

**A NEEDS ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS  
STUDENTS AT A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA**

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**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
KUALA LUMPUR**

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MALAYSIA**

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**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
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**A NEEDS ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS STUDENTS AT A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA**

Field of Study: Language for Specific Purposes

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## ABSTRACT

Given that the principal language of communication in the business field is English, this study looks into the English language needs and problems faced by business students at a private university in Shah Alam, Malaysia. The main aim of this study is to identify a) the English Language problems of the business students, b) the English Language needs and c) the language skills required in a proposed English Language syllabus for the business students. As this is a qualitative study, multiple sources of data were collected via semi-structured interviews with one Academic head, three Business lecturers and three Industrial supervisors and questionnaires administered to eighty business students. The findings of the study revealed that business students faced major problems in a) speaking- poor grammar, incorrect pronunciation, and giving presentation, b) writing- writing various business documents, c) listening- understanding clients' and superior's pronunciations, and d) reading – understanding business terminologies and general vocabulary. In terms of their needs, all of the business students wanted to improve their English and were interested in enrolling in the Business English course. The needs of the business students were, to focus on the four major skills, grammar and vocabulary. Some of the recommendations for the proposed English for Business syllabus given by the respondents of this study were a) speaking – effective communication at the workplace, negotiating in various situations, making polite conversations with prospective clients and telephoning skills, b) writing- techniques of writing business documents, techniques of writing negative messages and editing business documents, c) listening- watching YouTube videos to understand different accents and pronunciations, and d) reading – skimming and scanning business documents, interpreting non-linear texts and reading business related articles. Based on the findings, a three hour, 14 week Business English syllabus was developed.

## ABSTRAK

Bahasa Inggeris merupakan bahasa utama yang digunakan bagi tujuan komunikasi di dalam bidang perniagaan. Oleh itu, kajian ini dijalankan bagi mengkaji keperluan Bahasa Inggeris dan cabaran yang dihadapi oleh pelajar-pelajar dalam jurusan perniagaan di salah sebuah universiti swasta di Shah Alam. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti tiga perkara iaitu a) cabaran yang dihadapi dalam penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris di kalangan pelajar jurusan perniagaan, b) keperluan untuk berkomunikasi dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan c) kemahiran bahasa yang diperlukan dalam cadangan sukatan 'Business English' untuk pelajar jurusan perniagaan. Oleh kerana kajian ini adalah satu kajian kualitatif, pelbagai sumber data telah dikumpulkan, antaranya melalui temu-bual separa berstruktur dengan Ketua Akademik, tiga Pensyarah Perniagaan and tiga Penyelia Latihan Industri dan soal selidik diberikan kepada lapan puluh pelajar jurusan perniagaan. Keputusan kajian ini telah menunjukkan bahawa masalah-masalah utama yang dihadapi pelajar perniagaan adalah a) pertuturan- kelemahan tatabahasa, sebutan yang kurang tepat, dan pembentangan lisan, b) penulisan- menulis dokumen-dokumen perniagaan, c) pendengaraan- memahami loghat pelanggan dan d) pembacaan- pemahaman istilah perniagaan dan perbendaharaan kata umum. Dari segi keperluan, semua pelajar jurusan perniagaan mahu meningkatkan penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris mereka dan menunjukkan minat untuk mendaftar dalam kursus 'Business English'. Keperluan pelajar jurusan perniagaan adalah dari segi memberi tumpuan kepada empat kemahiran utama, tatabahasa dan perbendaharaan kata. Beberapa cadangan untuk sukatan Business English yang diberikan oleh responden kajian ini adalah a) komunikasi- komunikasi berkesan di tempat kerja, rundingan dalam situasi berbeza, komunikasi dengan pelanggan dan kemahiran mengendalikan telefon, b) penulisan- teknik penulisan untuk dokumen perniagaan, teknik penulisan mesej negative, dan cara menyunting dokumen perniagaan, c) pendengaran- menonton video di saluran YouTube untuk memahami loghat berbeza

dan d) pembacaan- teknik pengimbasan dokumen perniagaan, mentafsir teks yang bukan linear dan membaca artikel berkenaan perniagaan.. Berdasarkan kepada keputusan kajian, kursus 'Business English' selama tiga jam sepanjang 14 minggu telah direka bentuk bagi pelajar jurusan perniagaan.

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“Dream with direction, dream with purpose, dream with your eyes wide open, turn your dreams into a Vision” – Dato’ Vijay Eswaran



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ESP	:	ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES
EOP	:	ENGLISH FOR OCCUPATIONAL PURPOSES
EBP	:	ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES
EAP	:	ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES
CLT	:	COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background Of The Study

In this globalized era, Malaysia is striving to become a mature industrialized nation by the year 2020. With rapid development taking place in science and technology, and solid growth of the global market, the education system is undergoing a gradual transformation to accommodate the present expectations and to implement the country's visions (Wahi, O'Neill and Chapman, 2013). The fundamental of this growth is the wide usage of English language as the global language and as the main medium for communication. Therefore, English language is considered important in the education system especially in tertiary institutions which are key in developing and producing fresh graduates as potential employees to realize the needs of the local and international work force (Wahi, O'Neill and Chapman, 2013).

In the Malaysian working environment, employers seek fresh graduates who are able to communicate effectively in English in order to contribute to the business sector, particularly in local and international companies functioning in an English language setting. These employers select fresh graduates based on their ability to elaborate on their abilities, skills, and knowledge during the job interview process. Moreover, the Malaysian Employer Federation (MEF) emphasizes that fresh graduates should be able to write memorandums, reports, and letters, as well as being able to present logical ideas during discussions and meetings. According to Wahi, O'Neill and Chapman (2013), "prospective employers expect fresh graduates to be competent in their disciplines area in all modes of English language as well as socially and professionally competent in speaking and listening" (p.109).

It is crucial for tertiary institutions to take a step forward in implementing English for Specific Purpose (ESP) programmes, to prepare students for employment once they have graduated. This will enable them to function effectively in their working environment as well as fulfil the requirements of the employers. According to Belcher (2009), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is designed to meet the specific needs of the learners for a target language which is required for professional and academic purposes. In the early days, the teaching of ESP was largely driven by the need to communicate across language in specific disciplines such as commerce and technology. Presently, ESP has expanded to include legal, business, medical, vocational, occupational, and sociocultural fields (Belcher, 2009). In reality, it is impossible to teach and learn English as a whole. Thus, this kind of specifically targeted - courses help language learners to develop linguistic features and competencies needed in their specific disciplines. One of the subdivisions of English for Specific Purposes is English for Business. It is essential for business students to be equipped with the necessary English language communicative skills for them to function effectively at their workplace. According to Unal (2014), various colleges and universities are providing English for Business courses to improve students' occupational English ability. Although, these courses are offered, ESP course designers face challenges to design suitable materials, as they are not aware of the real needs of the students. In the long run, these courses turn out to be a failure as the learners' needs are not met (Wahi, O'Neill and Chapman, 2013).

The business department in a private university in Kuala Lumpur, which is the setting chosen for the present study, does not offer an English for Specific Purposes course for their students. According to Wahi, O'Neill and Chapman (2013), it is important for these business students to have the necessary business English skills to perform well in a business related- working environment. Therefore, this research is conducted to identify

the English language needs of and challenges faced by the business students. Programmes or courses which are developed and carried out without taking into consideration the actual learning needs of the learners may cause deficient learning outcomes (Nallaya, 2012). As the current research focuses on English for Specific Purposes, conducting a needs analysis by investigating learners' specific language needs is advantageous for students, lecturers, and course designers. The feedback obtained from a needs analysis will guide the lecturers and course designers to identify their programme goals. It is also beneficial as they are then able to develop the syllabus, teaching materials and teaching activities to meet the needs of the learners. Thus, a needs analysis is a vital element in an ESP approach for the development of curriculum planning (Nallaya, 2012).

### **1.1 Background Of The Private University**

The private university chosen for this study is an institution that has over 20 years of history and experience in the education field, believe in providing real world education to meet real world needs. It has been successful in producing competent graduates and preparing students for top universities and colleges all over the world. It was established in 1983, being one of the pioneers in providing private education in Malaysia. The institution, previously known as a private college, was awarded university college status in 2010. It is a reflection of its quality programmes and the growth of their international student population. Currently, the University offers more than twenty programmes at Foundation, Diploma, and Degree levels. The medium of instruction in the university is English with the exception of a few subjects such as 'Bahasa Malaysia and 'Pendidikan Islam'. As the focus this study is on the business degree students, English Language is considered crucial for the students, as they need to be competent in the language to secure a job in the business industry.

## **1.2 Statement Of The Problem**

English is widely used in the business sector. In Malaysia, many companies especially business related companies tend to use English Language for communication purposes (Wahi, O'Neill and Chapman, 2013). Employees are required to communicate with clients both local and foreign, write reports, business proposals, memos and letters, and give oral presentations in English. Although English has been used widely, there are major groups of people especially fresh graduates known to have problems communicating in English. Based on the recent study by PEMANDU (Performance Management Delivery Unit), there are about 400,000 fresh graduates unemployed due to their poor command in the English language (The Star, 2015).

According to the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) Executive Director, Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan, it is becoming increasingly difficult to hire fresh graduates who can communicate effectively in English. Moreover, he has mentioned that the problems seem to be getting worse and is more acute among the fresh graduates (The Star, 2015). Their level of proficiency in English does not command the confidence of employers to hire them. He stressed that future graduates should take the initiative to improve their English language. In addition, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Razak has announced that a special task force has been set up to ensure future graduates possess a good command of English Language (The Star, 2015). According to him, tertiary institutions should ensure that their students are well equipped with English language skills by seeking help from language experts to run Intensive English courses for the students. It is important to address the English language needs of the students especially in the fields of engineering, medical, and business as they are required to function in the language daily (Wahi, O'Neill and Chapman, 2013).

Moreover, recent studies also show that business employees lack the necessary competence in using English for different purposes (Wiwczaroksi, 2015). According to Wiwczaroksi (2015), the ability to communicate clearly and effectively in English is necessary for the employer and employees in the business sector. In the business sector, the ability to win over a business contact through effective communication carries a lot of weight. It creates a good impression on potential clients, investors, foreign and local partners, suppliers, etc. However, there are many employees who have problems expressing themselves in English and these include difficulties in pronunciation which hinders easy understanding, misleading grammar mistakes, and inability to use proper vocabulary (Wiwcczaroksi, 2015). In order to rectify these problems, having English for Specific Purposes courses particularly for the business students during their studies in the colleges or universities would benefit these students, as they will be well prepared to face the real and sometimes challenging working environment. Thus, the aforementioned problems could be avoided.

However, in the private university chosen for this study, ESP courses are not offered to students. It is important for these students to be equipped with good English language skills in order to secure suitable jobs easily after graduating. By having an ESP course, it will be beneficial for the students as they will be trained to be competent in English as the course will focus on their respective discipline. Therefore, this research attempts to identify the English language problems faced by the students particularly business students in order to propose a syllabus with the necessary English language skills they will require at their workplace.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objective of this study is to identify the English language needs and problems faced by business students in a private university. By identifying their needs, a syllabus will be proposed that outlines the English language skills that need to be focused on in an ESP course for the business students.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the research objectives the following research questions are formulated:

- 1) What are the problems faced by business students in using English at the chosen private university?
- 2) What are the English Language needs of the business students?
- 3) What recommendations can be made for the design of an English language course for the business students?

In order to answer Research Questions 1, 2 and 3, data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with one Academic Head, three Business Lecturers and 3 Industrial Supervisors, and questionnaires will be distributed to 80 Business Degree students. Data for the semi-structured interviews will be analysed according to themes and the data for the questionnaires will be analysed through frequency counts and percentages.

