demonstration, verbal & written, generally exterior the organization. However, which language should be used to a larger level is decided by the business' size and nature. However, written communication is generally used in English whereas oral communication is primarily in Urdu but an amusing fact is that most of the business English (BE) learners desire to be competent in English in order to communicate orally, conceivably getting back to its position as the language that opens up chances termed as a nation's language having a socio-economic periphery in society and the ruling privileged. Another fascinating fact is that frequently job interviews are not in English even when speaking in English is not requisite from the employee and in countries, business English a significant constituent of ESP is formulated by this state of affairs such as Pakistan who have yet to get over their imperial past.

2.4   Principles for Effective Business Communication: **The seven essentials of business communication.**
There are seven essentials of business communication proposed by Mary Ellen. To communicate effectively, one should utilize these essential elements to deliver successful business communication. The seven essential elements to successful business communication by Hopkins (2011) are: Structure**,** Clarity**,** Consistency**,** Medium**,** Relevancy**,** Primacy/Regency**,** Psychological Rule of 7±2.
If one is going to communicate effectively in business it is essential that s/he has to take hold of these seven elements.
Structure: actually deals with the organization of communication. It is about how one structures/organizes his/her communication to make it fully understandable by the receiver. A good communication is always consisting on three structural elements:
•   An opening – It allocates the receiver to know what communication is about (describes clearly desired action)
•   A body – It is said t be the heart of one's message. Explanation of the nature of arguments by providing details regarding the action.(the message that one communicates all the facts and figures)
•   A closing – conclusion or summing up the communication (End pleasantly with goodwill statement)
This structural rule grasp true no matter what your communication is -- a memo, a phone call, a voice mail message, a personal presentation, a speech, an email, a webpage, or a multi-media presentation.
Clarity: demands the use of simple language and easy sentence structure. Message should be clear and to the point in order to make the communication understandable. It is easy for decoder to grasp the meaning being conveyed by the encoder, if message is clear in presenting ideas. Giving a confused message to audience only ends up with them being confused and your message being ignored.
Consistency: The process of business communication needs consistency/reliability. It deals with the level of intensity of the message. The ideas must not be fluctuating because this can prevent suspect of the audience towards the communicator. When/if distrust is obtained it should be resolve effectively.
Medium: It is the most important element while communication. Communicator should decide first the appropriate medium to deliver the message. Medium works as a tool in effectively communicating with the audiences. One should communicate message with accuracy and in an understandable way.
Choosing the right medium is obviously critical. Choosing wrong medium and you could end up spending a whole lot of time and money on a very visually attractive business communication that delivers next-to-zero ROI (return on investment).
Relevancy: It is very important in every message to be communicated or pass on. One should deliver or communicate that is needed and interesting for the receiver. If one needs receiver/audience to pay close attention then s/he must avoid dull presentations or way to communicate. One should provide relevant information that is needed and to grasp audience's attention one should use interesting alternative resources that more fully convey message.
Primacy/Recency: It deals with the business communication's ability to be remembered by one or both of two (following) things:
•   The power and memory ability of its opening
•   The power and memory ability of its close

According to psychologists, "Primacy Effect" is the effect of remembering the first few items presented/delivered in a message/communication. "Recency Effect" is the effect of remembering the last few items presented/delivered in a message/communication. Both opening and closing effects are important to keep things in memory. A powerful opening can be anything that captures the audience's attention like a joke, a quote, a short story or a short activity.

Business communication skills also use the psychological rule of 7±2. The audience have tendency to only remember seven plus or minus two. This is the normal capacity of one's memory to store information. Therefore this might prevent learning process to happen.

2.5   Previous Researches

A research was conducting by Rayan & Shetty (2008) to assess the learners' needs and to assess what skills set employers look for when they recruit engineering graduates and to evaluate the existing course materials. The research tools used for analyzing learners 'needs and evaluating Engineering English curriculums was: Researcher's observation, Questionnaires, Interviews, Job advertisements, End-semester results, Communication apprehension tests, Proficiency tests, Literature related to ESP / EST, Documents related to engineers 'communicative needs.

The sample was selected of 110 from different sections and the conclusion was: there is a gap between the target situation (employment market) and the existing proficiency of learners. The reasons for this gap are absence of effective syllabus, methodology, course organization, assessment and learning outcome. The absences of standard course books contribute to students 'lack of English language and communication skills.

