

# PERSPECTIVE OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCE STUDENTS TOWARDS THE USAGE AND IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS ENGLISH AT A PRIVATE SECTOR BUSINESS SCHOOL

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## Abstract

*Business English has been in the spotlight because international business contexts regard English as an international lingua franca. This study aimed to explore perspective of management science students towards the usage and importance of Business English at a private sector business school. The study was conducted using quantitative approach through the use of survey in which the usage and importance of Business English was analyzed using the data that was collected on the perspectives of the students. The research was conducted in a private sector business school. A total of 105 students participated in filling in the questionnaires. Convenience sampling was used as the sampling technique in this study because the researcher collected data from the students he taught in the research site. The data was analyzed with the help of simple descriptive statistics. The findings showed that overall score of 18.71 out of total 28 points reflects that the students are concerned and they do give high weightage (of 66.8%) to business English in their lives. 72% students acknowledged that business English is essential for their future prospective. Therefore, it may be concluded that there is a need to fill the gap between the demand of Business English and ability to use it.*

**Keywords:** Business English, Business School, Business Communication Skills, Private Sector.

**JEL Classification:** Z000

## Introduction

Language has connected people across the globe, and it has made it possible for them to conquer knowledge in almost all domains of life and more. With the expansion of modern communication technology, multinational organizations have established themselves across the world. Globally, people of international business use business English among themselves. In this context, business

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English classrooms offer a genuine prospect of practicing business English which is vital in actual life business circumstances. Rao (2017) assert that business and management are an unavoidable element of the society which may be national or international using business English as the principal source of language. The business community prefers business English as the language of trade.

According to Anderson (2010), almost six thousand nine hundred and nine languages are spoken around the world. With so many languages, the communication gap between people and nations has widened and broadened. According to Raja (2013), “Communication has become one of the markers of social solidarity, social ranking and professional capabilities and most of the components of the language are learnt through this medium” (p. 154). Business English has reduced these communication gaps and business english has functioned as a global lingua franca. This language has become a bridge for the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Crystal (2000) estimates that around 1.5 billion people speak English either as native, second or foreign language. English is a widely used language in the world and it is a major source of information access and retrieval for students. This makes it important for English teachers to be more sensitive towards their teaching and they should ensure that students get good command on this language. According to Lee (2000), English Language teachers should take responsibility; they should facilitate students and make them feel citizens of a global classroom, practicing business English on a global level. Today English language has more non-native speakers than native speakers. Crystal (1997) calls English a truly global language. It is English language that acts as a bridge that links us and the outside world. It is the learning of this language which can make people a member of the global village.

With the ever growing demand of business English lately, research on business English has been undertaken at a massive level. Business English has been in the spotlight because international business contexts regard English as an international lingua franca. Research on business communication skills and strategies (Chew, 2005; Louhiala-Salminen, 1996) started by investigating frequently used business communication skills, but then shifted its focus into communication strategies for effective communication in business, applying the findings and the implications of discourse analysis research on business English use. Therefore, its importance is undeniable for the countries like Pakistan where it happens to be the only language that connects her with other countries of the world. Besides its value in trade, commerce and many other fields, its significance in higher education is increasing rapidly as well. According to Sim (2012), English is unquestionably the international language of business and because we are living in a world of business changing as rapidly as it has never had before, we find ourselves in front of new and ever growing challenges when it comes to teaching Business English.

In order to compete internationally, it is imperative that students in Pakistan, especially those pursuing higher education needs to be proficient in Business English. According to Jenkins (2003), “Currently, there are approximately seventy-five territories where English is spoken either as a first language (L1), or as an official (i.e. institutionalized) second language (L2) in fields such as govern-

ment, law and education". Despite the presence of English in almost every level of the Pakistani education system and the abundant amount of time students spend on it; many students have expressed their concerns about not being capable of using English proficiently. There have been many attempts to help students improve their language proficiency of business English and increase their motivation and confidence to use it proficiently. This study looks into issues related to the usage and importance of business English in the perspectives of management science students at a private sector business school in Karachi, Pakistan. For this study, a total of 105 students, participated in filling in the questionnaires.

### *Aim of the Study*

The study aimed to find out perspective of management science students regarding the usage and importance of Business English as a mean of communication at a private sector business school.

### *Research questions:*

1. Which medium do the students of management sciences use and prefer at a private sector business school for the purpose of communication, instruction and studying?
2. What is the attitude of the students of management sciences students studying in a private sector business school towards Business English?
3. What do the students of management sciences students studying in a private sector business school think about Business English regarding their future careers?