Based on the responses from the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, a Business English syllabus will be proposed for the private university to address Research Question 3.

## **1.5 Significance Of The Study**

The findings of this study will be of significance to course designers, business lecturers and business students specifically to the university in question but findings may apply to business students in other private universities in Malaysia. By identifying the language problems faced, appropriate steps can be taken to resolve the weaknesses in order for the business students to perform well at their workplace. In the business sector, it is crucial for employees to have a good command of the English language as the medium of communication will be mostly in English. If these students are not proficient in English, it may be challenging for them to execute their responsibilities well. The business students may have problems communicating with the clients, supervisors, colleagues, writing business reports, letters, memos, and voicing out their opinions clearly and coherently.

This study implemented a needs analysis to collect and analyse all relevant information from the business students at the private university. Further, the researcher collected information from various other sources such as the Academic Head, Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors. The data included semi-structured interviews and questionnaire surveys. Given the significance of a needs analysis as shown in this study, it is hoped that institutions are able to adopt needs analysis when designing or improving a syllabus in order to meet the learners' needs.

Specifically, the findings of this research will provide valuable information for the business lecturers to implement an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course for the business degree students at the private university. Hence, the course designer would be able to design a comprehensive course based on the outline of the proposed syllabus and develop teaching methodologies and materials to meet the English language needs of these business students.

## **1.6 Scope And Limitation**

This study limits itself to one private university. It is not representative of all tertiary institutions in Malaysia. Moreover, the study focuses on the final year business students, not students from other disciplines. The reason for focusing only on the business students is because the final year students have undergone their internship in different companies. Therefore, they would be able to provide useful feedback on the English language challenges and needs at the workplace.

## **1.7 Definition Of Terms**

### **English for Specific Purposes (ESP)**

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is “an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to method and content are based on the learner’s purpose of learning” (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p.16).

### **English for Academic Purposes (EAP)**

According to Dudley Evans and St. John (1998), “English for Academic Purposes (EAP) refers to any English teaching that relates to a study purpose. Students whose first language is not English may need help with both the language of academic disciplines and specific study skills required of them during their academic course” (p.34).

### **English for Occupational Purposes (EOP)**

English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) is “a branch of ESP and covers situations in which learners are studying English for job-related purposes. EOP courses are based on analysis of learners’ specific communicative needs in their work” (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998, p.48).



## **English for Business Purposes (EBP)**

According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), “English for Business Purposes (EBP) or Business English is a branch of ESP and can be considered as a specialism within English language teaching. The course focuses on English language skills and topics used in the world of business, trade, banking and finance” (p.53).

## **Manglish**

According to Lowenberg (1991), Manglish is defined as “a type of colloquial English derived from a potpourri mix of Malay as well as other languages in Malaysia into the English language, and is solely used in Malaysia” (p.367).

## **1.8 Chapter Summary**

The thesis has been divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 presents an introduction to the study focusing on the state of the research area, aims, research questions and problem statement of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study and definition of terms. Chapter 2 reviews the existing and up-to-date literature relevant to the study. Chapter 3 explains the methodology that will be used in the study such as sampling of data, the procedure of data collection and data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 presents the analysis and findings of the study. Data have been analysed and presented according to the research questions. Chapter 5 provides an overall conclusion to summarise the entire study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter is a review of relevant literature for the present study. This chapter will discuss the subjects of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), English for Business Purposes and Needs Analysis followed by a review of past studies on English language needs and challenges. It also discusses the subject of syllabus design which includes types of syllabus design and their approaches.

#### **2.1 English For Specific Purposes**

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was first introduced in 1960s and has become a significant vehicle for the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as well as English as a Second Language (ESL). Many ESP scholars have provided their definitions and views on ESP (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Strevens, 1988; Robinsons, 1991; Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998; Basturkmen, 2010). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) view ESP as “an approach rather than a product. It is a fundamental approach to language teaching in which the selection of the methodologies and content are subject to the students’ reason for learning” (p.9). The concept of language for particular purposes is related to the content which is based on a needs analysis. It also focuses on language appropriate to specific disciplines and activities in terms of lexis, semantics, syntax and discourse. According to Strevens (1988), there are four absolute and two variable characteristics of ESP.

The four absolute characteristics of ESP are as follows:

1. Designed to meet specific needs of the learner;
2. Related in content (i.e. in its topics and themes) to specific disciplines, activities and profession.
3. Centered on the language appropriate to those activities in terms of syntax, semantics, discourse, and lexis.
4. Contrast with General English.

The variable characteristics are that ESP:

- 1) May be restricted as to the language skills to be learned (e.g. speaking).
- 2) May not be taught according to any pre-ordained methodology.

(Stevens 1988, pp.1-2)

Stevens (1988) further mentions that the rationale of ESP is based upon four claims which are;

1. Time will not be wasted if the focus is on the learner's needs;
2. It is applicable for the students;
3. It is effective in providing knowledge;
4. It is more beneficial compared to 'General English'.

Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) added their claims on factors not mentioned by Stevens for ESP which are:

1. It uses authentic texts;
2. It is a communicative task-based approach;
3. It uses custom-made materials;
4. It has adult learners;
5. It is a purposeful course.

Robinson (1991) gives his definition of ESP based on two principles: i) ESP courses are usually “goal-directed”, and ii) the ESP course is developed through a need analysis with the objectives to specify what the students need to do through the medium of English. ESP courses commonly have a short span of time and therefore the aims have to be accomplished and taught to adults in a homogenous class in line with their work or area of specialized studies (Robinson, 1991).

Eight years later, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) revised Strevens (1988) characterization of ESP according to the absolute and variable characteristics as follows:

The absolute characteristics are:

1. ESP is designed to meet the specific needs of the learners;
2. ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves;
3. ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

The variable characteristics are:

1. ESP may be related to or designed for a specific discipline.
2. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English;
3. ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at tertiary level or in a professional work situation. It could, also, be used with learners at secondary school level;
4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced level learners;

5. Most ESP courses use some basic knowledge of the language system, so it can be used with beginners.

(Dudley-Evans and St.John, 1998, pp. 4-5)

In terms of its absolute features, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) do not contrast ESP with General English and they have incorporated additional variables features. Although ESP is applicable to young adults in a secondary school environment, it is more relevant to adult learners. The characteristics of ESP they provided are almost similar with Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) and Strevens' (1988) list of characteristics. ESP "can be differentiated from general ELT by its concern with specialized language and practice. The word special might refer to specific needs of the learners or specific language" (Javid, 2013, p.142).

According to Basturkmen (2010), the main objective of ESP is to teach the language and communication skills that a learner needs or will need to function effectively in his or her respective field of study, workplace or profession. Moreover, Basturkmen (2010) has distinguished between General English and ESP.

In General English situations, goals are generally linguistics (such as, development of oral competence or a wide vocabulary, or ability to use a wide range of grammatical structures). In an ESP situation, it is understood that the learner would want to achieve 'real world' objectives, objectives requiring specific linguistic competencies (Basturkmen, 2010, p.8).

In other words, General English focuses on developing higher proficiency in the language, and covers varied topics while ESP concentrates on the jargon of a particular discipline, and is often limited to the content of the discipline and the required structures and expressions. Thus, ESP has developed a multidimensional language approach to focus on the learners' specific needs required by their profession. In line with this view, Basturkmen (2010) states that the primary aim of ESP courses is improving learners' communication skills in English by providing specific terminologies in relation to their

field of work. According to her, ESP has a focus on where, why and when a learner needs the language especially in a working environment.

All types of ESP programmes address learners' present as well as future needs as these programs are developed by analysing the learners' specific needs. Based on the learners' current and future needs, the objectives and goals of the programme are determined. Moreover, along with the increasing focus on learners' needs, ESP is divided into two main sub-branches: i) English for Academic Purposes (EAP) which focuses on the language and skills needed for university study; and ii) English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) which focuses narrowly on a job category or industry (Basturkmen, 2010).

Further, EOP can be divided into various subcategories such as Medical English, Navigational English, Technical English, Business English and so forth. Each branch has its special language features; each one uses distinctive terminologies to be applied in interaction and communication (Harding, 2007). The next section discusses English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) in greater detail.

## **2.2 English For Occupational Purposes**

In the field of ESP, EOP differs from EAP. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), EOP and EAP are restricted to three major areas: English for Social Sciences (ESS), English for Business and Commerce (EBC) and English for Science and Technology (EST). Another classification by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) places EAP and EOP as sub-branches of ESP:

- a) English for Academic Purposes (EAP) with courses in study programmes primarily for the areas of Business, Medicines, Science and Technology and Law.
- b) English for Occupational Purposes with programmes for pre-work purposes, vocational and professional.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) state that although EOP can be taught to beginners, it is vital for learners to acquire basic proficiency of the language first. Moreover, according to Dudley –Evans and St. John (1998), there is a heavy workload that learners have to undertake in an EOP course; therefore, it is suitable to train learners at the pre-intermediate to upper intermediate levels. In this way, the goals and objectives of the EOP course may be accomplished.

The core of EOP teaching is the learners' work-related needs. The EOP syllabus is designed based on clearly definable needs that aim at meeting the learners' work-specific goals (Belcher, 2004). Belcher (2004) stresses that:

Tailor made courses make us resist the tendency toward being teacher-centered. Because teachers are expected to consult with the learners on an on-going basis to achieve the course goals, we have to learn to view the language training participants as resources. (Belcher, 2004, p.351)

According to Belcher (2004), although it is true that teachers lack the learners' specialist knowledge, this shortcoming turn into an advantage. An EOP course frees the teacher from being the only one responsible over activities, contents, goals and materials and invites teachers to share the syllabus design task with the training participants whose specific knowledge will combine with the teacher's expertise in language teaching. This approach leads to learner-centeredness, an essential approach in EOP (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). The learners in workplace language training need to have a degree of control over the learning experiences that Brown (2001) identifies for learner-centered instruction.

According to Brown (2001), a learner-centered approach provides opportunities for the learner to contribute their knowledge and creativity. He further adds that in EOP “learners contribute to the curriculum by bringing communication challenges they have encountered in the workplace to class for discussion” (p.4). In addition, Belcher (2004)

states that involving learners in syllabus design is an important aspect in order to have an effective EOP course. Belcher (2004) further stresses that the EOP course should encourage “communities of inquiry” in which the learners and teachers have opportunities to learn. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) EOP courses fails at the beginning stage in spite of conducting needs analysis and detailed planning because of the absence of learners’ involvement in syllabus design. Moreover, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) highlights that success is attained after learners have contributed their expectations of the EOP syllabus design. In this way, “classes were more responsive to the personal, affective, cognitive and metacognitive needs of the learners” (pp.52-53).

Hence, the success of an EOP course mostly depends on interaction between teachers, learners and their companies for an appropriate syllabus design. Authentic materials contributed by learners are some of the main elements for teachers to design suitable classroom activities, thus they become an important aspect for learner empowerment. According to Harding (2007), Business English is currently the area of research and growth in ESP. The next section discusses English for Business Purposes (EBP) which is a sub-branch of EOP.

### **2.3 English For Business Purposes**

According to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), the growth of Business English, which is a sub branch of EOP, began in the 1960’s. Business English has become a prominent area in ESP since the 1960’s because of the huge development of international business. Ellis and Johnson (1994) pointed out that the importance of speaking skills such as negotiating, giving suggestions, and giving ideas gradually emerged in the early 1970s. Through Business English courses, students have opportunities to improve their communication skills. In the 1980s, Business English focused on various language skills training. It also included authentic material such as companies’ annual reports and



business magazines. In the 1990's, Business English had become even more prominent because of the growth in multinational companies, global trade and business. Currently, Business English programmes are offered in many colleges and universities in order to develop the learner's occupational English ability. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), Business English has been introduced in tertiary institutions since the 1980's. Business English programmes include teaching professional business terms and communication which is in contrast to General English (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998).