A study conducted by Agarwal and Chintranshi (2012) concluded that business management teachers were more deficient in oral communication than written communication. It was recommended to introduce spoken English classes and might be offered in two semesters instead of one. This study was conducted byRajabi and Azarpour (2011) to investigate the academic needs of the Business Administration students in the use of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at Malayer Islamic Azad University. A total of 45 male senior students majoring in Business Administration were selected through random sampling. They were taking ESP as a compulsory course during their university studies at Malayer IAU. Besides, two ESP instructors who were teaching English to the subjects were interviewed to investigate their ideas about the questions of the study. The methodology underlying the research was both quantitative (through the implementation of the students' questionnaire) and qualitative (the teachers' interviews). The findings revealed that reading and writing skills have great importance in classroom practice while speaking got high priority in success in future jobs of these students.

The research was conducting by Freihat and Machzoomiz (2012),aimed at investigating the diverse forms of oral communication, particularly in English, ESP Jordanian business graduate employees practice in the diverse workplace settings. A survey questionnaire was distributed in 2010 to employers of Isra University business graduate employees (with Bachelor of Business degrees) to establish the picture of workplace oral communication for them. Out of a pool of 96 relevant companies, 24 completed the study survey questionnaire. The data from the survey were computer analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The study revealed that business graduate employees require experience and instruction in a range of oral communication settings and that they will be disadvantaged in the workplace if they lack such skills. It is recommended that these should be embedded in oral communication activities in a university business curriculum.

Jiajing (2007) conducted the study in order to Design an ESP course for Chinese University Students of Business. The research tool was questionnaire to produce a large amount of information about many different issues such as communication difficulties, preferred learning styles, preferred classroom activities, attitudes and beliefs. A combination of pre-course, mid-course and post-course analysis is conducted in order to see what students need to learn and improve upon through this course. ESP course design should start from analyzing learners' particular needs and wants. Based on learners' needs and their future language use, goals and objectives of the course can be determined, a process which involves consideration of specific grammatical functions, terminology comprehension, and the abilities required for future workplace communication.

This study aims to examine the communication needs of the personnel in the workplace by shedding light on their perceptions needs, wants and lacks. Also it attempts to explore the workers' attitudes toward English and the use of English in the workplace. The sample consists of thirty senior personnel who are equally distributed by

type of work. The data was collected by means of a questionnaire, interviews, and analysis of authentic workplace texts. The results of this study have shown that the workers' perceptions of their needs, wants and lacks are greatly affected by their attitudes toward English. The findings presented here bear on orientations toward the importance of studying ESP as a means of communication in relation to the group of workers using it and the workplace in which it is used (Al-Khatib, 2005).

3   METHOD AND PROCEDURE

3.1   Design of the study

The purpose of the research is "to study the communicative needs of M.BE students in ESP context.' This study under reference is quantitative research a formal, objective, systematic process for obtaining information about the world.

3.3   Sample of the study

The sample was 80 students studying in masters in business administration in a public sector university in Lahore. It was selected through convenient sampling techniques. The average age of the participants was 23 years old.

3.4   Instrument of the research

For the purpose of the research, two instruments were used to collect data.

- Oral proficiency test
- Checklist

Oral proficiency test.

Test's specifications.

It aims at assessing students' ability to apply grammatical principles and to use lexical items accurately and appropriately in varied contexts. It comprises on the following content area:

- Vocabulary should be related to the technical field.
- Fluency students must speak fluently.
- Accent student's pronunciation.
- Cohesion and coherence: ideas should relate to each other logically.
- Grammar students' ability to apply rules and their grammatical forms. Student's ability to use forms accurately and appropriately according to language functions.
- Confidence and comprehension students must speak with confidence and their opinions should be understandable to the listener.

The oral proficiency test includes 5 questions that will measure different aspects of interviewees' speaking ability. The test lasts approximately 5 minutes. For each type of question, examinees will be given specific directions, including the time allowed for Preparation and speaking.

Questions	Task	Criterion
1	Read the text aloud	Accent
1-2-3	Respond to the questions	Relevancy to content Grammar Vocabulary
5	Presentation Or Describe a picture	Confidence Cohesion All above

Checklist.

The checklist was prepared by the researchers to check and rank the oral proficiency of the sample and the prepared checklist (See the Appendix C). This was 5 Likert scale indicating:

5: Poor

 4: Satisfactory

 3: Good

2: Very Good
1: Excellent

3.5 Procedure of Data Collection

The subjects were contacted and explained about the nature of research and a letter was signed by the business students to get their willingness for oral test. Possible use of data was told to them. For the collection of data, the structured interview was conducted with business students, they were asked to speak freely to answer the questions. It was ensured that same level of guidance was given to each respondent. Ample instructions were given by both the researchers to the respondents so that they could speak freely about that and the samples' responses were recording. After listening the recordings the 5 likert (excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, poor) checklists were ranked individually. There was no biasness in data collection. The nature of the research had been explained to each and every respondent equally and clearly.

