

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study has been conducted to enable the writer to design a Business English course for third-year English majors in the Foreign Language Department of Guangxi University for Nationals who need to acquire basic Business English that will allow them to work in international business contexts in the future. The research was particularly guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the needs for using Business English among graduate English majors of Guangxi University for Nationals (GUN) who are presently working in international businesses.
2. To identify the preferred teaching methodologies of third-year English majors who are presently studying in the Foreign Language Department of Guangxi University for Nationals.
3. To design a Business English syllabus for third-year English majors studying at Guangxi University for Nationals based on the identified needs (cited in items 1 and 2).

The needs analysis was conducted by using two sets of questionnaires. The Business English Needs Questionnaire was accomplished by twenty English majors who previously studied in Guangxi University for Nationals and are presently

working in international businesses. The Teaching Methodology Preference Questionnaire was accomplished by thirty third-year English majors currently studying at Guangxi University for Nationals.

The statistical measures used in analyzing the data were frequency distribution, percentage, and the arithmetic mean. The results were as follows:

5.1.1 Results from the Business English Needs Questionnaire

The twenty graduate GNU English majors who are presently working in international businesses indicated that Business English was necessary in their daily work. Of the fifty-five skills listed in the questionnaire, forty-one items (75%) were rated as "often used." Nine items (16%) were rated "very often used" and five items were rated as "used occasionally." None of the items was reported to be "used a little" or "rarely."

In terms of listening and speaking skills, the respondents indicated that they have to explain terms, give opinions and express agreement or disagreement at meetings, deal with time and schedules, give greetings, and present a product to a prospective buyer /customer most often in their work. They used English only occasionally to nominate a topic for discussion at meetings, order meals or drinks, and ask about the food price at business lunch or dinner. As for reading skills, the respondents indicated that they needed to read English faxes and memos very often, while they read English telexes occasionally. With regards to writing skills, the respondents stated that they needed to write meeting agendas, minutes and memos very often but they only needed to write telexes occasionally.

Some skills not listed in the questionnaire were reported to be needed in the respondents' work. The respondents said that they needed to ask questions about foreign companies and introduce a division or department while meeting foreign business people. They needed to describe food and do some social chat while interacting with foreign business people. Moreover, at work, they needed to read job application forms, menus and E-commerce. They also needed to write timetables, invitations, greeting cards and fill out job application forms.

5.1.2 Results from Teaching Methodology Preference Questionnaire

In terms of the teacher's teaching methods used in class, the respondents indicated that student-centered activities such as games, class conversations and group work should be used in class. On the other hand, they indicated that traditional activities in which the teacher dominates the class, like the teacher lectures all the time and the teacher explains everything should not be used in class. Furthermore, the respondents stated that they agreed that the teacher would give them tasks to work on and give them more time to discuss in class. As for instructional medium, the respondents said that they agreed to use bilingual (Chinese and English) in class. They also agreed with the idea that the teachers team-teach in class. However, the respondents could not decide whether the teacher should speak English the whole class time. In terms of the teacher's presentation of the teaching points, the respondents indicated that they strongly agreed that the teacher should give some examples when explaining the teaching points. They also agreed that the teacher review the materials presented previously before presenting new materials.

The findings on the kinds of materials used in class show that the respondents strongly agreed that the teacher should use visual aids such as overhead projector, video and pictures in class. Regarding materials, such as audio aids, computer technology, print media and authentic materials, the respondents also agreed that these should be used.

With regards to assessment methods, the respondents indicated that they agreed that the teacher should give a grade for class participation, increase the value or weight of the grade for assignments while the value or weight of midterm and final grades should be decreased. However, the respondents did not agree that the teacher should give them short tests periodically. Concerning teachers' feedback, the respondents strongly agreed that the teacher should write advice or comments in their work. They agreed that the teacher should mark and correct every mistake in their work. At the same time, the respondents agreed that the teacher should give them oral feedback after completing tasks in class.

5.2 Discussion

Based on the results, all skills which are listed in the Business English Needs Questionnaire were reported to be needed in the respondents' work (16% rated as "very often used", 75% as "often used", and 9% as "used occasionally"). This result shows that the graduate respondents who studied general English in school have to use Business English at work. This implies that in addition to general English, English majors should acquire specific English which will enable them to handle their intended work. Since the current GUN curriculum for English majors does not

include Business English courses, it is recommended that the curriculum be readjusted so as to open a Business English course for students who want to work in international businesses.