According to Bhatia and Bremner (2012), "people around the world are learning Business English in order to meet the trend of globalization" (p.412). Due to the globalisation of business and economy growth in Asia, English has become the main means of communication. The English language has developed to become the global language for business and professional communication in the local and foreign workplace (Bhatia and Bremner, 2012). In reality, English is no longer the "sole-possession" of the native English-speaking countries such as the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. According to Babcock (2012) "proficiency in English is a mandatory requirement for any professional, working in a global business environment" (p.8).

Business English used to be referred to as "business writing". This is because business employees used to write business letters for the import and export business. However, technology has replaced the traditional methods and people nowadays are using telephone, fax and e-mail to communicate with each other. Moreover, with these transformations, all the four language skills, writing, speaking, reading and listening, have prominent functions in Business English (St. John, 1996). According to Forey (2004), Business English incorporates English and professional skills. In other words, the syllabus design will include General English (reading, listening, speaking, writing,

grammar skills, and vocabulary) and Business English (business expressions, presentation skills, agreeing and disagreeing, etc.). In line with this, Bhatia (2000) stated that Business English not only emphasizes general communicative competence but also focusses on the specific ability to manage the delicacy of context that leads to a successful business relationship.

According to Bhatia (2000), competencies can be defined as one's ability to adjust his or her language to the situation, which is part of overall expertise. From the Business English perspective, learners need to select appropriate language and use it strategically to accomplish a specific communicative purpose, and even a specific personal style, in business settings or a target situation where English is the language of communication. According to Bhatia (2000), these competencies can be divided according to communicative tasks for business. These include tasks requiring the use of:

a) cross-cultural skills (e.g., “understanding the nature of participation expected in a meeting, whether to give a point of view or simply listen to a decision; or understanding the expected acknowledgement of status and authority with a senior person, whether to be collegial or show deference”).

b) writing and reading skills (e.g., “communicating through letter, e-mail or fax; reading business and technical materials; writing reports and proposals”).

c) listening and speaking skills (e.g., “giving presentations , taking part in training, leaving voice mail, telephoning, socializing, participating in meetings and negotiating”).

(Bhatia, 2000, p. 42)

Additionally, St. John (1996) mentioned that, Business English could be defined in terms of the learners' needs. This specifically refers to the learners' relationship to the business world, whether learners are in the workplace or preparing to enter it. Learners of Business English can be categorised into three categories based on their relationship to the business

world: pre-MBA, pre-professional and professional. Pre-MBA learners are those pursuing their graduate studies in business. They need and require Business English to function in the workplace at a higher level. Pre-professional, the second largest group of learners, consists mostly of undergraduates who are preparing to enter the business world. These learners may know very little about the workplace or about the culture of business, so their needs and wants are related to entry into their profession. Lastly, the largest group is the professionals, those who are currently working in business related sectors. As these learners are familiar with the professional setting, and have business experience, they are able to identify their need to be able to function in English professionally and the specific kind of knowledge and skill they need (Babcock, 2012).

In addition, Shen (2008) proposed that Business English programmes should be offered to students who are in their final semester of study. This is because students' English skills would be better and ESP teachers can teach real Business English such as "business writing styles" and "business terminologies". Additionally, most final year students are about to enter the working field and this course will be an advantage to them when seeking employment. Therefore, for this study, the participants are learners in their final semester of study. They are also categorised under the pre-professional category, as they are about to enter the professional working environment.

To sum up, Business English is in contrast with English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which focuses on language skills for academic study (Hamp-Lyons, 2001). Moreover, Business English is in contrast with general English that includes language for general usage rather than for a specific purpose (Dudley Evans and St. John, 1998). Adding on Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) stated that "Business English, far from being independent of these fields, has areas of overlap with all of them" (p.56). Business English is considered to be cost-effective, relevant and efficient. In line with this view, Babcock (2012) stated that programmes which assess and focus on the business learners' specific

needs are valuable because they save time and money, sustain motivation and interest, and are ultimately rated as useful by learners. Furthermore, companies may view Business English courses as a good investment if they help prevent cultural misunderstandings. This also benefits the participants of the Business English courses as they have opportunities for networking, both among learners and professionals in the business field. These benefits grow when business English courses meet the basic principal of ESP- “the careful research and design of pedagogical materials and activities for an identifiable group of adult learners within a specific learning context” (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998, p.58).

Nevertheless, these criteria are demanding and not all courses succeed in offering a Business English syllabus design that is clearly focused (Babcock, 2012). In order to have a successful Business English programme, a thorough needs analysis is required. These needs are the necessary business knowledge which learners should acquire in order to perform effectively in their working fields, especially taking into account their lacks and wants. The needs analysis will be discussed further in the next section.

## **2.4 Needs Analysis**

### **2.4.1 Definition Of Needs Analysis.**

Needs analysis has a vital role in the process of planning and carrying out language programs, notably for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. The ESP course objective is to teach specific language and communication skills (Ali, 2003). As such, ESP curriculum design includes a phase in which the curriculum designer needs to identify what specific language and skills the group of learners will need (Basturkmen, 2010). According to Basturkmen (2010), “the identification of language and skills is used in determining and refining the content for the ESP course. It can also be used to assess learners and learning at the end of the course. This process is termed needs analysis” (p.17). In the early years, needs analysis used to focus on targeted situations, however at present, needs analysis has a broader use (Hamp-Lyons, 2001). Different linguists have defined needs analysis from different perspectives.

According to Nunan (1988), there are two types of needs, which are “Subjective Needs” and “Objective Needs”. These needs represent the destination of the learner’s journey. Subjective needs analysis obtains information that reflects the goals, priorities and perception of the learners. This analysis uncovers information on the reasons learners are learning a second language, classroom tasks and activities that the learners prefer. Objective Needs Analysis obtains information about the learners. This includes the learner’s home language, nationality, biographical details such as age.

Similar to Nunan’s (1988) definition of needs, Richterich (1983) , Brindley (1989), and Robinson (1991) defined objective needs analysis as the route to obtain information about the learners such as language proficiency, language challenges and the usage of the language in real-life situation. Meanwhile, subjective needs analysis relates to the cognitive and affective factors. Subjective needs analysis obtains information on learners’

attitude towards learning, their level of confidence and their expectations towards language learning. In contrast to this, Berwick (1989) defined needs as “a gap of measurable discrepancy between a current state of affairs and a desired future state” (p. 49). Berwick (1989) distinguished needs as “felt needs” and “perceived needs”. Perceived needs are the perception the teacher has of the learners. Teachers make judgment on what learners need to learn for successful language learning. On the other hand, felt needs are the wants, desires and wishes of the learners learning the language.

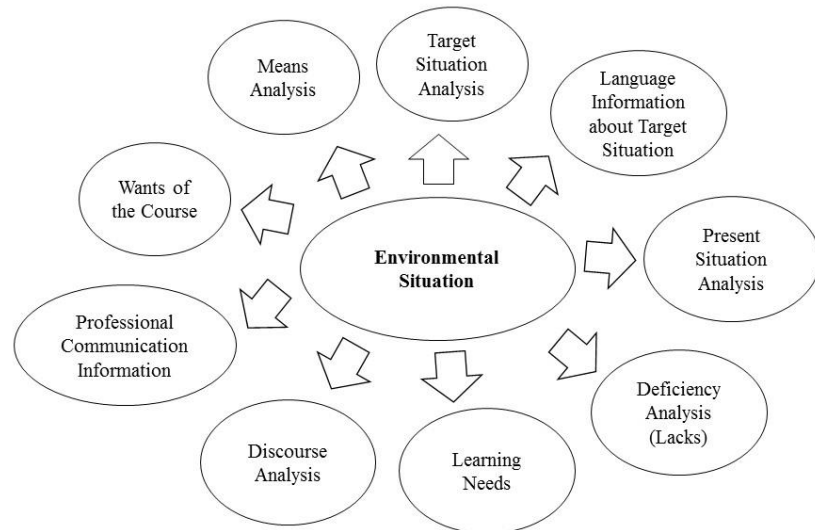
Moreover, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) defined needs analysis as a tool to identify the learners’ necessities, wants and lacks in order to develop ESP courses. Firstly, “necessities” are determined by the demands of the target situation. This step involves the estimation of necessary skills required for the learner to perform effectively in the target situation. Next, “wants” are perceptions of the learners about their own needs. Finally, “lacks” are the gaps between the target proficiency and the present proficiency of the learners. According to John and Dudley-Evans (1991), “needs analysis is the first step in course design as it provides validity and relevancy for all subsequent course design activities” (p.300). Brown (1995) asserted that needs analysis refers to “the systematic collection and analysis of all subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate defensible curriculum purposes that satisfy the language learning requirements of students within the context of particular institutions that influence learning and teaching situation” (p.35). The next section presents the approaches that can be used to conduct a needs analysis.

## 2.4.2 Approaches Of Needs Analysis

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) have defined needs analysis as the process of establishing the “what” and the “how” of a course. According to them a needs analysis encompasses the following:

- A) Professional information about the learners: the task and activities learners are/will be using English for- target situation analysis and objective needs.
- B) Personal information about the learners: factors that may affect the way they learn such as their previous learning experience, cultural information, reasons for attending the course, and expectations of it and finally their attitudes towards English- wants, means, subjective needs.
- C) English language information about the learners: what their current skills and language use are- present situation analysis- which allows us to assess (D).
- D) The learners’ lacks: the gap between (C) and (A) - lacks.
- E) Language learning information about (A): effective ways of learning the skills and language in (D) –learning needs.
- F) Professional communication about (A): knowledge of how language and skills are used in the target situation –linguistic analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis.
- G) What is wanted from the course.
- H) Information about the environment in which the course will be run – means analysis

(Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998, p.125)



***Figure 2.1: Components of needs analysis (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998, p.125)***

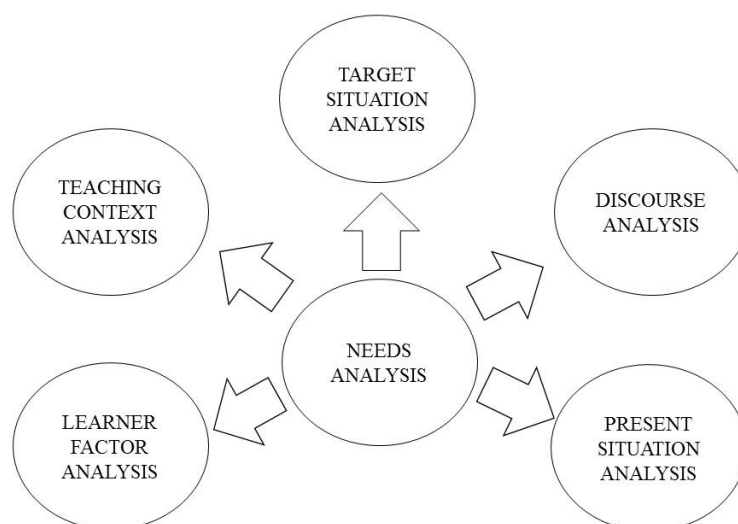
It can be concluded that, needs analysis enables the ESP instructors to identify what learners know, what they do not know and what they are supposed to know. In other words, needs analysis is a procedure that is used to collect information about the needs of the learners (Richards, 2001).

