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CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSE AT KOHAT UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

English being an official language enjoys a prestigious status in Pakistan. It is considered a key to success in almost every field, especially business. Due to the specificity and uniqueness of different contexts in which English is being taught, one may argue that there is a need to develop specific English courses for different groups of English language learners. This study therefore identifies English Language needs of business students at the undergraduate level keeping in view their academic background and target career. Through needs analysis, the study critically evaluates the current ESP course, Business Communication, offered at KUST and addresses the target needs of business students to meet the demand of the modern business world. Although the study is designed to analyze the needs of a specific group of undergraduate students, it may also be helpful in other similar contexts for better course design and teaching practices. Prior to data collection, the literature was reviewed which helped to decide the tools for data collection. Next, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were selected for conducting needs analysis. The data was collected from students, ESP course instructors, and domain experts. A total of 44 students, two course instructors, and two domain experts were included in the sample of the study. Data analysis and findings conclude that all four major skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) are very important in business communication. Thus, this study offers valuable implications for course designers and provides a guideline for developing an effective business communication course at the undergraduate level.

Keywords: ESP, Needs Analysis, EAP

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INTRODUCTION

English is acknowledged as a global language (Graddol, 1997; Ali et al., 2022), and its role as a lingua franca in international business contexts is now beyond dispute (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). The use of English in science, business, and the academic world has become so widespread that the language is now on an unstoppable trajectory of use (Graddol, 1997). Since the concept of the global economy turned out to be deeply rooted in English, specifically after the Second World War, thus providing enough room and booming interest of people in a new methodological domain of the English language for a specific purpose catering to the learners' needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The new world factors led to the expansion of English language teaching and a marked inclination towards English for Specific Purposes, which is essentially a learner-centered approach (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The aim of ESP is to equip the learners with specific skills or professional knowledge related to their specific field. The science of ESP received much attention after the Second World War and has developed considerably. The need and demand for ESP have increased considerably in today's global world of trade and economy and with a continued increase in international communication (Gao, 2007).

English for specific purposes is defined as an approach rather than a product (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) which is based on “an investigation of the purposes of the learner and the set of communicative needs arising from these purposes” (Kennedy & Bolitho, 1984). Several taxonomies have been proposed by various educationalists concerning ESP, including Carver (1983), who identifies three faces of ESP: English as a restricted language, English for academic and occupational purposes, and English with specific topics. In line with the second type of ESP, English for academic and occupational purposes, Hutchinson & Waters (1987) presented the 'Tree of ELT'. They divided ESP into three sub-branches: English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics (EBE), and English for Social Studies (ESS). These subject areas are further subcategorized as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). They clarify that there is no clear-cut boundary between EAP and EOP as people may work and study simultaneously, and sometimes it may also be the case that language learning for the immediate academic environment may be used later in the business world when the students enter the workplace. This explanation may serve as a rationale for Carver's classification of EAP and EOP being placed in the same category of ESP, which reflects that Carver might be implying that the ultimate end of both EAP and EOP is the same, that is, employment. Nevertheless, despite the goal of both genres being the same yet the means taken to accomplish the goal are indeed very different (Gatehouse, 2001).

Basturkmen (2012) asserts that ESP courses are meant to teach the language and communication skills that are required by a particular group to function effectively in various domains like study, professions, or workplaces. In today's competitive society, it is crucial for tertiary institutions to design ESP courses to aid learners in their future professional careers. Since the notion of the global economy is escalating, a marked inclination towards learning business English has appeared around the world to meet the trends of globalization (Bhatia & Bremner, 2012). The same scenario prevails in Asia as well, thus demanding proficiency in English as a mandatory requirement for the workplace in the global business environment (Du-Babcock, 2012). Considering various aspects as discussed above, providing business students with comprehensive professional business English courses is inevitable to meet the demands of intra and international business operations.

However, designing an ESP course takes a different route as it is an attempt to comprehend and collect massive information about learners, their expectations from the course, their working environment, and learning preferences, all of which revolve around the 'needs analysis' (Dudley-Evans et al., 1998). Thus, the first stage in the process is the need analysis which is expounded as a lighthouse for course design since at the heart of it lies the evaluation of the learners' existing perceptions of needs. According to Pourshahian et al. (2012), needs analysis should examine what aspects of language are required by the learners and to what extent, and it should also investigate why the specific group needs to study the language. Berwick (1989) proposed that carrying out a needs analysis would help the course designer identify the discrepancies between the current state of the learner's language competence and the target competence. Studies that are focused on need analysis include not only student surveys but also interviews with the faculty (Johns, 1981). The clearer the learner's needs are, the handier the objectives will be, thus yielding a more compelling and effective ESP course (Theeb & Albakrawi, 2013).