Considering the findings, all skills listed in the questionnaire, and those not listed in the questionnaire but were indicated to be needed should be included in the syllabus. Skills which were rated as the most needed should be prioritized in the syllabus. These skills are: expressing terms, giving opinions and expressing agreement or disagreement at meetings; dealing with time and schedules and greeting in socializing for business purposes; presenting a product to a prospective buyer/customer; reading faxes and memos; and writing meeting agendas, minutes, and memos.

In terms of teaching methodology, the result of the Teaching Methodology Preference Questionnaire shows that, on the one hand, the respondents preferred student-centered activities to teacher-dominated activities. Therefore, in-class activities, such as conversation, group-work, and games should be employed rather than devoting the whole time to lecturing or teacher-talk. Furthermore, the teacher should give students tasks to work on and give them more time to discuss in class.

On the other hand, the respondents indicated that they still heavily relied on their teachers' feedback. The respondents "strongly agreed" that the teacher should write comments or advice on their work. They agreed that the teacher should mark and correct every mistake in their written work. They also agreed that the teacher should give them oral feedback. Such attitudes might be due to the fact that in Chinese culture, students look up to their teacher as authority. Students might think

that they are not knowledgeable enough to detect and correct errors themselves. In addition, since Business English concerns specialized contents which English majors might not be familiar with, teacher feedback is more important than in other courses. It is therefore recommended that the teacher give both oral and written feedback on students' work. This does not necessarily mean that the teacher should mark and correct every mistake in students' work. What is more important is that the teacher can make the students become aware of their strengths and weaknesses. A teacher-student conference or consultation may be a good way to motivate students to think and convey teacher feedback. In a teacher-student conference or consultation, students may be grouped into groups of four or five. The teacher may assign the students to discuss or peer-assess their work. The teacher may go around and join group discussion. Each group may choose a representative to present their results. The teacher may finally synthesize the students' presentation and convey his/her feedback.

As for the teacher's presentation, the teacher should give several examples or models for the teaching points as indicated by the respondents. The teacher should also review previously presented materials before presenting a new one.

Concerning the use of teaching aids, since the respondents indicated that they agreed to use all of the teaching aids listed in the questionnaire, these should be used in class. The Foreign Language Department of GUN has a multimedia laboratory equipped with an overhead projector (OHP), video and audio players, and computers. One session each week may be held in the language laboratory.

Regarding testing and evaluation, while the respondents indicated that they would like that the assignments be given a higher weight than that of examinations,

this researcher believes that the evaluation or marking system should not rigidly follow such scheme because the objective for the assignment is different from that of examinations. An assignment or a take-home task is given for the purpose of giving students more practice and study time, thereby developing writing skill while that of an examination is to measure teaching and learning effectivity. The respondents also indicated that they do not want a class to have short tests (quizzes) periodically, however, this researcher believes that an occasional quiz can be very helpful for the students since it will check their grasp of the content and development in a particular skill at a particular period in the course. The nature of Business English, like that of other ESP courses, is such that it has quite a heavy load of content other than the English language (structure) itself. Hence, occasional quizzes are necessary to check students' understanding of the business facts or information content. Hence, a 50%-50% scheme is recommended: assignment (weekly writing outputs collected into a portfolio) 40%, classroom participation 10%, or a total of 50% for assignments and class participation; occasional quizzes 10%, mid-term examination 20%, and final examination 20%, or a total of 50% for quizzes and examinations.

5.3 Conclusion

The findings of this research show that the English majors at GUN who are preparing to work in an international business context need to take a specific course in Business English. Moreover, the research has also shown that the Business English course should not be developed simply based on assumed needs but on actual identified needs of the learners, and the specific context or the target situations. The

syllabus design and materials selection should focus on the target learners' needs. This research study has identified the third-year English majors' target needs and learning needs for a Business English course. Based on the learners' needs, this researcher proposes a syllabus and some instructional materials for the specific course in Business English.

5.4 Recommendations

In this section, the researcher proposes a syllabus and some instructional materials based on the finding presented in the previously chapter. In addition, the researcher gives some suggestions for the teacher for considering before and while teaching this course.