Basturkmen (2010) gave an updated version of Dudley Evan and St. John’s (1998) approach to needs analysis. The information gathered through the needs analysis is used to determine and refine the content and method of the ESP course (Basturkmen, 2010). She further stated that Needs Analysis involves:

- 1) Target Situation Analysis: Identification of tasks, activities and skills learners will be using English for and what learners should ideally know and be able to do.



- 2) Discourse Analysis: Description of the language used in the above
  - 3) Present Situation Analysis: Identification of what the learners do or do not know and can or cannot do in relation to the demands of the target situation.
  - 4) Learner Factor Analysis: Identification of learners factors such as their motivation, how they learn, and their perception of their needs.
  - 5) Teaching Context Analysis: Identification of factors related to the environment in which the course will run. Consideration of what realistically the ESP course and teacher can offer.
- (Basturkmen, 2010, p.19)



**Figure 2.2: Needs analysis process (Basturkmen, 2010, p.19)**

This study will adopt Basturkmen's (2010) framework of needs analysis. The Target Situation Analysis will obtain information on the English language communication needs of the business students in the private university in Kuala Lumpur. Present Situation Analysis will obtain information on what the business students know or do not know in relation to the demands of the target situation. The English language communicative problems and English language needs of the business students or in other words the gap between Target and Present Situation Analysis will be obtained through semi-structured

interview sessions and questionnaire surveys. Similarly, information about the learners' preferences in learning and the activities they would like to have in an English course will be collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaire surveys. The Teaching Context Analysis of the Business English course will be conducted by the lecturers from the university and will be approved by the Academic Head of the business faculty if the proposed ESP syllabus is accepted for consideration. The next section discusses the importance of conducting a needs analysis.

### **2.4.3 The Importance Of Needs Analysis**

Needs analysis can be conducted at the beginning, during or at the end of an ESP course. At the beginning of the course, needs analysis can be used to decide on the suitable content for the ESP course. If the needs analysis is conducted during the ESP course, the ESP course designer can modify the current syllabus and include suitable topics to match with the learners' needs. Finally, needs analysis can be conducted at the end of the ESP course, and used for assessing progress and planning future direction for learners and the ESP course (Hyland, 2006). In this study, needs analysis is conducted at the beginning of the course. According to Basturkmen (2010), needs analysis should not be viewed as entirely objective procedures. As stated by Hyland (2006), "needs analysis is like any other classroom practice in that it involves decisions based on teachers' interest, values and beliefs about teaching, learning and language" (p.113).

According to Cowling (2007), many ESP curriculum designers often fail to realize the significance of needs analysis as a tool second language curriculum planning. He even criticized the practice of using textbooks as the whole syllabus by some universities. Many teachers rely on the textbooks as their only resource tool to teach. In Cowling's (2007) words, "such an outlook eliminates the needs of a time consuming and often-expensive syllabus design process and such approach ignores the specific learning needs

of the target students, something that could be examined through needs analysis” (p.207). Needs analysis has an important role in ESP because students’ needs are often clear and the usage of published textbooks would not be sufficient to achieve their respective needs. Moreover, using textbooks to decide the course syllabus will bring great risks to both students and ESP instructors because the quality of learning will be questioned (Cowling, 2007). Hence, in designing syllabus for any language program, ESP curriculum designers should make an effort to carry out needs analysis in order to avoid any doubts related to the curriculum.

According to Basturkmen (2010), there are four roles of needs analysis in the syllabus design process. First, ESP instructors can be more acquainted with the institutions they are in and the learners. Next, needs analysis is able to identify how learners are using English in their fields of study. Needs analysis also provides the ESP instructors with necessary information on the learners’ present level of proficiency in English and lastly, needs analysis offers opportunities for ESP syllabus designers to gather samples of authentic texts, spoken and written, which learners in targeted situation use. Thus, “needs analysis enables the ESP instructors to translate the language needs into linguistic and pedagogical terms which in turn develop good curriculum for the program”(p.25). Finally, needs analysis can provide support and guidance to the teachers who are running the ESP programme. Based on the justifications given, needs analysis is regarded as the fundamental component in language curriculum planning specifically in ESP. The next section presents the past studies related to needs analysis.

#### **2.4.4 Past Studies Employing Needs Analysis**

##### **i. Past Studies On English Language Needs and Challenges Faced By Business Degree Students**

English is vital in every discipline especially in this era whereby communication among individuals around the world is borderless and through various channels. Moreover, with globalization of trade and economy and the continuing increase in international communication in different fields, the need of English for Specific Purposes is growing, mainly in countries where English is used as a second/foreign language (Gao, 2007). According to Kaur and Khan (2010), Malaysia is currently becoming a developed nation. Hence, it is important for higher education to equip its graduates with important English language skills which are high in demand in the current employment market. The current dominant area in ESP are English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Business English (Javid, 2013). In addition, syllabus design needs to take into account the target needs of the ESP learners. Therefore, it is important to identify learners' language needs through needs analysis (Hamp-Lyons, 2001). This section will discuss some relevant past studies related to the English language needs and challenges faced by business students.

Chen and Wu (2010) conducted a study with 219 university students who took Business English in a university in Taiwan. The study investigated their perceptions of the Business English course and their English language needs. The analysis of the questionnaire data revealed that students wanted the Business English course to include some business knowledge, which incorporates both English language ability and the development of business knowledge. They wanted the Business English courses to include some financial knowledge, to help them understand the international business culture, and the present situation of international business. Moreover, they wanted the course to include lessons to improve their communication skills particularly the ability to negotiate and improve

their presentation skills. One important component that the students also needed was writing formal business letters. They believed that writing skills would enable them to handle professional documents. Students also suggested that the course should introduce business terminologies, and provide practical training programmes. They need to know business terminologies, as they are different from General English as the words and phrases in business are far more complex. Practical training programmes would help the learners to understand the real business environment.

According to Chen and Wu (2010), having knowledge on Business English would increase their competitive ability in job search. In addition, they felt that the Business English course teacher should have relevant experience to teach and provide them with useful authentic materials. Instructors with working experience would offer suitable training programmes for the learners. Finally, the results of the study indicated that about 90% of the students agreed that their English ability and business knowledge improved after attending the Business English course. The rest of the students felt that they needed more training to improve their business knowledge skills and English language skills.

On the other hand, Tsao (2011) conducted a study using questionnaires with 351 business technological students and 24 lecturers in a university in Taiwan to identify the needs of the students for an ESP programme. The findings of the study showed that both students and lecturers felt that the ESP programme should be placed under language training while integrating specialized content into the programme to meet with the learners' specific needs. They also felt that the ESP programme should be different from General English in terms of the teaching approaches, teaching materials and the teaching objectives. According to Tsao (2011), the findings suggested that in ESP programmes, ESP teachers should not use the same method that was used in teaching General English, because these two are not the same in terms of the learning content and goals.

The findings also revealed that the lecturers and students believed that ESP teachers need to have sufficient knowledge on specific discipline content and English teaching. Previous studies have shown that one of the ways to solve this issue is through collaborative teaching or team-teaching (Basturkmen, 2010). Moreover, ESP teachers also felt that English should be the only language used in the ESP classroom. However, most of the teachers stated that they often translated from English to Chinese for the students to understand the lessons. In contrast to this, students felt that they needed their teachers to translate from English to their mother tongue as they felt that they were not communicatively competent enough to understand English. The findings of the study indicated that there are few factors which would determine the success of an ESP course. Among them is the need to survey students' needs before the ESP programme is implemented, and to identify student learning motivations and their learning capacity. The ESP programme should have specific course objectives and proper planning. Moreover, the ESP teacher should choose appropriate teaching materials and methods so that the ESP course would reflect real-life work scenario. Finally, the ESP teacher should have good proficiency in English and have good content-specific knowledge.

Meanwhile, Ghengshesh, Hamed and Abdelfattah (2011) conducted a study to investigate the English language needs and challenges of business degree students and the business faculty in a university in Egypt. The data was collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. A total of 98 business degree students and 42 lecturers participated in this study. The findings of study reported that the students rated writing as the most important skill followed by speaking, reading and listening, respectively.

Meanwhile, lecturers felt that writing and reading were the most important skills followed by speaking and listening. Both students and lecturers agreed that listening was the least important skill. Business degree students perceived critical thinking as very important in reading followed by reading technical vocabulary. Students also felt it was important for

them to understand technical vocabulary. In writing, summarizing texts and writing reports were considered important. Moreover, giving presentations, opinions, suggestions and ideas were important speaking skills. Speaking with clients and customers was a priority as well. The lecturers felt that students needed to read articles from business related books with high standards of professional Business English, write business reports, write research projects and give oral presentations.

In terms of the problems faced, the lecturers felt that students had major problems in speaking followed by writing. According to the lecturers, students had problems giving oral presentations, short talks and speaking in group discussions. Students also faced problems in writing reports and business proposals. The researchers suggested that Business English teachers could select subject related materials from various sources such as authentic online materials, course books, and teacher-generated material that were relevant to students' needs. According to the researchers, it is important for the materials to be relevant with the students' needs as it increases motivation in learning.

## **ii. Past Studies on English Language Needs and Challenges Faced By International Business Employees**

In recent years, calls have been made for graduates to be proficient in their English communication skills in order to function effectively at their workplace (Crosling and Ward, 2002). Crosling and Ward (2002) stated that employees have to develop and maintain excellent communication skills to provide excellent services to their clients in the business industry. However, employees still face many problems in communicating with their clients. This section presents a review of past studies on the English language needs and challenges faced by business employees.

Wu and Chin (2010) investigated the English language needs of banking and finance professionals in Taiwan. The data for this study was collected through questionnaires and

semi- structured interviews with 16 professionals from 10 organizations. The findings of the study revealed that writing was the most important skill for the employees. Employees had to work with their counterparts in other countries and most of the time, the writing skill was needed. Business proposals, business reports, business letter writing and e-mail messages were routinely written in English. Similarly, speaking and listening skills were considered to be crucial in the banking industry. For example, employees needed to have good English speaking and listening skills in order to exchange ideas and information during multinational conference calls either by telephone or online. In addition, employees also needed speaking skills for oral presentation and for business conversations.

Furthermore, employees revealed that reading skills were also needed in their field of work to read research reports, financial news, financial product descriptions, financial newspapers, and finance related websites. Employees needed to learn how to scan (i.e., searching for specific information) and do search reading (i.e., searching for information related to predetermined topics). To sum up, employees emphasized that gaining competence in English skills enabled them to avoid miscommunications and created a good working relationship with foreign clients and partners. Wu and Chin (2010) suggested that the Business English course should give equal importance to writing, speaking, listening and reading skills that would cater to the banking employees' needs. Authentic materials should be incorporated in the Business English course to make the lessons more interesting and meaningful.

Evans (2010) conducted a large scale study with 2000 working professionals from various business sectors in Hong Kong. The main aim of the study was to investigate the spoken and written English language needs at the workplace. The data was collected through a questionnaire survey. The findings of the study revealed that written English played a vital role at the workplace. Among the highest usage of written skills in English were



writing e-mail messages for internal and external reasons, writing documents such as business letters, memos, minutes of meetings and promotional materials. Many employees reported that writing emails to Chinese colleagues, clients and customers in English was easier and more convenient. This was because using a computer to decode Chinese characters was difficult. Another driving factor of using English for written communication was because of economic globalization and the advancement of information and communication technology.