In this regard, the current study relied on Dudley Evans and St. John's framework of needs analysis (1998) for designing business English courses. According to Basturkmen (2012), the information collected via need analysis evaluates and determines the content as well as the method of the ESP course. Needs analysis, as defined by Dudley-Evans et al. (1998), is the process of establishing the “what” and the “how” of a course. It may be important and beneficial to identify learners' learning needs, backgrounds, expectations, and wants before the actual classroom instruction, as it can contribute to better learning outcomes (Nallaya, 2012). The current needs analysis has adopted the framework suggested by Dudley-Evans et al. (1998) and later on updated by Basturkmen (2012), which provides an insight into various aspects which are to be covered during the process:

- i. Target Situation Analysis: realization of tasks, skills, and activities for which the learners will need or use English that is their objective needs: what the learners ideally need to know and be able to do.
- ii. Wants and Subjective Needs: investigate the factors that may influence the learning process, such as the reasons for attending the course, their expectations concerning the course, and specifically their attitude towards the ESP course.
- iii. Present Situation Analysis: identify the current skills and competence of the learners, which ultimately help us in finding the gap that is the learner's lack.
- iv. Deficiency Analysis: Looking for the gap between the target situation and the current situation of the learners, what Hutchinson and Waters (1987) as lack.
- v. Needs: After finding the gap, proposing effective ways to equip the learners with the missing yet crucial aspects of language and the required skills based on their lacks.
- vi. Discourse analysis, Linguistic analysis, and genre analysis: Analyzing the target situation thoroughly in order to get the knowledge of how language and the skills are going to be used in the future.
- vii. Means Analysis: Examining the environment where the course is going to be offered.

The needs analysis framework undertaken here aims to design a business English communication course to improve learners' general business English communication skills. A needs analysis will highlight what learners currently know, what they do not know, and what they need to know. Hence, working on the given framework, the current study seeks a gap between the learners' target situation and the current situation providing a rationale for designing the target business communication course. This study is expected to cover all the required skills demanded by an academic institution as well as the workplace, including business interactions, writing, reading and listening skills, business-related vocabulary and idioms, and also an understanding of the cultural differences by providing an exposure to appropriate business etiquette and customs. In terms of proficiency level, the target course will cater to the intermediate students. Furthermore, the course material highlighted in this study is expected to integrate task-based and content-based approaches keeping in view both theoretical and practical perspectives.

Business English can be based on learners' needs (St John, 1996) in terms of their relationship with the business world, depending on whether the learners are already in the workplace or preparing to step in. These business English learners can be divided into three categories considering their position in the business world: pre-MBA, pre-professional and professional. Pre-MBA learners pursue their graduate studies in business and require business English for a higher level to perform effectively in the workplace. The second group, Pre-professionals, are mostly undergraduates who are about to enter the business world. Regarding their knowledge about workplace or their exposure to the culture of business is very limited so their needs and wants are related to their entry in the business profession. Lastly, the larger sector consists of the professionals who are currently working in the business world as this group is familiar with the business sector and professional setting, so they are in a better position to identify their English language needs, skills, and specific type of knowledge that is required for their better professional performance (Du-Babcock, 2012). The present study deals with the pre-professionals who are undergraduates about to enter the business world. It employs needs analysis on three complementary axes: learners, ESP teachers, and subject experts as previous studies have reflected that to design an ESP course, it is necessary to work in collaboration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to the skyrocketing demand for business English in recent decades, much research has focused its attention on business English (Gimenez, 2000, 2001, 2006; Chew, 2005; Grosse, 2004). One of the reasons for its spotlighting is the role of English being a lingua franca in international business contexts which is

now beyond dispute (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Earlier business English was generally known as “business writing” as the people of this field relied heavily upon business letters for their intra and international communication. But now, due to advanced technology, the traditional method has been replaced by phones, emails, and faxes. With these advancements, all four language skills, listening, reading, writing, and speaking, have secured a much stronger position in Business English due to their substantial functions (St John, 1996; Gul et al., 2022; Ishtiaq et al., 2022). Forey (2004) clarifies that business English encompasses English as well as professional skills that are syllabus designed will incorporate General English (listening, reading, writing, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar) and business English (presentation skills, business expressions, delivering constructive criticism, etc.). Parallel to this, Bhatia (2000) highlighted that business English not only deals with general communicative competence rather it also emphasizes the specific ability to cope with the delicacy of context for an effective business relationship.

Chen & Wu (2010) survey based on a business English course taken by students in a university in Taiwan relates to the students’ perception of the business course. The findings reported that students want a business English course that encompasses both English language ability and business knowledge. The students expected the course to improve their communication skills in terms of negotiation, presentation skills, writing skills to handle professional documents, business terminologies, and practical training programs to understand the real business environment. Their study suggests that business English courses would strengthen the students’ competitive ability in the job hunt.

Another survey conducted by Ghenghesh et al. (2011), the English language needs of business students and the challenges faced by the students and faculty in a university in Egypt. The findings revealed that students ranked writing as the most important skill, followed by speaking, reading, and listening. On the other hand, faculty suggested that writing and reading come first, followed by speaking and listening. Students perceived critical thinking, technical vocabulary, writing skills (summarizing text and report writing), and speaking skills (presentation, opinions, suggestions, dealing with clients and customers) as the most relevant field-related skills. However, the faculty also emphasized reading business articles and writing research projects to be equally important.