### *Significance of the Study*

The status of English in education should be determined with due consideration of its expanding functions. This study attempted to find out the ideas, ideologies, opinions, views, and attitudes of the management science students towards Business English. English is a global language, it has become very important especially for teachers and students to learn and use this language not only to become the citizens of the vast shrinking world but also to compete internationally. Raja (2017) asserts that, "in today's world, good communication skills are needed the most at all level" (p. 97) and Business English is used for communication globally.

### *English Courses in Research Site*

The private sector business school chosen as the research site offers three English courses to its students. No student is eligible to take an advance course without passing the pre-requisite courses. These three courses include Business English, Public Speaking and Official Communication & Report Writing. Each English course which is offered in this institute is of three credit hours (i.e. 30 sessions of 1.25 hrs. each session) in a semester. Keeping the current market trend and the important role of English in students' professional lives, great emphasis is given to spoken English besides

writing skills. Various language promoting activities and events are organized in each English course at this university and participation of the students taking English courses is mandatory in these activities and events. These include declamations, debates, 'rapid fire speech' contests, formal presentations, 'advertisements', turn back speeches, dramatics and skits, poster exhibitions, 'English supermarkets', parliamentary debates, simulation of business meetings, interviews, story narration competitions, and the rest. Through these activities, students are exposed to the basic formats and principles of communication in order to strengthen their soft skills for workplace effectiveness and competency building. The focus is on the various forms of written and oral communication that are helpful and, in most cases, necessary in real-life business situations or in personal life. This helps the participants in their self-analysis as well as appraisal by their colleagues. With a view to create awareness and appreciation among the students of their existing level of communication skills, their participation in the activities and the projects ensures that they sharpen up their receptive as well as expressive communication skills.

English has been a major cause of tension and social division between the elite and the 'Englishless' (Sultana, 2012, p.50) masses, in the countries that were once colonized by an English speaking nation, such as Philippines (Tollefson, 2000), Nigeria, Tanzania, and Kenya (Bamgbose, 2003), India (Bhatt, 2005), or Sri Lanka (Canagarajah, 1999). The English ruled India for less than a century but English arrived here much earlier and it seems that it will never leave the subcontinent that now includes Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. English in these countries is playing a vital role in all walks of life. Pakistan, being part of the British colony till 1947, is also a multicultural and multilingual society. Pakistan's language policy in education keeps taking turns with different governments. Urdu was declared the national and the primary official language of the country, English the language of knowledge, technology and international communication as an important second language (University grants commission report, 1982).

Abbas (1998) writes that the educational policy declared English a compulsory subject for B.A, B.SC degrees. All science subjects would be taught in English. Some humanities subjects would be optionally taught in English otherwise, students would be taught and examined in Urdu. There came a time when efforts were made to replace English with Urdu. It was expected that English would be phased out at the provincial as well as federal level but after so many years, English is the code in which most of the official communication is carried out. According to Rahman (2004), national language (s) was supposed to replace English eventually as an official language by a certain date, but many such dates matured and expired and English persisted to be as firmly engrained in the realm of supremacy as it had been at the time of its inception. According to (2014, p.87), "Although, mother tongue serves as the best mode of instruction at the primary school level for the cognitive growth of pupil, Urdu, the national language, which is the second language for most Pakistanis as well, is preferred".

Ghose (2005) writes that there is no longer a need to consider the argument for and against the retention of English as a means of communication, scholarship, research, management, finance

and education. She argues that as globalization spreads, it brings with it greater demand for people who know the English language. The literature review reveals that problems of English comprehension at the tertiary level are found in several Asian countries including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, etc.

Sultana (2003) investigated the reasons of students' failure in English at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh soon after independence English was made a compulsory subject at the primary and secondary level and the medium of instruction at the tertiary level and chief means of formal communication. In 1974, the education commission of Bangladesh though realized the importance of English but did not put forward any recommendation for keeping English as a compulsory subject in the universities. This resulted in confusion about the medium of instruction, in some it was Bengali and in others it was English and in few others, it was the mixture of the two. Out of this confusion, a contradictory situation evolved where officially and overtly Bengali was encouraged in all spheres of life but people having good English proficiency were with better job opportunities. Similarly in Pakistan, though English enjoys the status of co-official language with Urdu, it is also considered the symbol of prestige. In most educational institutes of Pakistan, English is dominantly used and in some cases students are fined for the use of any language other than English. In government schools of Pakistan, Urdu is dominantly used and in average private sector institutes a blend of both languages is followed. Consequently, those with better proficiency in English find better job market and better professional prospects. To combat this imbalance, students and even professionals register themselves in certification courses at various institutes. They invest a lot of money and time to improve their English language skills.