In contrast to this, for speaking, employees stated that they preferred to speak in Cantonese particularly in formal meetings and discussions. They generally used a few English vocabulary in their speech. The findings also revealed that Cantonese was the main medium of spoken communication at the workplace in Hong Kong. Therefore, employees would only speak in English with non-Cantonese speakers and in special situations such as job interviews which were partially conducted in English in order to assess candidate's professional knowledge and language proficiency. The findings of the study suggested that both English and Cantonese were important in the business industry in Hong Kong. This study is also useful for language planners to design a suitable Business English course for employees such as giving priority to written English such as writing professional documents. While, for spoken English, the course can include topics such as how to participate effectively in meetings and giving oral presentations.

Evans' (2013) follow-up study showed similar findings. The study showed that spoken English does not play an important role at the workplace. Most employees in Hong Kong preferred to speak in Cantonese. Evans' (2013) study suggested that an effective Business English course should develop employees' language proficiency and skills which they can apply at the workplace. Moreover, the Business English course should incorporate engaging activities for the learners to relate those activities with real-life situations.

In a recent study, Chan (2014) conducted a needs analysis with 215 working adults from a private company in Hong Kong. The data was collected through questionnaires. This study investigated the spoken and written English language needs of the employees and the most challenging spoken and written means of communication at the workplace. In terms of the spoken needs, the findings revealed that informal meetings, group discussions, telephoning and formal oral presentations were important. Meanwhile, the most important written needs at the workplace were writing e-mail messages for internal and external purposes, writing documents such as memos and business letters in English. Among the challenges they faced in spoken communication were business negotiations, formal oral presentations and social interactions. They were worried about the proper use of words when communicating with foreign clients. Moreover, they felt that English was not the medium of communication as most people speak in Cantonese at the workplace. This is consistent with Evans' (2010, 2013) findings that Cantonese is the main language used for spoken communication at the workplace.

Giving oral presentations was another difficulty experienced by these employees. Oral presentations require formal and professional language; in addition, the presenter has to keep the audience' interest and attention. Employees found difficulties during the Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions. According to the employees, most of the time, audience tended to ask unexpected questions which they were not able to handle. In terms of written communication, employees faced a challenge in writing English documents such as writing business proposals, reports, and business plans.

They also faced difficulties in writing minutes of meetings and negative messages. Writing these documents required advanced vocabulary; moreover these messages should be clearly written and concise. They also stated that they did not have sufficient knowledge on business terminologies. In terms of writing minutes of meetings, the findings revealed that employees faced difficulties in using the correct format and style.

They also had difficulties in summarizing main ideas and using correct tenses. Writing negative messages was also a big challenge for the employees. They had to choose appropriate words to meet different parties' expectations (satisfying clients' needs and saving company face). It was difficult for them to write negative messages, as it required the necessary gist with the right tone especially if it involved high rank professionals and international business clients.

The study provided some suggestions on how an effective Business English course should be planned. Business English courses can offer more opportunities for learners to practice in the classroom for example through a) group discussions, b) role-plays, c) using authentic sample of text, d) exposing employees to different accents for them to communicate effectively with people from different countries, and e) inviting professional speakers to share their knowledge. From the findings also, it can be concluded that English language is mainly used for writing emails, reports, and various documents in the workplace in Hong Kong, while speaking in English is mainly used for presentations and formal meetings (See also Evans, 2010 and Evans, 2013).

In a more recent study, Unal (2014) investigated the English language problems encountered by business employees at their workplace. The study was conducted through a set of questionnaires with a few hundred employees in Egypt. The findings of the study revealed that their major language problems involved oral communication skills. Miscommunication arises because of the lack of understanding while communicating in English. Business employees who were engaged in the international business industry had to establish good relationships with their clients from different countries. Some clients who were from different parts of the world had different accents and pronunciations when speaking in English. The English used in The United States of America, Australia, Canada and other English speaking countries is different from the English used in Asia.

The study revealed that employees had difficulties in understanding different pronunciations and accents. Similarly, the clients experienced difficulties understanding the business employees' pronunciations and accents. Therefore, this led to miscommunications between both parties and left both feeling frustrated which eventually broke down the communication pattern. This also led to low self-confidence in speaking. Another form of miscommunication as pointed by Unal (2014) was the use of code switching. When a conversation took place, employees tended to answer by code switching from English to their mother tongue or the first language. Code switching occurs when employees feel pressured or when they were asked unpredicted questions. In this scenario, employees tended to panic and reply in their first language and then after a while replied in English. Likewise, those employees who were not proficient in English tended to mix two or more languages when they respond to unexpected questions asked by their clients or colleagues. The findings of the study suggested that an ESP course needs to be designed for the business employees to function effectively at the workplace. The next section will discuss past studies related to the English language needs and challenges faced by business employees in Malaysia.

### **iii. Past Studies On English Language Needs and Challenges Faced By Business Employees In Malaysia**

Kassim and Ali (2010) conducted a study with 65 employees from 10 business companies in Malaysia. The findings revealed that communication skills play an important role in multinational companies. About 80 percent of the employees felt that English communication skills have a major role at their workplace. These employees use English with different personnel such as suppliers, subordinates, supervisors, working colleagues, colleagues from international companies and clients/customers. According to the

employees, they need English to negotiate with clients, discuss work related matters formally and informally and give oral presentation skills. They also needed writing skills for work purposes. The written communication components needed include writing business project proposals, reports, minutes of meeting, formal letters and memos. These writing components are often used at the workplace.

Kassim and Ali (2010) also investigated the English language problems faced by business employees. According to them, employees found themselves in a situation in which they did not have the ability to communicate well. These problems included the inability to express their ideas and opinions to international clients at the workplace, problems speaking fluently in meetings as well as giving oral presentations and delivering public speeches. Other major problems encountered by them were organizing ideas during presentations, facilitating discussions and negotiations, paraphrasing, giving and asking for clarifications, supporting opinions, explaining logically and arguing persuasively. The findings revealed that a thorough needs analysis is important to design an English Business course for employees to function effectively at their workplace.

Similarly, Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012) conducted a needs analysis study in order to investigate the Business English language needs and challenges of internship business trainees in a private company in Kuala Lumpur. The data for this study was collected from 136 trainees through a set of questionnaires. The findings of the study revealed that there were some important specific communicative activities for the workplace. Among them were discussing projects, designs, and plans in English.

It was also important for the trainees to establish social relationships with clients, colleagues and superiors, having face-to-face communication with subordinates and they needed English to speak on the telephone with clients about job related matters. Moreover, the trainees also stated that making formal oral presentations on designs, plans, proposals and projects in English was important. The study also gauged the trainees'

perception of the importance that should be given to different oral skills in future ESP courses for business undergraduates.

According to Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012), some of the oral communication problems experienced by the business trainees during their industrial training were speaking fluently, facilitating negotiations and discussions and arguing persuasively. They also faced problems in asking for and giving clarifications and organizing ideas during oral presentations. According to them, superiors in the business companies often stereotyped employees who were not fluent in communicating in English. Employees who used English as a Second Language/Foreign Language revealed that sometimes they were not able to find the right words when expressing themselves to clients, superiors and colleagues. Employees needed extra time to think in their mother tongue and respond in English. This showed that they had difficulties in spontaneous speech and fluency while using English. This is in line with Kassim and Ali's (2010) finding that employees have problem speaking fluently, negotiating, organizing ideas during oral presentations and arguing persuasively. However, Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012) stated that employees who worked in an English-speaking environment would eventually improve their English language skills.

The findings of studies such as the above provided important feedback for curriculum designers to develop a new ESP course or to improve the current course catering to business undergraduates. According to Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012), tertiary institutions in Malaysia are seeking to produce innovative graduates in different fields to meet the demand of thriving resources in various situations. In line with this, one of the goals in Malaysian higher institutions is to produce graduates with good communication skills in English at the workplace. In order to realize this goal, tertiary institutions are seeking to develop language courses by focusing on communicative skills. To quote Moslehifar and Ibrahim's (2012), "in the workplace context employees need

communication skills in English language to be successful in their jobs as they must carry out different communicative tasks such as presentations, meeting and negotiations” (p.530).

Much of the literature on the needs of and the challenges faced by business learners are from countries such as Taiwan, China and the Middle East. Although in Malaysia, there were a numerous needs analysis studies conducted with tertiary institutions students in the fields of medical, law, banking and finance and engineering, there were no past studies conducted to seek perceptions from final year business students who have completed their industrial training. Some of the past studies done in Malaysia focused on English language problems business employees faced at the workplace (Kassim and Ali, 2010; Moslehifar and Ibrahim, 2012). This study intends to fill the research gap by identifying the English language problems and needs of the final year business students at a private university. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with various parties such as the Academic Head, Business Lecturers and Industrial Supervisors and questionnaire survey from the business students. This study will be one of the first to seek information from various sources especially taking into account the Industrial supervisors’ perceptions as they have first-hand knowledge of the English language problems students faced during industrial training and these supervisors are able to identify the relevant language needs of the business students. Hence, by identifying the problems and needs of the business students, an outline of the ESP syllabus will be proposed. The next section discusses the subject of syllabus design in ESP.

## 2.5 Syllabus Design

Hyland (2006), defined syllabus as “a plan of what is to be achieved through teaching and learning, identifying what will be worked on in reaching the overall course objectives and providing a basis of evaluating students’ progress” (p.83). Designing a syllabus involves analysing the findings of needs analysis and setting achievable goals.

According to Hyland (2006), the terms “syllabus” and “curriculum” can be very close in meaning. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the difference between curriculum and syllabus before reviewing language syllabus in detail. Graves (1996), defined “curriculum design as a broad statement of the philosophy, purpose, design and implementation of the entire language teaching program and the syllabus as a specification and ordering the content of the course taught” (p.21).

According to Widodo (2007), syllabus design involves seven important steps, which are:

1. Conducting need analysis;
2. Objective formulation;
3. Selecting instructional content;
4. Designing instructional content;
5. Selection of instructional activities;
6. Designing instructional activities;
7. Selection of instructional evaluation.

(Widodo, 2007, p.90)

One of the major considerations in planning a syllabus is the content that should be included in the ESP course (Basturkmen, 2010). According to Basturkmen (2010), “how the ESP programme has been focused impacts on what will be included in the syllabus” (p.61). Belcher (2009) stated that, if the focus of the ESP programme is on English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP), the ESP practitioner may teach academic words



that are related to the learners' academic field. Generally, a syllabus is organized in units. These units may be seen as components of language functions (speech acts), skills, notions, strategies, genres, vocabularies and grammar. In some cases, the ESP course may have combinations of units (Basturkmen, 2010). Basturkmen (2010) adapted Cowling's (2007) research as an example for her to explain these combinations of units. In Cowling's (2007) research, he describes how findings from a needs analysis were used in planning a syllabus for a series of intensive workplace courses at a leading Japanese company in Japan. In his research, "the needs analysis involved multiple sources and multiple methods of information and suggested that the courses needed to provide a communicative component in which learners would be able to adapt their present General English into knowledge for business situations" (p.432).

Moreover, the ESP course also took cultural communication with foreign business clients into consideration and provided realistic and authentic examples of language use (Cowling, 2007). Nevertheless, this syllabus was partially "content based" and included a "cultural" focus for example, one of the units in this ESP course was titled "Placing Business Orders". This syllabus specifies discourse/language items for the unit (such as useful expressions and vocabularies and the function of 'telephone introduction'), content items (such as 'confirming details' and 'giving and taking orders') and cultural components on 'level of formality and politeness'. Basturkmen (2010) stated that in planning a syllabus, the course designer should also make decisions on what was to be included in terms of 'sequencing' such as what should be the first, second and so forth. This decision should be made according to the immediate and less immediate needs, level of difficulty with easier items before more difficult items and logical flow- for example, in Business English, learners should know how to start and close a negotiation deal. Next, the 'items in the units' such as which genres, semantic sets and functions and lastly the

‘types of units’ such as skills, vocabulary, genres, functions, notions and disciplinary, professional or cultural content.