Remache and Ibrahim (2018) carried out a survey at the Al-Ain University of Science and Technology (AAU) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to determine business students’ academic and professional needs. Through needs analysis, their study attempted to tailor syllabi that best meet the needs of Business English students and to develop an accurate Business English course for them. The results suggested that the integration of primary English skills is crucial for business students, be it in their academic context or for their professional purposes. Their survey favored a pragmatic and needs-driven Business English course that focuses specifically on communication skills like listening, speaking, and writing. Skills integration was emphasized to develop learners’ communicative competence, which would secure effective workplace communication skills for the learners in view of the 21st-century business world.

A considerable amount of research has been carried out on discourse analysis of business communication and genre analysis of business writing. The research on discourse analysis of business communication (de Beaugrande, 2000; Gimenez, 2001; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005) has mainly examined the discourse patterns of the conversations that are frequently used in business English communication like business meetings and negotiations. These studies helped not only in highlighting the specific discourse patterns but also the factors that affect these patterns, such as the degree of formality and cross-culture aspects. The research on genre analysis of business writing (Gimenez, 2000, 2005; Gul et al., 2022) has specifically focused on business letters and emails, thus revealing the specific moves which are helpful in identifying the specific type of business English texts. Some research work has also attempted to study business communication skills and strategies (de Beaugrande, 2000; Chew, 2005). Initially, these studies investigated the frequently used business communication skills but later on directed their attention toward

communication strategies for effective business communication. For the said purpose, mainly the implications of discourse analysis research were relied upon, and its findings were applied in business English used.

However, the research dedicated to needs analysis of business English, to a large extent, is based on case studies dealing with specific situations, thus not directly applicable to the current study; however, these studies provide thorough insights into business English needs which are definitely of interest and great value. Most of the research on specific situations has attempted to distill English for general business purposes. St John (1996) and Dudley-Evans et al. (1998) provided a collection of core business skills, including oral and written sub-skills, based on the works of Holden (1993) and Yin and Wong (1990). Oral skills include negotiation, telephoning, socializing, taking part in meetings, and giving presentations, whereas written skills include correspondence and report writing. Louhiala-Salminen's survey (1996), based on Finnish business professionals in terms of their written business communication, revealed certain important written business communication situations. These situations include (i) exchange of written messages in the form of letters, emails, faxes, and telexes, (ii) report writing, (iii) writing official documents, (iv) reading professional journals and other publications, and (v) translation. While studying communication patterns, another survey (Barbara et al., 1996) carried out in the Brazilian business context reported memos, prospectuses, proposals, reports, meetings, presentations, and projects as the most frequently performed business writing tasks. Grosse (2004), in his needs analysis of Mexican business executives, provided the most up-to-date and comprehensive business English tasks. He identified phone calls, telephone, email, fax correspondence, video or face-to-face conferences, negotiation, presentation, writing business letters, meetings, business trips attending foreign guests, professional reading, products exhibition, training programs, and Internet research. An extensive amount of research has also focused on conflict management led by Rahim, whose framework aided the findings of Du-Babcock (2013), reporting that the major aim in the business world is to resolve conflicts and get the tasks done.

METHODOLOGY

The target population of this study comprises three groups: Undergraduate students of the BBA program, course instructors of business communication, and domain experts at the Institute of Business Administration, KUST, selected through purposive random sampling. The target students, forty-four in number, were in their seventh semester pursuing a full-time BBA degree program, academic session 2016-2020, at KUST. These students had already gone through the business communication course offered in the third semester of their bachelor program; thus, they were in a better position to aid the researcher in finding the gap. This study also considered two subject experts, both female Ph.D. doctors teaching for more than ten years, to provide valuable feedback on the English language needs of the business students in their study as well as the target career. Despite the central position of domain experts, they had been criticized for lacking adequate information from the linguistic perspective. To deal with the lacking aspect, the researcher approaches the linguistic experts who are the course instructors of Business Communication in the present case.

To cover the linguistic aspect, the Institute of Business Administration, KUST, was approached, and the researcher was informed that the institute employs instructors from the Department of English to teach the course of Business Communication. Thus two Business Communication instructors, both female and serving at the institution for more than four years, were considered for the study as they were in a better position to provide extensive feedback regarding the students' English needs, discuss students' strengths and weaknesses while using English thus helping the researcher in assessing the English language needs effectively.

Instrument

Two versions of the questionnaire, one for undergraduate students and the other for course instructors, were used as data collection tools. The questionnaires comprised mainly of two parts: evaluating the current Business communication course content and target situation needs.

Data Collection

The researcher administered the questionnaire herself to forty-four students of BBA, seventh semester, in their respective classrooms. Permission was taken from the lecturer whose students were considered for the questionnaire survey session. The questionnaire was collected after 30 minutes. Language teachers, the course instructors of Business Communication, and domain experts were addressed in person. Language teachers were handed over the questionnaire, which was collected at their convenience, and one-to-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with the domain experts at their respective offices using English as the medium of conversation.