5.4.1 The Proposed Syllabus

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher proposes a syllabus which includes the title of the course, course objectives, the course content, teaching methods, and a general evaluation format.

The Title of the Course

Specifically, this course is designed for the third-year English majors in the Foreign Language Department of Guangxi University for Nationals, who want to acquire basic Business English skills which will allow them to work in an international business context in the future. Thus, the course is named: Basic Business English.

Course Description

Basic Business English is for third-year English majors at the Foreign Language Department, Guangxi University for Nationals, who already possess considerable knowledge of English and want to be able to handle basic business situations in English. The situations chosen are those that students will most likely encounter in English: job applications and interviews, meeting foreign contacts and talking about companies, telephoning, socializing for business purposes, marketing, sales, and advertising

Course Objectives

The course aims to increase students' awareness of the language used in business and enable students to use the English skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in basic business situations. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. answer and raise questions in a job interview;
2. talk with foreign contacts and get to know them;
3. introduce themselves and other people;
4. make contact, exchange information and do business over the phone;
5. open a meeting, get views across and make, reject, and accept suggestions in a meeting;
6. hold social conversations with business contacts;
7. present a product or service to business people;

8. discuss payment, express or answer a complaint, and express approval or disapproval in negotiation;
9. find out information about job applicants from job application letters and resumes;
10. scan classified advertisements for the needed information;
11. grasp the main point and the specific details of business reports and business plans;
12. read business correspondence;
13. write documents concerning job applications;
14. write personal profiles;
15. jot down key words while taking a phone message;
16. write business correspondence;
17. write meeting agendas, minutes; and
18. write product descriptions and advertisements for companies.

The Course Contents

The syllabus is designed to enable learners to acquire language skills in basic business communicative situations. All the English skills, which were rated “very often,” “often” and “occasionally used” as well as those skills which were added by the respondents as necessary in their daily work, are included in the contents. Those skills are divided into listening and speaking, reading, and writing. These tasks can be categorized according to their business functions, thus: (1) Job applications and interviews, (2) Meeting people and talking about companies, (3) Telephoning,

(4) Meeting (5) Socializing for business purposes, (6) Marketing, sales, and advertising (See Table 27, pp. 61 - 63).

PAYYAP UNIVERSITY

Table 27: The Course Contents

Topic	Tasks	Listening and speaking	Reading	Writing
Job Applications and Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing for a job interview • asking and answering questions in a job interview • informing the job applicants the results of job application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asking an interviewee about educational background, personal background, work experience and the likes. • asking an interviewee for further information • raising questions to the interviewer about company, fringe benefits, holidays and the likes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • classified ads. (about employment) • job application forms • job application letters • resumes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • filling out job application forms • job application letters • resumes • letters offering a job • letters denying a job
Meeting Foreign Business People and Talking about Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing a personal profiles • introducing your company • describing your and others jobs and responsibilities • asking questions about foreign companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introducing a company • describing jobs • describing responsibilities • introducing a division or a department • asking questions about foreign companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • company structures • descriptions • company profiles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal profiles

Table 27: The Course Contents (Continued)

Topic	Tasks	Listening and Speaking	Reading	Writing
Telephoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spelling and noting down key words in a telephone • doing business over a phone • writing letters confirming telephone calls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • starting the phone • taking and leaving phone messages • placing an order over a phone • making appointments over a phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • memos • telexes • faxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • memos • phone messages • letters of confirming a phone call • faxes
Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holding a topic to discuss • expressing your opinion and asking opinions of your colleagues • making, rejecting and accepting suggestions • writing meeting agenda, minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nominating a topic for discussion • asking for explanation • explaining terms, giving opinions • expressing agreement or disagreement • summarizing, restating, or rephrasing • making suggestion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business reports • business plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business reports • meeting agenda, minutes.