3.6 Reliability Statistics

The measure was taken the reliability by the application of Cronbach, s Alpha. The value of data was computed with the help of SPSS. The value for the study was 0.824 which is considered good for educational research.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table –1 Accent description on Oral Proficiency Test

Accent	Percentage					Mean	SD
Subscale	Excellent	V.Good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor		
Pronunciation	8.8%	30.0%	35.0%	20.0%	6.2%	2.85	1.04458
Intonation	1.3	25.0	36.5	32.5	5.0	3.15	.90148
Stress	2.5	18.8	33.8	37.5	7.5	3.28	.94392

Table 1 indicates that most of the respondents were good in pronunciation (Mean= 2.85), similarly most of the respondents were good and the satisfactory in intonation (Mean= 3.15), and then in stress area, most of the respondents got score on satisfactory and then on good (Mean= 3.28). Students got low score on intonation, pronunciation and stress respectively.

Table –2 Grammar description on Oral Proficiency Test

Grammar	Percentage					Mean	SD
Subscale	Excellent	V.Good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor		
Use of Pronouns and gender	10.0	26.3	45.0	16.3	2.5	2.7500	.93457
Use of Singular and Plural forms	11.2	26.2	41.2	20.0	1.2	2.7375	.95126
Use of appropriate sentence structure	17.5	18.8	36.2	32.2	1.2	2.75	1.07327

Table 2 indicates that most of the respondents were good in use of pronouns and gender (Mean= 2.75), similarly most of the respondents were good and then very good in use of singular and plural forms (Mean= 2.73), and then in the use of appropriate sentence structure, most of the respondents got score on good and then on satisfactory (Mean= 3.28). Students got low score on intonation, pronunciation and stress respectively.

Table –3 Comprehension description on Oral Proficiency Test

Comprehension	Percentage					Mean	SD
Subscale	Excellent	V.Good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor		
Clarity	7.5	33.8	27.5	26.2	5.0	2.85	1.04790
Completeness	13.8	16.2	43.8	22.5	3.8	2.86	1.04025

Table –4 Vocabulary description on Oral Proficiency Test

Vocabulary	Percentage					Mean	SD
Subscale	Excellent	V.Good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor		
Technical Vocabulary	12.5	21.2	27.5	31.2	7.5	3.00	1.15835
Wide vocabulary	7.5	26.2	27.5	23.8	15.0	3.50	3.54358
Flexibility	7.5	26.2	20.	28.8	17.5	3.2250	1.23222

5.   Conclusions

The conclusions were drawn regarding English spoken proficiency of business students are;

1-   Students are very good at technical vocabulary with highest rank.

2-   Students' performance is good regarding accent with high rank but less than vocabulary.

3-   At coherence their performance is overall good.

4-   Students are lacking at comprehension but better than grammar.

5-   Grammar is weak area of spoken English of business students.

6-   Confidence and fluency got lowest rank and these are weakest areas of English speaking skill.

7-   Overall students' performance is good at vocabulary, coherence and accent comparatively to Grammar, comprehension, confidence and fluency.

8-   It was found that overall competence level is low.

After investigating the communicative needs of business students, the researchers have reached to the conclusion that most of the students are lacking in grammar, comprehension, fluency and confidence. The researchers also found them good at technical vocabulary, coherence and accent and conclude that overall their oral competence level is low. After knowing the weak areas researchers have suggested some guidelines to improve their lacking areas. It is hoped that this study may bring benefits to students in enhancing their learning.

6.   Recommendations

In English language, speaking skill includes fluency, pronunciation, and grammatical accuracy, confidence, cohesion & coherence and comprehension. It means one has to focus on improving these areas in order to be proficient in communication. There are several ways to enhance speaking skill in English language.

1. One should start participating in discussion on certain topics in English with your friends, classmates and teachers as much as you can. Usually students feel hesitation and fear of being criticized by others. One should not feel hesitation even if mistakes are occurred while speaking in English because mistakes are part of learning process and one can't learn until s/he makes mistakes.

2.   Correct pronunciation plays vital role in speaking because pronunciation can change the meaning of a word. One should watch TV shows that are in English in order to get a rich exposure to the local dialects and speech mannerism because pronunciation can be enhanced by listening rather than learning. One can improve pronunciation by listening to English news daily, songs, watching English movies and another better way is to use "Talking Dictionary". The best but interesting way to terminate the supposed 'Thick Accentor Non-Standard' is by imitating local (American or English) style and slang. Another way is that one can record his/her audio and listen to it, after that practice more to get better in the pronunciation.

3.   Grammatical accuracy is the significant element of fine speaking skill. There is a little time to think of grammatical rules in speaking relatively as in writing. To enhance and develop grammatical accuracy, the way is by practicing the application of grammar rules by using accurate verb forms, tense and parts of in spoken English. One can get command on it by speaking in English and paying attention to grammatical accuracy.

4.   One should use CALL software to improve language skills.

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