Data Analysis

Both the questionnaires composing closed-ended items were analysed statistically using software commonly used in education research and applied linguistics known as SPSS.

For analyzing the interview data, three steps were followed: preparation, analysis, and summary. The first step helped in managing the material and retaining as much original information as possible, the second step assisted in finding the key themes, and the last one aided in drawing conclusions to get the answer to the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All the relevant data provided by the three complementary axes are collated to decide a collective answer for each research item. The quantitative and qualitative findings are presented concurrently in terms of each question. The responses provided by the students and course instructors are arranged in the form of tables that display the frequencies. These are presented side by side, where possible, to compare the perspective of the two groups as, for the most part of the questionnaires, the research items were identical. It is followed by domain experts' views to strengthen the discussion and come up with a collective answer. The results are also supported by the relevant literature.

For clarity, the data is categorized and divided into three sub-categories:

- i. English Language Need of Undergraduate Business Students
- ii. Evaluation of the Current ESP course
- iii. Target Needs

Below is the data analysis and findings of each category which discuss if undergraduate business students need English, to what extent the current course meets the needs of the students, and the identification of the target needs.

English Language Need of Undergraduate Business Students:

To investigate if undergraduate students of business administration need English for their academic studies and target career, this category of research addressed the importance of English as well as communication in the business field. It was meant to identify if the ESP course, Business Communication, is really the demand of the business world. So data was analyzed, and frequencies were counted. These are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Importance of English in academic studies and target career.

Unimportant	Little Important	Not Sure	Important	Very Important
0	1	0	13	30

Table 2. Importance of communication in academic studies and target career.

Unimportant	Little Important	Not Sure	Important	Very Important
0	1	1	16	26

Results in the above tables reflect that both communication and English are considered important for academic studies and target careers because the majority of the respondents opted for the scales “Important” and “Very Important”. The ESP course instructors also rated it “very important” so their response percentage is 100% which clearly favors the importance of English and business communication for pre-professional business students. In a semi-structured interview, the domain experts also emphasized the importance of English and ESP course in their field and considered it to be “very important.” Expert 1 commented, “In the field of Business Administration, the students must have the ability to interact efficiently, and in this regard I consider the English Language to be very important. Therefore the ESP course is very important for our students.”

Comparing the perception of the three groups after analysis reveals the level of agreement among respondents on the importance of the English Language for undergraduate business students. All the groups consider the ESP course to be very important in terms of the students’ academic studies as well as their target careers. Since the notion of the global economy is escalating, a marked inclination towards learning business English has appeared around the world to meet the trends of globalization (Bhatia and Bremner, 2012). The same scenario prevails in Asia as well, demanding proficiency in English as a mandatory requirement for the workplace in the global business environment (Du-Babcock, 2012). Forey (2004) and Bhatia (2000) clarify that Business English encompasses English as well as professional skills, so it can be suggested that to be an effective businessperson, an ESP course is indispensable indeed.

After confirming the importance of English and communication in the field of business, the study next addresses the language needs of business students. The students were asked to rate the relative importance of basic language skills keeping in view their academic and target careers. Using a questionnaire of five-point Likert scale, 1: unimportant, 2: little important, 3: Not sure, 4: important, and 5: most important, the responses of students and ESP teachers were collected. These responses are presented below in frequencies (table) side by side, followed by qualitative data provided by domain experts. The majority of the respondents agreed upon the importance of the stated language skills for academic studies on the scales of “important” and “very important” which is shown below in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequencies of importance of given linguistic skills for academic career.

Students’ Response						Language Skills For Academic Studies	ESP Teachers’ Response				
No Response*	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
2	1	0	0	19	22	Listening	0	0	0	0	2
1	1	2	0	14	26	Reading	0	0	0	0	2
2	0	4	0	16	22	Writing	0	0	0	0	2
1	1	0	0	11	31	Speaking	0	0	0	0	2
1	0	4	5	17	17	Grammatical structures for business discourse	0	0	0	0	2
1	1	2	2	19	19	Technical vocabulary	0	0	0	0	2

Similarly, frequencies were counted for students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the importance of given linguistic skills for their target career. Results are presented the Table 4.

Table 4. Frequencies of importance of given linguistic skills for target career.

Students' Response						Language Skills For Target Career	ESP Teachers' Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
0	2	0	0	19	23	Listening	0	0	0	0	2
0	1	6	1	14	22	Reading	0	0	0	2	0
2	2	7	1	17	15	Writing	0	0	0	1	1
1	1	0	1	10	31	Speaking	0	0	0	0	2
0	2	10	5	17	10	Grammatical structures for business discourse	0	1	0	0	1
2	2	7	2	16	15	Technical vocabulary	0	0	0	1	1

Closely observing the frequencies related in Table 4 shows that a greater majority of the respondents agreed that these linguistics skills are important for success in the target career. Domain expert 1 reflected that all the skills are very important. On the other hand, expert 2 considered listening, speaking, writing, reading, and grammatical structures related to business discourses as very important both for the students' academic studies and target careers. She stated, "For writing, reading is important and in the same way for speaking, listening is important, so keeping in view that they are interconnected so, all the four skills are very important." Regarding vocabulary, she commented, "Since the students are constantly engaged in the material related to business discourse throughout the BBA program, their technical vocabulary develops automatically. I believe that this skill is very important in terms of their academic and target career but not necessarily to be a part of ESP course."