Table 27: The Contents (Continued)

Topic	Tasks	Listening and Speaking	Reading	Writing
Socializing for Business Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making and changing arrangements for social activities for foreign contacts ordering food and explaining food at a business meal holding social conversation with foreign contacts writing invitation letters, cards, greeting cards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making arrangements ordering meals or drinks asking about prices dealing with time and schedules explaining foods greeting social chitchatting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> menus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> timetables invitation letters, cards greeting cards
Marketing, Sales, and Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> presenting a product or service negotiating a business arrangement writing business letters concerning marketing and sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> presenting a product or service to a prospective buyer/customer discussing payments expressing approval or disapproval in negotiation expressing or answering a complaint in negotiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> product descriptions sales letters classified advertisement (about product) E-commerce contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> product descriptions sales letters letters of placing or acknowledging an order claim and adjustment letters advertisements for the company letters of inquiry and requests

The Proposed Teaching Methods

- Lectures
- Conversations
- Discussions
- Small group activities
- Games/Role-play
- Using IT
- Team-teaching
- Giving models/samples

The Proposed Course Evaluation

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • Assignments (weekly writing outputs collected into a portfolio) | 40% |
| • Class participation | 10% |
| • Occasional quizzes | 10% |
| • Mid-term examination | 20% |
| • Final examination | 20% |

5.3.2 Recommended Materials

Based on the finding, the researcher recommends two textbooks as the texts for this course.

Business Objectives, written by Vichi Hollett, and published by Oxford University Press in 1991 is recommended as the basic text. The *Business*

Objectives package consists of a student's book, a workbook, a teacher's book and an audio-cassette. The student's book contains a grammar summary, a complete and carefully explained glossary of terms and role-play notes. The workbook is closely linked to the student's book syllabus and provides useful practices and consolidation exercises. It is accompanied by an answer-key. The teacher's book includes answers to all the exercises in the student's book, full tape scripts of the material recorded on the cassette, and classroom notes for each unit.

One reason for choosing this book is that the units of the book are organized according to specific Business English objectives so that each unit provides the everyday language, structures, and conversational strategies which students need to communicate in a typical business situation. These objectives meet the Business English needs listed in the designed syllabus and requested by the respondents (For the contents of *Business Objectives* (1991), see Appendix C, pp. 85-91).

Unit One, "Meeting People", and Unit Three "Company Presentation" serve to teach the English skills of introducing a company and its divisions or departments, describing jobs and responsibilities, reading company structures and writing personal profiles needed in the business situation of meeting foreign contacts and talking about a company.

Unit Two, which deals with telephoning for business purposes, can be used to teach the English skills needed in making contact, exchanging information and doing business over the phone, specifically: initiating the phone call; taking and

leaving phone messages; placing an order through a phone; making arrangement through a phone; writing letters confirming a phone call.

Unit Six, “Socializing”, and Unit Eight, “Making Arrangements” can be used for teaching English skills such as ordering meals or drink, asking about prices, reading menus and describing food, greeting, social chitchatting and making arrangements needed in socializing for business purposes.

Unit Seven, “Meetings” can serve to teach the English skills needed to participate effectively in meetings, such as holding a meeting to discuss a topic, expressing and asking for opinions, making, rejecting and accepting suggestions and writing meeting agendas, and minutes.

Unit Four, “Product Description”, Unit Fourteen, “Achievements”, and Unit Sixteen, “Negotiation” can be used to teach English skills such as presenting a product, discussing payment, expressing approval or disapproval in negotiation and writing advertisements for the company, concerning marketing, sales and advertizing.

Other reasons for choosing this book as the text for this course are:

1. The package includes good listening and reading materials adapted from international companies. A wide range of international voices is heard on the cassettes. A good number of the materials which are adapted from authentic sources meet the needs of the target group of this course design, as indicated in the interpretation of the needs analysis.
2. The student-centered approach employed in the package invites learners to participate in group work, game/role-play, conversation, and discussion

activities in class, which the respondents had indicated as their learning activities.

3. Key business vocabulary is presented in contexts. It includes a glossary of terms which will be very helpful for the English majors who are not familiar with business terms.

Although *Business Objectives* can serve to teach most of the language skill areas listed in the designed syllabus, the book does not provide sufficient materials to teach business correspondence. Therefore, the researcher recommends another textbook as a companion text for the purpose of teaching business correspondence.