### **Methodology**

This research was conducted using quantitative approach through survey to explore perspective of management science students towards the use and importance of Business English in a private sector business school. The respondents, who filled in the questionnaire in this study, were 105 students. These students were fresh admissions and were enrolled in the Business English course.

#### *Data Collection Tools*

Questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. It consisted of ten closed ended questions, and 105 students filled in the questionnaire. Questionnaire was chosen because it is a time efficient technique of gathering data from a large population and roughly the same information is obtained across the respondents which help in data analysis.

#### **Sampling**

Convenience sampling was used in this study. According to Larvakas (2008), 'convenience

sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling in which people are sampled simply because they are "convenient" sources of data for researchers' (p.149). 105 management science students who were taught Business English were taken as participants for this study.

### Data Analysis

The questionnaire consists of close ended questions. A total of 105 students filled the questionnaire. Simple descriptive statistics was used to analyze the close ended questions and the same were presented with the help of bar graphs. Later, they are also analyzed and interpreted using a table (See appendix 2). The sample size drawn for this study was taken from one business school. This study can be further extended by increasing the scope of population by other researchers. This section of the research elaborates and analysis the data collected from the management science students of a private sector business school with the help of the questionnaire

1.You like/prefer reading reference books in\_\_\_\_\_.

Table 1

*Language Preferences for Reading Reference Books*

<b>Udu</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Both</b>
2.8%	57.1%	40.1%

In this questionnaire item, 3 options were provided to students. Only 2.8% students opted for Urdu as a choice whereas 57.1% students chose English as an option to suggest their preference of reading reference books. 40.1% students opted for the third option 'both' as their preference of reading reference books.

2.What should be the medium of education at university level?

Table 2

*Medium of Education Preferences*

<b>Udu</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Both</b>
5.7%	51.4%	42.9%

In this questionnaire item, table 2 shows that only 5.7% students opted for Urdu as medium of instruction at university level. 51.4% students showed their preference for English and 40.2% students choose the third option 'a mixture of both'.

3. Your proficiency level in English language is \_\_\_\_\_.

Table 3  
*Language Proficiency*

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
8.5%	36.3%	49.5%	5.7

In this questionnaire item, table 3 shows that 8.5% students confessed that their English language skills are poor. 5.7% students claimed that their English language skills are excellent. 36.3% students opted for option B 'good' and the other 49.5% students stated that their English language skills are fair.

4. What percentage of subject related reading material is available in English?

Table 4  
*Availability of Subject Related Material in English*

25%	50%	75%	100%
8.6%	11.4%	17.1%	62.9

According to table 4, 8.57% students believe that 25% subject related material is available in English and 11.42% students believe it to be 50%. A group of 17.1% students think that 75% subject related material is available in English and the other 62.8% students opted for the fourth option '100%'.

5. When someone outside the classroom speaks English, he/she is thought to be?

Table 5

*Perception towards Students Speaking English*

<b>Snobbish</b>	<b>Rude</b>	<b>Educated</b>	<b>Show Off</b>
0.0%	0.0%	47.7%	52.3

Table 5 reveals that 0% student thinks of other students as snobbish or rude when they speak English outside the classroom. In fact 47.7% students indicated that these students are considered educated, however 52.3% students believe that when someone speaks English outside the class with others, he/she is showing off their English language skills.

6. Students taking exams in English get better marks.

Table 6

*Perceptions towards Earned Grades*

<b>Always</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>
45.7%	42.9%	11.4%

As shown in table 6, 45.7% students think that those taking exams in English get better marks, 5.7% students disagreed with the statement. 42.9% students said sometimes students taking exams in English get better marks and 5.7% students opted for the last option 'never'.

7. What language does your teacher deliver the lectures in?

Table 7

*Medium of Instruction in Class*

<b>English</b>	<b>More in English</b>	<b>Urdu</b>	<b>Urdu</b>
21.9%	44.7%	30.6%	2.8



As shown in table 7, 21.9% students opted for option A, which is teachers deliver their lectures in English. 44.7% students said that teachers deliver their lectures more in English. 30.4% students claimed that lectures are delivered more in Urdu, whereas only 2.8% students said it is delivered in Urdu.

8.How important is English for your future career?

Table 8

*Importance of English for Future Career*

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
72.3%	25.8%	1.9%	0.0%

According to table 8, 72.3% students agreed that English is very important for their future career. 25.7% believed it to be important. Only 1.9% thought that it is somewhat important, whereas 0% believed it to be unimportant.