Quantitative data, consistent with the interviews, the majority of respondents rated all the mentioned skills as important or very important for their academic as well as target careers. Among the mentioned language skills, speaking skills obtained the highest percentage of 'very important' both in academic studies and target career. As St John (1996) opines, with the advancement in technology, all four language skills, listening, reading, writing, and speaking, have secured a much stronger position in Business English due to their substantial functions, which is reflected in the responses of all participants.

Current ESP Course Evaluation

One of the objectives of this study was to evaluate the current ESP course that was offered for business students. After going through the literature review and identifying the students' need for the English Language in the business field, it was necessary to investigate to what extent these needs were met by the current ESP course, Business Communication, offered by IBS, KUST. Here, the data collected from all three axes was meant to evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the ESP course at the institution. So firstly, the course outline was provided to all the respondents despite the fact that the questionnaire included such research questions which clearly addressed all the constituent parts of the current course in order to collect accurate data. This helped them to get an overview of the current course and provide effective feedback regarding its appropriateness and effectiveness on the whole. It helped to highlight the strengths as well as weaknesses of the course.

So the research question related to what extent the current ESP course, Business Communication, is effective in terms of academic studies and target career. The students' and ESP teachers' responses are presented below in Figure 1, which is then followed by domain experts' views.

When the domain experts were interviewed, both of them highlighted that the course is effective in certain language skills while some are lacking. Expert 1 said, "All four skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking are very important in our field. After reviewing the course outline, I could see that the course focuses particularly on writing and speaking. So it is effective in terms of writing and speaking but lacking

in reading and listening.” The second expert also had almost the same view considering all four skills to be very important and the current course to be effective in terms of writing and speaking only.

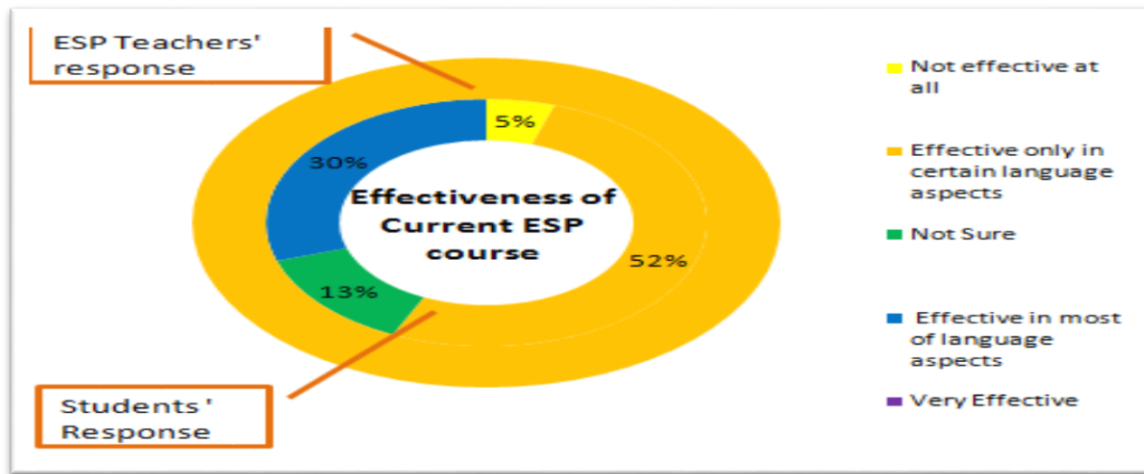


Figure 1. Effectiveness of current ESP course.

After analyzing the responses of the three groups, the results suggest that the majority consider the current course to be effective only in terms of certain language aspects and lacking in others. In the light of the survey carried out by Ghenghesh et al. (2011), reading, writing, listening, speaking, and technical vocabulary are important skills for business students, so the current course needs to be effective in the lacking skills.

i. Course Contents Evaluation: It was meant to find out to what extent each constituent part is appropriate and relevant to the students’ needs. A five-point Likert scale was used to get feedback regarding the need for these sub-skills. The quantitative responses for each constituent part are displayed below in tables showing frequency and graphs highlighting percentages followed by the qualitative data.

For convenience, the constituent parts of the current course are divided into two sub-categories:

(a) Writing skills, (b) Speaking skills (as the current ESP course contents mainly focused on just these two skills. So the next question addressed was)

To what extent do you feel the following English sub-skills (constituent parts of the current course) are important keeping in view your field of business administration?

a. Writing Skills: First part of the course contents evaluation focused on writing skills. The responses of both teachers and students were analyzed, and frequencies were counted, which are presented below in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5. Importance of writing skills for academic studies.