Modern Business Correspondence (Sixth Edition), written by Donna C. McComas and Marilyn L. Satterwhites, and published by Macmillan/McGraw-Hill in 1993, has been designed to help learners develop the ability to plan and write successful business letters, memos, and informal reports. The book presents the fundamentals of business writing logically, clearly, and completely. The text divides its coverage of business writing into four major parts: Principles of Good Letter Writing, Writing Effective Memos and Reports, Writing Effective Business Letters, and Employment Communications. Each part begins with an introduction which gives the learner a brief preview of the key concepts to be covered in the units within that part of the text. It subsequently proceeds to the unit lesson which guides the learner in exploring principles and techniques in writing on a specific topic in business correspondence. Carefully selected examples are also given. Finally, the worksheet following each instructional unit provides exercises correlated with the material in that particular unit for practice in handling realistic

communication problems (For the contents of the *Modern Business Correspondence*, see Appendix D, pp. 92-95).

Some parts of this textbook offer good materials to teach writing business letters as listed in the proposed syllabus. Part Two, “Writing Effective Memos and Reports” can serve to teach writing routine memos, reports, meeting agendas, and minutes of meetings.

Part Three, “Write Effective Business Letters”, is used for teaching writing letters of inquiry and requests, letters of placing or acknowledging an order, sales letters, claim and adjustment letters, invitations and faxes.

Part Four, “Employment Communication”, deals with writing job application letters, resumes and other employment-related correspondence. It also provides instruction on filling out job application forms.

In addition, web resource, Business English Links for ESL which can be accessed at [http://www. Geocities.com/Kurtracy](http://www.Geocities.com/Kurtracy), may be a good resource for finding supplementary materials and for students’ self-access study materials. The site is an educational resource for ESL teachers and students interested in teaching or learning Business English. It links to other sites concerning Business English and serves as both a source of activities and lessons and as a guide to resources that may be adapted to business lessons for English as second language or English as a foreign language. The contents include: Lessons/Resource for Students, Magazines and Newspapers, Activities/Resources for Teachers, Other Business Information Sources, Business Writing Links, Dictionaries and Glossaries, Online Business Courses, and Professional Organizations.

5.4.3 Suggestions for Teachers

The researcher would also like to mention some points that teachers might consider before teaching this course:

1. As Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) state, none of the available materials exactly meet the needs of a particular learner or group. Thus, when developing teaching materials, the ESP teacher should select appropriately from what is available and adapt the materials and provide supplements so that the materials developed can meet the needs of the target learner. Although the course designer has recommended some texts for teaching this course, some of them might not be appropriate for and sufficient in real teaching. Therefore, in real teaching, the teacher should consult the learners periodically so that the teacher and the students could continue identifying the students' language needs. In this way, the teacher could adjust the activities and find appropriate supplementary materials to meet the needs of the learner. An interview using checklists or a teacher-student conference concerning students learning needs periodically might be of help. In this purpose, teachers may consult the more recent edition (1996) of *Business Objectives*. In fact, ideally, an open-syllabus system should be adopted, in which the teacher adapts as many authentic materials as possible. However, the reality in most teaching-learning contexts is that teachers have to teach many large classes; hence, preparing teaching materials which often require some amount of adaptation poses some limitations. Hence, textbooks are recommended in this study.

2. The tradition in education of separating the Humanities and Sciences is also true in China. In such structure, languages are allocated to the Humanities area. Hence, English majors often study only non-humanities courses or subjects. Business concepts and terms might pose some problems for English majors. Thus, the teacher should spend some time in teaching business concepts and terms. The list of terms, appearing in *Business Objectives* (Student's Book) can be a good resource.
3. The teacher might have a similar problem of not being sufficiently familiar with the specialized contents. However, it is not necessary for the teacher to be a business teacher. If the teacher has a positive attitude towards business and has some knowledge of the fundamental principles of business, she or he can be an effective Business English teacher. For some specialized topics which the teacher is unfamiliar, he/she may invite business teachers to team-teach with her/him. It is also recommended that the teacher use bilingual (instruction in English and Chinese) to present teaching points which include business concepts which the students may not understand in English.
4. In a Business English course, performance objectives are more important than learning objectives. Therefore, classroom activities such as games/role-play, group work, conversations and discussions, which allow the student to perform the tasks in a "real situation" should be employed as much as possible. Furthermore, such learning or activities engage the students in problem-solving, decision-making and team-building which are important skills in handling a business situation.