9.When do you feel the need to communicate in English?

Table 9

*The Need to Use English*

<b>When Talking to a Teacher</b>	<b>During Classroom Discussion</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Never</b>
24.7%	8.5%	66.8%	0.0%

Table 9 reveals that 66.6% students think they feel the need to communicate in English when they are talking to the teacher or during the classroom discussion. 24.7% students feel the need to communicate in English when they talk to a teacher. Only 8.5% said they feel the need to communicate in English during classrooms discussions, whereas 0% opted for the option never.

10. According to you English language has become

Table 10

*Perception towards Importance of English in Society*

<b>The language for Better Communication</b>	<b>The Language of Knowledge</b>	<b>The Language of Elite Class of Society</b>	<b>All of the Above</b>
43.8%	20.9%	18.2%	17.1%

As shown in table 10, 43.8% students said that English is used as a language for better communication. 20.9% said that is the language of knowledge. According to 18% students, it is the language of elite class of society and only 17.1% students opted for option all of the above.

In order to have an objective analysis and conclusion about the replies/ preferences of the students surveyed, the replies of 105 students on all the ten questions of the survey have also been assigned numeric values for onward consolidation. This consolidation is done to conclude overall rating about both the usage of English and importance of English, being reflected by the participants of the survey. Furthermore, in order to understand overall results of usage of English and importance of English separately, this overall result has been bifurcated into two parts, i.e. usage of English and importance of English. The methodology to calculate these results is given in the following FOUR steps:

Step (i): Allocation of Maximum Score for Each Question - Considering the number of options available in replying a question of the survey, each question has been allocated maximum marks/ scores equal to the number of options. For example, maximum score of 3 for question numbers 1-5, 7-8, and 10 and maximum score of 2 for question numbers 6 and 9. Therefore, the maximum total score for all the ten questions will be 28 ( $= 8 \times 3 + 2 \times 2$ ).

Step (ii): Allocation of Priority Weight for Each Option in a Question - Within all ten questions, each option was allocated a score according to its priority. The option with highest priority was given the highest score and the option with second highest priority was given second highest score and so on. This scoring method enables us to have high scores reflecting high preferences for usage and importance of English and low scores reflecting low preferences for usage and importance of English.

Step (iii): Calculation of Weighted Score for each Question - Now for each question, the score obtained out of maximum score allocated (in step (i) above) to the question will be calculated. For this, firstly, weighted score for each option within the question will be calculated by multiplying the

frequency (total number of students who opted for the option) of each option with the priority weight (in step (ii) above) of the related option. Then, for each question, the sum of weighted scores of all options will be divided by the sum of related frequencies.

Step (iv): Calculation of Overall Score for All Questions - The sum of scores obtained in all the ten questions will be divided by the sum of maximum scores of the ten questions. This is the overall preference measured in quantitative terms of all 105 students surveyed for the usage and importance of English for them. The interpretation of the result of 66.8% is that on a scale of zero to 100, the preference of students surveyed is rated as 66.8 (roughly on higher side if not very high).

Furthermore, in order to have more insight of the student preferences, all the ten questions of the survey have been segregated into two categories of "usage of English" and "importance of English". For example, question numbers 1, 5-7, and 9 have been categorized for usage of English and question numbers 2-4, 8, and 10 have been categorized for importance of English. Now by repeating the above mentioned steps from (ii) to (iv), overall preferences of 105 students for the questions of usage and importance categories may be calculated separately.

### **Conclusion**

Out of the sample of one hundred and five, majority of the students agreed that they do not possess excellent proficiency in business English. Fifty two percent students considered other students showing off who speak English outside classrooms. It implies that these students possess negative attitude towards other students who practice using English more regularly. However, when they were asked if they think that English language is important for their future career, about seventy two percent students acknowledged that it is essential for their future prospective. The study clearly indicates that management science students accept Business English as a key determiner to their future growth but they are reluctant to use it in their classrooms at the same time.

Also, the usage of English and importance of English is presented via the overall score of 18.71 out of total 28 points which reflects that the students are more concerned and do give high weightage (of 66.8%) to Business English in their lives. However, if the overall weight of 66.8% is bifurcated into two aspects of "usage" and "importance" in their lives, it is found that they give more weight (73.2%) to importance than to its usage (59.5%). It means that the demand for Business English is more (due to higher importance of 73.2%) than is being practiced (due to lower usage of 59.5%). Therefore, it may be concluded that there is a need to fill the gap between the demand of English and the ability to use it.

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