Students’ Response						Writing Skills for Academic Studies	ESP Teachers’ Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
1	1	3	2	23	14	Reports	0	0	1	1	0
0	1	4	5	24	10	Business messages	0	0	1	1	0
1	2	2	5	24	10	Memos	0	0	2	0	0
1	1	5	4	18	15	Proposals	0	0	1	1	0
4	0	1	3	19	17	Letters	0	0	1	1	0
1	0	6	16	13	8	Dictation techniques	1	0	1	0	0
0	0	3	4	15	22	Job application	1	0	0	1	0

Table 6. Importance of writing skills for target career.

Students' Response						Writing Skills for Target Career	ESP Teachers' Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
0	0	2	6	24	12	Reports	0	0	0	1	1
1	0	3	7	21	12	Business messages	0	0	0	1	1
1	0	5	6	25	7	Memos	0	0	0	1	1
1	0	2	1	19	21	Proposals	0	0	0	1	1
4	0	3	5	11	21	Letters	0	0	0	1	1
2	3	3	11	16	9	Dictation techniques	1	0	0	1	0
0	0	2	2	13	27	Job application	0	0	0	1	1

The domain experts reflected that all writing sub-skills are important both in academic studies and target careers, except for the dictation techniques. Expert 1 considered the dictation techniques “little important,” while expert 2 considered it to be “unimportant” in both domains.

To summarize the data, the result suggests that the three groups reflected agreement on all the writing sub-skills as being important or very important except for the dictation techniques, which shows differences in opinion across the groups. Considering the students' responses, the highest frequency of 'not sure' is obtained in the case of dictation techniques. On the other hand, domain experts consider it either unimportant or little important. One of the course instructors also rated it to be unimportant, and the other was not sure. This suggests that the frequency of “important” or “very important” on the part of students is in terms of their wants, whereas in terms of their needs, this sub-skill is of little importance in the academic and target career of business students. As discussed in the literature review, Barbara et al. (1996) considered reports, memos & proposals, and Grosse (2004) identified letters to be frequently used for correspondence.

Regarding students' academic needs of writing sub-skills, for the most part, the course instructors are not sure. The reason may be inferred from the response to 2nd question in the ESP teachers' questionnaire, which investigates if the course instructor has ever joined an ESP (or Business English) teacher-training program. Both the teachers had expertise in general English teaching and hadn't joined any ESP or business English teacher-training program.

b. Speaking Skills: The researcher analyzed the responses of both speakers and teachers for the importance of speaking skills in academic studies and target careers. Results are presented below in Table 7 and Table 8, respectively.

All the speaking skills mentioned above, reducing stage fright, obtained a high frequency of 'not sure' on the part of students both in academic studies and target careers. Professional Telephoning also received a high rate of 'not sure' on the part of students and also one of the course instructors in terms of academic studies but in target career, 'important' obtains the highest frequency. Grosse (2004), in his survey on Mexican business executives' revealed phone calls to be a frequently used communication channel. Both the domain experts considered all of the skills very important both for academic studies and target careers. St John (1996) recognizes the importance of presentations and meetings in the business world.

To summarize the findings of this section, the analysis reveals that the current course contents are appropriate and effective in terms of academic studies and target careers. Only Dictation Techniques turned out to be of little importance both in academic and professional life. However, the claim does not essentially entail absolute appropriateness in terms of all language skills. As the course is lacking in certain important skills like listening, reading, technical vocabulary, and grammatical structures related to business discourses. The responses to language skills discussed in the first section suggest that these skills

are also very important both for academic and professional life. Thus, considering the needs, undergraduate students should be equipped with these skills. Both the domain experts in their interviews explained the importance of the skills that are lacking in the current course. They emphasized their importance in terms of students' needs and suggested equipping the students with these skills.

Table 7. Importance of speaking skills for academic studies.

Students' Response						Speaking Skills for Academic Studies	ESP Teachers' Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0	0	17	27	Presentations	0	0	0	0	2
1	1	7	5	11	19	Meetings	0	0	0	2	0
1	0	7	17	13	6	Professional Telephoning	0	0	1	1	0
2	2	3	15	16	6	Reducing stage fright	0	0	0	0	2
1	0	5	3	18	17	Persuasive and informative speaking	0	0	1	0	1

Table 8. Importance of speaking skills for target career.

Students' Response						Speaking skills for target career	ESP Teachers' Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	0	13	28	Presentations	0	0	0	0	2
1	1	5	1	17	20	Meetings	0	0	0	0	2
1	3	7	3	22	8	Professional telephoning	0	0	0	0	2
1	3	6	13	12	9	Reducing stage fright	0	0	0	0	2
0	0	6	6	13	19	Persuasive and informative speaking	0	0	0	0	2

Target Needs

After reviewing the literature, the following skills were identified as the target needs of undergraduate business students. Since the studies are mostly case studies and the needs are identified in a specific context so it was important to investigate if the three groups consider them to be equally important in the current research context for the target students. Secondly, with the advancement of technology, the ways of correspondence are changing, and the typical channels are substituted with modern ones. So the aim was to equip the students with skills that are in line with the advanced global business world considering their needs. For communication, whether at the academic level or professional level, all four skills are marked as very important, but probing further, it turns out that in each skill, certain sub-skills are frequently used in the business world. So in the current research context, it is very important to identify those specific sub-skills frequently used in the business world and those needed to keep up with the modern business world.