In the literature, syllabus is perceived differently as there are various types of syllabuses recommended by the ESP scholars. Each of these syllabuses have been systematically planned in order to cater to a specific language course. The next section discusses the types of syllabus that can be implemented in the ESP courses.

### **2.5.1 Types Of Syllabus**

According to Hyland (2006), before selecting a syllabus, the course designer should consider between the Traditional and Holistic View of syllabus. Comparing the two views of syllabus, the Holistic View focuses more on communication of the learners while the Traditional View of syllabus focuses more on the grammatical aspects of the language. The Holistic View of syllabus is usually the preferred choice to develop an ESP course (Dincay, 2011). Nunan (1988) listed a few characteristics of the Holistic View of Syllabus that are still applicable today (Dincay, 2011). The characteristics of the Holistic View of syllabus are listed below:

- 1) It focuses on the natural language learning process by concentrating on the content and meaning of the expressions rather than the form.
- 2) It tends to be learner-centered rather than teacher-centered in teaching.
- 3) It gives equal importance to speaking and reading for a task to be completed.
- 4) The objective is to have learners communicate effectively in order to complete a task.
- 5) It gives importance to everyday language.
- 6) It selects the language elements the learners need to know and need to improve on.

7) Lastly, it focuses on communication rather than grammar.

(Nunan, 1988, p.68)

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) there are seven types of syllabus and quite often, these seven syllabuses are combined with each other. The combination of the syllabuses makes the syllabus become 'holistic' (Dincay, 2011). The seven syllabuses are:

### **1. Task And Activity Based Syllabus**

Task and Activity Based Syllabus organizes activities according to following instructions, following directions and applying for a job. This type of syllabus is designed to meet the target language needs.

### **2. Skill Based Syllabus**

Skill Based Syllabus organizes activities according to micro skills such as skimming and scanning documents, and writing negative messages.

### **3. Topical-Based Syllabus**

Topical Based Syllabus organizes activities according to topics such as health, food and travelling. These topics are usually related to the learner's target language.

### **4. Functional And Notional Syllabus**

Functional and Notional Syllabus are a combination of functions (organized around communicative functions such as defining, reporting and identifying) and notions (organized around conceptual categories such as location, time, duration, and space).

### **5. Structural Syllabus**

Structural Syllabus is designed according to grammar and sentence patterns. It is language focused.

## **6. Situational Syllabus**

In Situational Syllabus, activities are designed based on different types of situations and language skills related to a specific situation such as negotiating a business deal.

Situational syllabus can be found in “English for Business Purposes”, in some “English for technology courses” and in the “English for social orientation” components of ESP programmes (Robinson, 1991). According to Dincay (2011), “a situational syllabus is a collection of real or imaginary situations in which language occurs or is used” (p.15).

The primary objective of the Situational syllabus is to teach the language that occurs in the learners’ learning environment such as giving an oral presentation during meetings, opening and closing a negotiation, giving suggestions and so forth. One advantage of the situational syllabus “is that motivation is heightened since it is learner-centered rather than subject-centered” (Dincay, 2011, p.10). In addition, Hyland (2006) suggested that an Analytic Syllabus could bridge from “declarative knowledge”, or what students know, to “procedural knowledge”, or what they can do with this knowledge. This syllabus gives importance to meaning and communication as the learners are exposed to relevant authentic target language discourse and content. Therefore, a Situational Syllabus and Analytic Syllabus permit language learners to practice using the language in the activities offered in the ESP course. By using this holistic view of syllabus, the learners would be aware of the natural language process and would gain knowledge to apply the language based on their understanding. Therefore, a good syllabus design would combine a Situational based Syllabus and an Analytic Syllabus. In addition, it is also important to identify a suitable approach to design the syllabus. The next section discusses the approach to syllabus design.

### **2.5.2 Approach To Syllabus Design**

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) posed an important question which is “What role should a syllabus play in the course design process?” We can look at this question in terms of the approaches to course design. One of the best approaches for syllabus design in Business English courses is learning- centered (Dincay, 2011). According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), “learning-centered approach is based on the principle that learning is totally determined by the learner” (p.72). The teachers have a say in what they would teach, but the learners themselves decide what they would learn. The “learning-centered” approach goes beyond the competence that enables the learners to perform a communicative act. Specifically, this approach places emphasis on the process rather than the product. Moreover, this approach includes the language learning-process and learners’ effort at every stage of the course.

Nunan (1988) argued that it is impossible for the ESP instructor to teach every aspect of the English language in a short period of time, therefore it is important to take into consideration the aspects of the language that learners themselves feel are important to learn. Moreover, in a learner-centered classroom, the ESP learners do not rely on their ESP instructor, instead, they value each other’s contributions: by co-operating, learning and helping each other (Dincay, 2011). The focus is on working together as a whole class, in groups and in pairs. The ESP instructors’ responsibility is to guide them in developing their language skills. This is “an approach whereby learners’ needs are considered as a group and as individuals, and they are encouraged to take part in the learning process regularly” (Dincay, 2011, p.10). Therefore, in this approach, the ESP instructor is seen as a member of the team and as a participant in the learning process.

Along with the curriculum based on learner-centered language teaching is Communicative Language Teaching. Dincay (2011) stated that, “a basic principle underlying all communicative approaches is that the learners must learn not only to make grammatically correct, propositional statement about the experimental world, but must also develop the ability to use the language to conduct various real-world tasks”(p.18). Through learner-centered activities, learners will be aware of the different functions of the language and they will be able to solve challenges in any given situation.

According to Taghizadeh (2013), there are many advantages in the learner-centered approach. The advantages are as follows:

- 1) Learners will be more interested in the learning process because they are able to interact with others in the activities offered in the curriculum.
- 2) Learners will be able to communicate without any hesitation through collaborative learning.
- 3) Learners will be able share their ideas with others.
- 4) Learners will be able to draw a connection between what they have acquired and what they already know.
- 5) Learners will be able to apply their schemata or prior knowledge and experience.
- 6) Learners will be able to compare and contrast ideas and notions when tackling a problem.
- 7) It provides learners with numerous ways in handling a problem using language.

(Taghizadeh, 2013, p.3793)

The ESP syllabus design is considered realistic because it is needs driven and flexible as the focus is on the learners’ needs and wants. In general, language learning is complex

and the teaching-learning process cannot be intuitively outlined. Therefore, Basturkmen (2010) asserted that the ESP curriculum should have a certain degree of adaptability as well as flexibility. A good curriculum designer would have a clear focus on “language functions as well as the subject matter through which the language is taught” (p.57). Though syllabus design is based on the outcome of a needs analysis, the ESP curriculum should have a built-in-mechanism to accommodate emerging challenges and undiscovered realities.

## **2.5.2 Past Studies on Syllabus Design**

### **i. International Past Studies On Syllabus Design**

Cowling (2007) reported his encounter of creating a course to serve the purpose of equipping the workers of Japan-based Mitsubishi Heavy Industries with the training of a more practical usage of English language focusing on scenarios of business situations that they might experience in their workplace. Cowling, through a thorough execution of needs analysis later came to discover that the process of syllabus design, particularly the stages of planning and implementation are much more severe in complexity in comparison to what is delineated in the design literature’s syllabus. Some of the fundamental purpose for his syllabus design task comprises: (a) To introduce nine area of study (one for each intensive course) that would come in handy in their jobs. (b) To provide a communicative course of which their general English knowledge could be further accommodated into business scenarios. (c) To introduce a course that takes into account the cultural affair when attending to people of different nationality in business. (d) To provide realistic (authentic) illustrations of language. Cowling claimed that these considerations required a content-based and notional–functional syllabus which mirrors the differing needs of the target group. The notional–functional part of the syllabus was organized in regards to the modules such as conducting business introductions, hosting business visitors, making business related phone-calls, taking business orders and

describing trends of business. The materials designed were of the intention to mirror realistic utilisation of language incorporating genuine transcripts and more. The content-based part of the syllabus was meant to include modules such as descriptions of products and services, business presentations, business meetings and business negotiations. Original text examples were also employed in the teaching materials of this part of the syllabus. A set of task-based realistic activities were also included in the programme feature in the effort of bringing authenticity to the course.

According to Zhang and Wang (2011), the teaching of the English Language in China has undergone excessive transformation. There is a recent program introduced with the exception of the currently existing linguistic-focused traditional major English and literature program, which is the Business English Program. China's Education Ministry accredits this new program. The Business English program of the National curricula has been formulated and put into practice. The need for teachers and administrators as a guide for a national curriculum for this subject have now sky-rocketed since fifteen universities were given the permission to run this program. 700 universities and colleges all across China is also offering a variation of courses in Business English. Curriculum development is deemed to be a vital element in an educational program. Richards (2001), states that curriculum development "focuses on determining what knowledge, skills, and values students learn in schools, what experiences should be provided to bring about intended learning outcomes, and how teaching and learning in schools or educational systems can be planned, measured, and evaluated" (p.2). The main concern of the development's curriculum of which this definition specifies are: What should be included in the program, how to go about the implementation, and the method of which the outcome is accessed. The current doings and efforts to further enhance China's Business English national curriculum were also reported in the article. This would affect crucial aspects of the program's mission, its theoretical bases for curriculum design, elements of knowledge



and capabilities, requirements of competency levels, course design, and teaching principles and methods.

According to Zhang and Wang (2011), determining the appropriate and most suited syllabus is crucial in the efforts of enhancing an effective Business English course. Brown (1995) through his research has identified synthetic and analytic to be the two types of curricula. The first type which is the traditional foreign language curricula includes language form syllabus, situational syllabus, notional syllabus, and lexis syllabus. Brown (1995) specifies that a shift in language form syllabi from the discipline as the basis to learners is a representation of situational syllabi. As due consideration is given to the situations where learners are to use language and the needs of learners, the motivation of learners is remarkably boosted. Notional syllabi are synthetic in nature. Grammatical structures and semantic features were also taken into consideration. Having the training of communication proficiency being the center of focus, functional linguistics became the guide of the communicative teaching syllabi. The content were being selected based on these two crucial points of reference: notions and functions. The concepts as time, space, motion, and causality falls under the “notions” criteria. Functions are the purposes and goals of communication. Notional and functional syllabi has more to do with communicative functions, which is a big influence on Hymes’ report in regards to communicative competence. Zhang and Wang (2011) reported that modern linguistics and foreign language teaching contributes heavily onto the theories utilised by the Business English curriculum. This includes the curriculum development principles, cognitive linguistics, theories on cross-cultural communication, task-based language teaching theories, English for Specific Purposes theories, and needs analysis of business knowledge. The classification of language tasks and knowledge is the foundation of the abilities band and course design. Upon this discovery, the synthetic syllabus has been

materialised by the curriculum which became the representation of the current trend in language teaching syllabus design.

A study was conducted by Chan (2014) employing the needs analysis with a subject of 215 working adults from a Hong Kong-based private company. This study looks into the existing gap to first analyse (a) the spoken and written necessity of professionals in the local Hong Kong establishments (b) the obstacles they face (c) what is perceived to be the utmost challenge in spoken and written communication and (d) professionals' concerns in regards to the content of the business English courses to further improve its effectiveness. This article contributes to the insights of what makes up an effective Business English course, which could contribute to the educators to further expand their capacity to facilitate the teaching and learning of Business English to a non-native speaker that could acquire English as a second language. As being proposed by Chan (2014), as Business English is deemed to be a branch of ESP, it is able to concord into the course designs used exclusively for ESP without challenges. After further examination of the course design, it is safe to conclude that learning-centered course design would be the most appropriate and suitable aid in the Business English teaching process. This scenario is due to the fact that those with the interest to further thrive and expand their knowledge in this particular field have a certain expectation on the type of expertise they would like to obtain to strive in the field they wish to pursue. It is crucial to take into account an employer's requirements and needs so that in the future students will be prepared to fulfil them.

## **ii. Past Studies On Syllabus Design In Malaysia**

A Business Course which is based on needs analysis were developed by Kassim and Ali (2010). As proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) needs analysis is crucial to the organisation of teaching in addressing the learners' needs, demands, lacks and constraints

in the English Business course as they are more precise and distinct from those of the tertiary education. This course caters to a wider aspect of which learners would be involved in all four basic skills while focusing on a number of target events, like professional skills and career content. Specific needs of learners would be taught and addressed in the topic of the course. This is a situational-based syllabus. Activities are created in relation to the various situations and language needs in relation to a particular situation. English will be established as the medium of instruction and as a classroom communication tool. In efforts to further enhance the learner's communication skill and bring about an English speaking environment, learners are recommended to converse in English throughout the course duration. The in-house materials representing language input are collected from a range of sources which mainly encourage learners' motivation in learning and are related to their job or profession. In order to enhance the learner's interest on the subject, real-life based and authentic materials were used. The learning procedure would include task-based learner-centered activities. Therefore, all the tasks are created to enable the learners to acknowledge their advancement, development and shortcomings in acquiring language skills. They would have the opportunity to polish their English language to be more fluent within the course of the period, in and out of class. To ensure learners' engagement, the materials of models, pictures and handouts include engaging and apprehensible illustration from a more diverse range of related sources that are suited to the needs of the learners were used. A good teaching establishment must possess a resource unit to assist the educators in providing suitable materials. Likewise, the teaching of speaking skill involves audio-visual materials such as cassettes, videos, VCDs, DVDs, CD-ROMs and other types of multimedia materials. To assist on further improvement of the learners' listening and speaking skills, cassette tapes were provided in all the in-house reading materials. Kassim and Ali (2010) claimed that learner-centered is by far the most ideal approach to run a Business English course.

Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012) stated that the English for Business Purposes curriculum is often based on the results of needs analysis. A diverse scheme of requirement of the chosen syllabi have been advised by some principles, including the contextual considerations and limitation, in reliance of the importance given to the substance of the skills or capacity deemed important for a particular groups of learners, the relevance of activities and tasks, texts or genres probably applied and often produced by the intended learner groups, the time and resources accessible for these course design exercises to be executed, and more importantly to take into account the educator's involvement, experience, competence and proficiency in teaching this course. It is important to realize that even the best of curriculum designs can fail if the teachers are not adequately trained or have insufficient commitment to executing such courses. A study of which conducted by Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012) on a Kuala Lumpur - based private company's 136 intern trainees came to discover that less than half the interns complied to the needs-analytical procedures to discover what is pertinent to business professionals, some applied the business-oriented instructional materials, or integrated activities with bases of business, also tasks identical to those of which usually appears in a business situation. As there were many conclusions that derived from this, one of the main ones that were taken into account is that fact that high quality Business English courses are in high demand all around the globe but its availability in relation to detailed specifications of needs and complementary design of distinct targeted curricula to satisfy such requirements is scarce, therefore a need arose for theoretically informed business-centered English courses that incorporates business-related materials, with motivating work-related activities. There is also a multi-layered flexible syllabi (incorporates notional-functional syllabus and situational syllabus) created by Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012) that is made up of three integrated and complementary strands of functions, topics, and vocabulary, employing a variation of authentic material and relevant topic-based activities.

## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented a review of literature relevant to the research issues. It discussed the subject of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Business Purposes and Needs Analysis as well as reviewed past studies on English language needs and English language challenges. It also discussed syllabus design. The theoretical framework and methodology adopted will be presented in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3

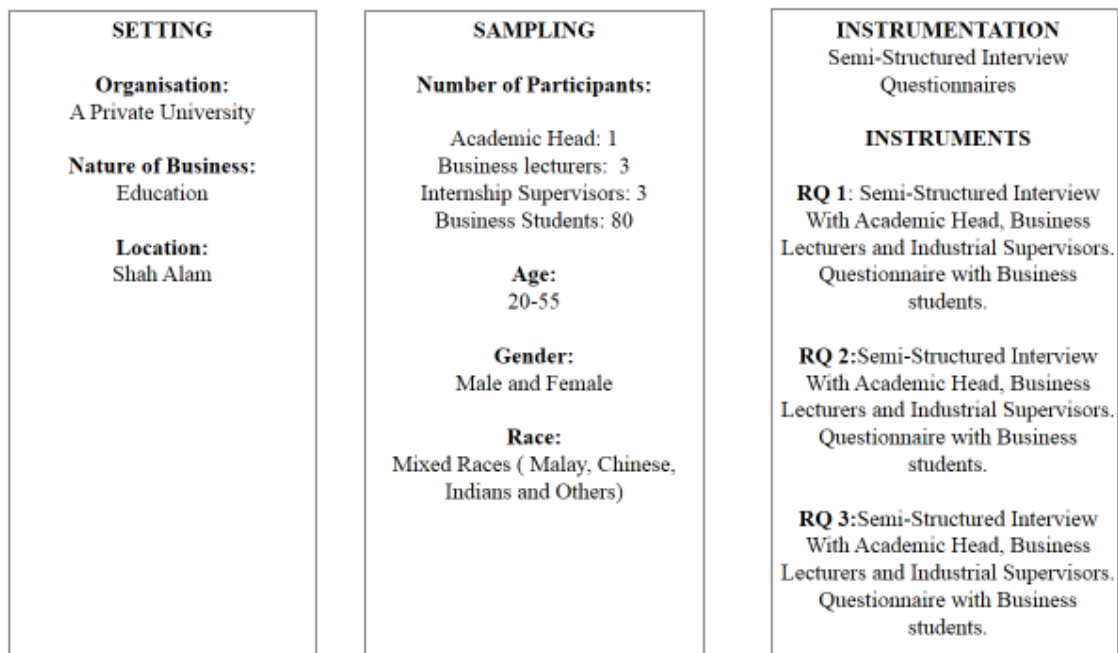
### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents details on the methodology used to answer the research questions of this study. It presents the research design, and the setting of the study, as well as the sampling used to conduct the research, and research instruments utilised for this study. This is followed by an explanation on data collection and data analysis used for this study. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a summary of the methodology used in this study.

#### 3.1 Research Design

This is a qualitative study to investigate the English language needs of and problems faced by business students in a private university. According to Creswell (2012), “qualitative research explores a problem and develops a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon” (p.120). The qualitative research addresses a research problem in which the researcher does not know the variables and needs to explore them. In Creswell’s (2012) words, “the literature might yield little information about the phenomenon of a study, and the researcher needs to learn more from participants through exploration” (p.30). In order to validate findings from a qualitative research, the researcher can employ a strategy that is triangulation. Triangulation involves using multiple data sources from different respondents (e.g., lecturers, and students) as well as methods of data collection (e.g., interviews, observations and questionnaires). In this way, the researcher is able to establish a research which is credible and accurate (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used in this study. Different groups of participants were used in order to collect different input. They included the Academic Head, Business Lecturers, Industrial Supervisors and Business students.



**Figure 3.1: Overview of the Research Design**

Figure 3.1 shows an overview of the research design. Further explanation of the setting, sampling and instruments is provided below.

### **3.2 Research Setting**

The research site of this study is in a private university located in Shah Alam. This university was chosen as the site of the research as the researcher had the accessibility to obtain the necessary data to conduct the study. Preliminary inquiries revealed that the Business programme did not include a language course in its curriculum, which made this university ideal for investigation into the language needs of its business students.

### **3.3 Sampling**

A questionnaire survey was conducted with business degree students at the chosen private university for this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Academic Head, three Business Lecturers, and three Industrial Supervisors. The participants of the study were selected through purposive sampling. Purposeful sampling is the most common form of sampling in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012).

According to Creswell (2012), purposeful sampling allows the researcher to focus only on the respondents who share specific characteristics to answer the research questions of the study.

One of the most common strategies of purposive sampling is Maximal Variation Sampling. According to Creswell (2012), the idea behind maximal variation sampling is to look at a subject from all available angles, thereby achieving a greater understanding. Also known as “Heterogeneous Sampling”, it involves selecting candidates across a broad spectrum relating to the topic of study. This type of sampling is useful when a random sample is not taken, for instance, if the sample pool is small. Therefore, in this study the researcher employed maximal variation sampling strategy. The researcher intentionally selected these participants in order to develop a detailed understanding of the English language problems and needs of the business degree students.

**i. The Academic Head Of The Private University**

The Academic Head was selected because he is the Head of the business department at the private university. Moreover, he has more than 10 years working experience lecturing students. Thus, he is able to provide relevant information on the English language needs and problems of the business students.

**ii. Business Lecturers Of The Private University**

There are fifteen business programme lecturers at the university. Three out of the fifteen lecturers agreed to participate in the semi-structured interviews. These business programme lecturers have been teaching various subjects such as Introduction to Organizations and E-Business, Management of Finance, Business Process Integration, Academic, Managerial and Professional Awareness and Business Economics 2. These lecturers have been selected because they are in a position to give ample feedback on the students’ English usage. They have been teaching and tutoring the business students for



more than six years and they are the business students' internship supervisors. Given their experience, they are able to identify the students' strengths and weaknesses in using the English language. Their responses will be valuable in assessing the English language problems and needs of the business degree students at the workplace.

### **iii. Industrial Supervisors**

There were three industrial supervisors chosen to participate in this study. The supervisors were selected randomly from different business related companies. The reason for choosing these industrial supervisors is that they have experience supervising the business degree students during their industrial training for more than 5 years. Moreover, these supervisors hold the position as the Head of their business departments. Therefore, the industrial supervisors would be able to provide feedback on the English language problems and needs of the business students in the workplace.

### **iv. The Business Degree Students Of The Private University**

This study targeted all of the eighty students pursuing a full-time business degree program in their final semester of the 2015/2016 academic session at the private university. These students have met the minimum English language requirement to enrol in their business degree programme (i.e. Malaysian University English Test (MUET), a minimum of Band 3). All eighty students were involved in the questionnaire survey. These respondents were selected as they are able to provide comprehensive feedback since they had completed their three months of industrial training. They are thus able to give pertinent information for this research from their experiences using English at their workplace. Therefore, they are able to identify their language needs and reveal the problems faced by them at their workplace, i.e. industrial training site. This would provide valuable insights from the perspectives of the business students.

### **3.4 Research Instruments**

Interviews were conducted with the Academic Head, Business Lecturers and Industrial Supervisors at the beginning of the research. Upon completing the interviews, a questionnaire was developed by adapting Basturkmen's (2010) questionnaire to be answered by the business students (*See Appendix A, B, C and D*).