The following items deal with the corresponding sub-skills of each major language skill in the business context to determine undergraduate students' needs.

Writing skills

Since writing skills are considered an important skill for developing the capabilities of business students, the responses of participants were analyzed after identifying certain specific target needs. The calculated frequency revealed the relative importance they attribute to specific sub-skills of writing (target needs) in their own business context keeping in view academic studies and target careers. Results are presented below in Table 9.

Table 9. Importance of writing skills in academic and target career.

Students' Response						Writing Skills for academic studies	ESP Teachers' Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	4
3	2	5	1	17	16	Emails	0	0	0	2	0
3	1	4	7	18	11	Minute taking	1	1	0	0	0
3	1	4	2	19	15	Writing with professional impact and persuasive power	0	1	0	1	0
2	0	6	2	13	21	Resume & cv	0	0	0	2	0
1	1	5	6	22	9	Executive summaries	1	1	0	0	0
4	0	9	3	14	14	Meeting agendas	1	1	0	0	0
3	2	5	4	18	12	Note taking	0	0	0	0	2
Students' Response						Writing skills for target career	ESP Teachers' Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
1	1	5	1	17	19	Emails	0	0	0	0	2
1	0	8	7	20	8	Minute taking	0	0	0	0	2
4	0	4	11	11	14	Writing with professional impact and persuasive power	0	0	0	0	2
2	0	4	1	14	23	Resume & cv	0	0	0	0	2
2	1	2	8	17	14	Executive summaries	0	0	0	0	2
4	0	4	5	15	16	Meeting agendas	0	0	0	0	2
4	2	8	5	15	10	Note taking	0	0	0	0	2

There can be seen a difference in opinion between the two groups, specifically in terms of academic studies. The course instructors rate Minute Taking, Executive Summaries, and Meeting Agendas as either unimportant or little important in terms of academic studies; however, they consider these to be very important for the target career. Both domain experts also share the same view by stating that these skills are little important in academic studies. However, in the target career, they deem these skills as important and are frequently used. Students' response to these skills in their academic purpose was the opposite and may be treated as their wants. Regarding the target career, they responded that the importance and need for these skills cannot be ignored. Louhiala-Salminen (1996) conducted a Finnish survey with business professionals on written business communications and found emails to be the most common communication medium. Chew identified minute-taking as an important business task.

Speaking Skills

Delivering constructive criticism receives a high percentage of not sure on the part of students both in academic and target, yet the cumulative percentage of important and very important remains high. Course instructors and expert 2 consider it to be important, as can be seen in Table 10. Expert 1 considers it to be of little importance. Overall comparing the responses suggest that it is important in terms of the target career. One of the course instructors rates negotiation, professional introduction, and managing difficult conversations as little important for academic studies, but a comparison of overall responses reveals that the other two groups consider them important. Grosse identifies negotiation to be important in the world. Du-Babcock (2013) reports that the major aim in the business world is to resolve conflicts and get tasks done, so in this regard managing difficult conversations and delivering constructive criticism is important. All of the other speaking sub-skills obtained high cumulative percentages of important and very important.

Table 10. Importance of writing skills in academic and target career.

Students' Response						Speaking Skills for Academic Studies	ESP Teachers' Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	4
4	0	7	7	13	13	Negotiations	0	1	0	0	1
1	1	7	4	19	12	Professional introduction	0	1	0	0	1
3	1	9	2	18	11	Public speaking	0	0	0	1	1
3	5	9	10	11	16	Delivering constructive criticism	0	0	0	1	1
3	2	7	6	18	8	Managing difficult conversation	0	1	0	0	1
Students' Response						speaking Skills for Target Career	ESP Teachers' Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
5	0	6	4	14	15	Negotiations	0	0	0	0	2
3	0	5	2	15	19	Professional introduction	0	0	0	0	2
6	1	4	1	15	16	Public speaking	0	0	0	0	2
2	1	9	11	13	8	Delivering constructive criticism	0	0	0	0	2
2	1	7	4	16	14	Managing difficult conversation	0	0	0	0	2

Listening Skills

Regarding all the listening sub-skills in both the academic and target career, high percentages of *importance* are obtained on the part of students, whereas the course instructors consider all the skills to be very important for both fields. Domain experts also share the same view and consider all *very important* at both levels. Table 11 shows the importance of writing skills.

Table 11. Importance of writing skills in academic and target career.

Students' Response						Listening skills for academic career	ESP Teachers' Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
0	1	1	2	22	18	Active listening	0	0	0	0	2
0	1	5	2	23	13	receiving spoken instructions/advice	0	0	0	0	2
0	1	5	2	15	21	listening to presentations and discussions in international meetings/seminars/ conference	0	0	0	0	2
Students' Response						Listening Skills for Target Career	ESP Teachers' Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
0	1	4	1	23	15	Active listening	0	0	0	0	2
0	2	4	5	18	15	Receiving spoken instructions/advice	0	0	0	0	2
0	2	1	5	20	16	Listening to presentations and discussions in international meetings/seminars/ conference	0	0	0	0	2

Reading Skills

Table 12 shows that the two groups show a high level of agreement on all the reading skills by providing a high frequency of cumulative important and most important both for academic and professional life. Both domain experts also consider all the skills to be important except for reading academic journals and publications where there is a difference of opinion. Expert 1 commented, “Reading academic journals and publications is of little importance unless the students are engaged in a certain type of research work.” Expert 2 added, “Reading academic journals and publications is important in academic life as the students need to be updated regarding the current trends in the business world, but it is of little importance in the target career unless the person gets into the research-related field where reading publication is a need.” Considering the survey of Grosse (2004) that reports extensive use of English in terms of reading job-related materials such as English magazines, research reports, Internet news sources, and training materials among Mexican executives, it seems important for undergraduate students to read English publications to update themselves about business in general. Louhiala- Salminen finds reading journals and publications to be important, whereas Chew highlights the importance of reading manuals.

Table 12. Importance of writing skills in academic and target career.

Students’ Response						Reading Skills for Academic Studies	ESP Teachers’ Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
0	1	6	5	17	15	Reading office documents	0	1	0	1	0
0	0	9	3	14	18	Reading manuals, instructions, or product descriptions	0	1	0	1	0
0	1	6	7	19	11	Reading academic journals and publications	0	0	0	0	2
3	1	4	9	20	7	Skimming	0	0	0	0	2
2	3	6	6	20	7	Scanning	0	0	0	0	2
Students’ Response						Reading skills for target career	ESP Teachers’ Response				
No Response	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
0	0	1	1	20	22	Reading office documents	0	0	0	0	2
0	1	2	1	22	18	Reading manuals, instructions, or product descriptions	0	0	0	0	2
2	1	5	4	17	15	Reading academic journals and publications	0	0	0	2	0
3	2	9	9	12	9	Skimming	0	0	0	0	2
2	2	7	5	22	6	Scanning	0	0	0	0	2

Technical Vocabulary

Table 13 shows that the three groups agreed that technical vocabulary is important. Regarding technical vocabulary expert 2 opines, “Technical vocabulary is important both for academic studies and target career but in ESP course including it as a separate constituent part is not necessarily important. As the students are constantly engaged in the business material so their technical vocabulary develops automatically.” Overall result suggests that technical vocabulary is important for the target students.

Table 13. Importance of writing skills in academic and target career.

Academic Studies									
Unimportant		Little important		Not sure		Important		Very Important	
S*	T	S	T	S	T*	S	T	S	T
1	0	3	0	5	0	20	1	15	1

*S: Students' Response & T: ESP Teacher's response

Grammatical structures frequently used in Business discourses

The cumulative result of the important and most important is higher among all the groups, as is evident from Table 14. In interviews to probe further, the researcher asked domain experts' views regarding general grammatical structures. Expert 1 preferred grammatical structures related to business discourses over general grammar. Whereas expert 2 responded, Firstly, at this stage, in our context, the students' grammatical skills are expected to be advance enough to deal with general grammatical structures. Secondly, the course, Functional English, is also a compulsory subject for undergraduate business students in this department. So considering the level of students, I consider general grammar a little important in terms of the ESP course.

Table 14. Frequently used grammatical structure in business discourse.

Academic Studies										Target Career									
Unimportant		Little important		Not sure		Important		Very Important		Unimportant		Little important		Not sure		Important		Very Important	
S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T
0	0	2	0	5	0	23	1	13	1	3	0	4	0	4	0	18	0	14	2

All the identified target needs in terms of all major skills and their respective sub-skills received a high percentage of being important. The data analysis dealt with both academic studies and target careers. There were certain items that were less important in the case of academic studies but very important in the target career. So in order to integrate the ESP course with target career, those items should be considered in terms of business students' needs and should be given equal attention.

CONCLUSIONS

Needs analysis makes an ESP course more relevant and trimmed according to the learners' needs. Therefore, a needs analysis was carried out to evaluate an already offered ESP course, Business Communication, at KUST and identify undergraduate business students' target needs while skimming the literature review. The identified target needs were verified by learners, ESP instructors, and domain experts, keeping in view their own social context and the resources available. Therefore, this study offers a tentative basis for selecting material for an ESP course and provides guidelines for deciding the students' needs, wants, and lacks while designing a business communication course at the undergraduate level.

Though this study provides sound implications for developing a Business Communication course, it has several limitations. The study has selected only the students of KUST as a source of data, so clearly, they cannot represent undergraduate business students in general. Hence the finding of the study is context specific and cannot be generalized. Therefore further studies need to be conducted in line with this, including a larger pool of business pre-professionals, business English teachers, graduates, and business professionals to identify the core business English skills and get a holistic overview.

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