#### **3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interview**

There are a number of reasons for employing a semi-structured interview for this study. Creswell (2012) states that qualitative interview transpires when the researcher puts forward open-ended questions to one or more respondents in general, records their responses and in addition the recording will be transcribed for analysis. According to him, open-ended questions are used so that the respondents can voice their views that are not restricted by the perspectives of the researcher and previous research results. Furthermore, Wahi, O'Neill and Chapman (2013) made a point that, interviews usually allow respondents to convey their own perceptions, ideas and judgements. A number of researchers share similar views on the objective of having an interview (Hutchison and Waters, 1987; Brown, 1995; Bastrukmen, 2010). Therefore, for this study, semi-structured interviews that contained open-ended questions were used to elicit pertinent information from the Academic Head, Business Lecturers and Industrial Supervisor on the English language needs and problems of the business students. The semi-structured interview questions comprised questions pertaining to the language needs and language problems faced by the business students. The interviews also consisted of questions that gauged the perceptions of the participants on the necessity of having an ESP course for the business students. (*See Appendix A, B and C*).

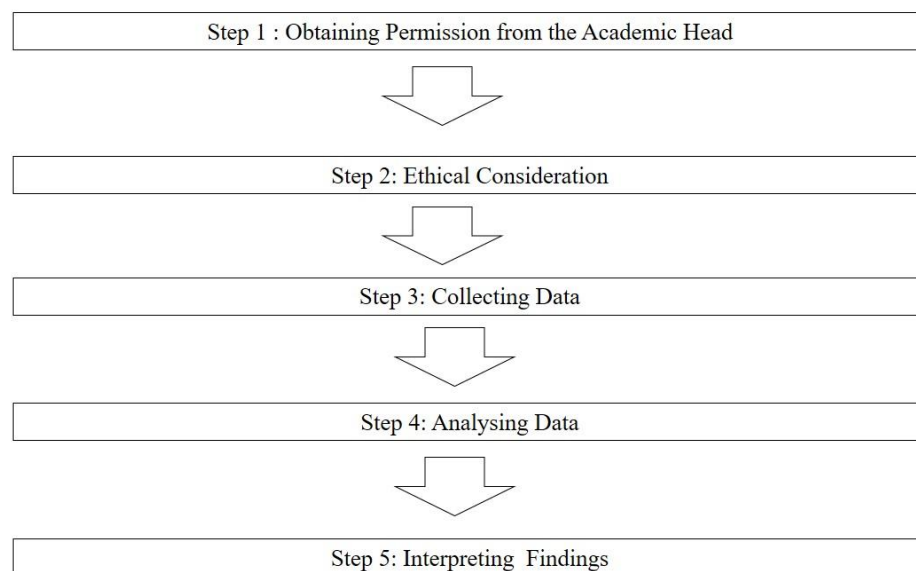
### **3.4.2 Questionnaire**

According to Basturkmen (2010), questionnaire surveys can be used to obtain information from a large number of respondents and data can be collected in a short span of time and it is cost effective. In Wahi, O'Neill and Chapman's (2013) view, self-grading questionnaires are generally beneficial for gaining useful insights from the respondents as they are asked to do "judgmental ranking" whereby they provide their perspectives of the numerous aspects of the programmes and courses. Questionnaire surveys have been extensively utilized by many researchers to conduct needs analysis and it is recognized as one of the best techniques to assist researchers to gain knowledge of the students' necessities, lacks, and wants (Dincay, 2011). Hence, the justification for choosing questionnaire for the present study. Questionnaire surveys were used to collect the responses of the students to answer the research questions of this study.

In order to identify the English language needs of and problems faced by the business degree students at the private university, the researcher developed a questionnaire adapted from Basturkmen (2010) to suit the present study. The reason for adapting her questionnaire is because the questions are related to the English language problems and needs of business degree students. It has also been used in several other needs analysis studies by Kassim and Ali (2010), Ghengshesh, Hamed and Abdullah (2011), Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012) and Unal (2014). There were three parts in the questionnaire. The first part was on the personal background of the respondents. There were six questions about the respondent's gender, age, highest education level, mother tongue, other languages spoken by them and their level of proficiency in the English language. The second part of the questionnaire had seven questions regarding the respondents' language abilities and their learning preference. The first three questions were regarding their daily usage of English, their proficiency level in the English language and the English language skills that they needed to improve on. The fourth question elicited their opinion of having

an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. The last question of the second part of the questionnaire was regarding the content or skills that should be included in the proposed English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. The final part of the questionnaire consisted of seventeen items. These items aim to identify the English language problems faced by the business students during their industrial training. These seventeen items used a four point Likert scale, in the scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3(Agree) and 4 (Strongly Agree) (*See Appendix D*).

### 3.5 Data Collection And Data Analysis Procedures



**Figure 3.2: Overview of the Research Procedure**

Figure 3.2 shows an overview of the data collection and data analysis procedures of the research. Further explanation of the research procedures, ethical consideration and data analysis is provided below.

#### 3.5.1 Obtaining Permission

Permission was obtained from the Academic Head of the private university to conduct the research at the university. The researcher distributed the relevant documents such as Letter of Consent to conduct the study, the complete research proposal, and copies of the research instruments (Questionnaires and Interview Questions) to the Academic Head.

The researcher verbally explained in detail of her intention to conduct the research, and the possible benefits the university would gain based on the outcome of the study. The Academic Head granted her permission to conduct this study.

### **3.5.2 Ethical Consideration**

The researcher gave special attention to the necessary ethical issues in conducting the research. Proper measures were taken to prevent any misconception of the main aim of the study. The participants were well informed on the objectives of carrying out the study, prior to the distribution of the questionnaires and conducting the semi-structured interview. The information provided by the participants regarded as private and confidential and was to be used for the purposes of this study only, and the data collected is not used for any other purposes. All of the participants gave their verbal agreement to participate in this study.

### **3.5.3 Collecting Data**

#### **3.5.3.1 Semi-Structured Interview**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted separately with the selected participants (one Academic Head, three Business lecturers and three Industrial supervisors from the business Industry). The interviews were conducted at the private university over a period of two weeks. The researcher asked for specific information on the English language problems and needs of the students (See Appendix A, B and C). Each interview lasted about 25 minutes. It was audio-recorded with the consent of the Academic Head, the Business degree lecturers and the Industrial Supervisors and later transcribed verbatim. The interview sessions were conducted prior to the distribution of the questionnaire.

### **3.5.3.2 Questionnaire**

The researcher herself administered the questionnaire survey to eighty final year business degree students in their respective classrooms. Permission was obtained from the lecturer whose students were involved in the questionnaire survey session. The researcher explained the contents and purpose of each section of the questionnaire. This was to ensure that students knew how to answer the questions. They were given 25 minutes to answer the questionnaire survey. Once completed, the researcher collected all the questionnaires for analysis.

### **3.5.4 Data Analysis**

The methods of analysing the data are presented in this section. The results of the findings will be presented in Chapter 4.

#### **3.5.4.1 Semi-Structured Interview**

The interviewees were asked open-ended questions (*See Appendix for A, B and C for Interview Questions*). For the semi-structured interview, the transcribed data was coded and the developing themes were identified. The themes were presented according to different categories such as students having problems understanding spoken English, reading in English, writing in English and those having problems listening and speaking in English.

#### **3.5.4.2 Questionnaire**

The data from the questionnaires were analyzed descriptively. Statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were used to tabulate the data.

### **3.6 Chapter Summary**

This section focused on the methodology used to conduct this research. It discussed research design, the setting of the study, the sampling method, the research instruments, the data collection and the data analysis. The next chapter will present the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter reports the results from the data analysis and findings addressing each of the research questions.

#### 4.1 Background Of The Respondents

This section reports on the results of Section A of the questionnaire. Section A is on the demographic profile of the business students, their use of English in daily conversations, use of English language skills at the workplace and their self-rating of English language skills.

##### 4.1.1 The Demographic Profile Of Respondents

A total of 80 questionnaires were distributed to the business students. The response rate was 100 percent. The demographic profile of the respondents is provided in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Demographic Profile Of Respondents**

Variable	Frequency	Percentages
Gender		
Male	23	28%
Female	57	72%
Age		
18-21 years old	68	85%
24-27 years old	12	15%
28 years and above	0	0%
Highest Qualification		
Professional Certificate	11	14%
Diploma	44	55%
STPM	25	31%



**Table 4.1, continued**

Mother Tongue		
Malay	25	32%
Mandarin	40	50%
Tamil	10	12%
English	5	6%
Other Language (s) Spoken		
Malay	55	69%
Hokkien	22	28%
Cantonese	18	23%
English	75	94%
Self-Rated English Proficiency		
Excellent	12	15%
Good	38	48%
Average	18	22%
Poor	12	15%

As shown in Table 4.1, the majority 57/80 (72%) of the respondents were females. There were 23(28%) males. Out of the 80 respondents, 68 (85%) were in the 18 to 21 years age group while 12 (15%) were in the 24 to 27 years old age group. Most of the respondents 44 (55%) have a diploma as the highest qualification while 25(31%) have a STPM certificate.

Half the respondents, i.e. 40 (50%), stated that their mother tongue was Mandarin, while for 25 (32%) it was Malay and the mother tongue for 10 (12%) respondents was Tamil. 5 (6%) respondents stated the English language was their mother tongue. 75 (94%) respondents reported that they spoke English as the other language. The majority, i.e. 55(69%) reported that they spoke Malay in addition to their mother tongue.

On self-rated English language proficiency, 48% reported their English proficiency as good, 22% as average and 15% as poor. 12 (15%) of the respondents rated their English proficiency as excellent. The reliability of the students' self-rated proficiency could have

been tested if the researcher was given an opportunity to conduct a language proficiency test among the students and comparisons were made. However, this was not the case.

#### **4.1.2 Use Of English In Daily Conversation**

In Part 1 (a) of Section B of the questionnaire, the students were asked how often they communicated in English with others. The results are summarised in Table 4.2

**Table 4.2 Use Of English In Daily Conversation**

Usage of English in Daily Conversation	Frequency	Percentages
Always	26	33%
Sometimes	40	50%
Seldom	8	10%
Rarely	6	7%

As shown in Table 4.2, only 26(33%) respondents always used English to communicate with others at home or at the workplace. On the other hand, 40 (50%) respondents reported using English sometimes, 8(10%) seldom and 6 (7%) rarely used English to communicate with others at home or at the workplace.

#### **4.1.3 Use Of English Language Skills During Industrial Training**

The business students had recently completed their internship and their response to this questions pertains to their experience of using English during the internship. Therefore in Part 1 (b) of Section B, the students were asked to specify the skills they used during their industrial training. The skills used are summarised in Table 4.3

**Table 4.3 Use Of English Language Skills During Industrial Training**

Use of English during Industrial Training	Frequency	Percentages
Speak to:		
Lecturers	65	81%
Colleagues	60	75%
Industrial Supervisor	75	94%
Clients	70	88%
Listen to:		
Lecturers	78	98%
Colleagues	72	90%
Industrial Supervisors	76	95%
Clients	70	88%
Write:		
Reports	80	100%
E-mails	80	100%
Messages	75	94%
Notes	70	88%
Read:		
Reports	80	100%
E-Mails	80	100%
Messages	65	81%
Notes	60	75%

Based on the information provided in Table 4.3, the majority of the respondents, i.e. 75 (94%), spoke English with their industrial supervisors, 70 (88%) conversed in English with their clients, 65 (81%) of the respondents spoke English with their lecturers and 60 (75%) reported that they used English to communicate with their colleagues.

The use of English for listening purpose was quite similar to speaking where 78 (98%) of the respondents listened to their lecturers in English, 76 (95%) listened to their industrial supervisors, 72 (90%) listened to their colleagues and 70 (88%) listened to their clients in English. Listening to the lecturers in English was the highest because most of the instructions pertaining to their internship matters were given only in English.

All of the respondents, i.e., 80 (100%) reported that they wrote reports and e-mails in English, while 75 (94%) reported using English to write messages and 70 (88%) reported that they wrote their notes in English. The materials in English read by the students were

reports and e-mails, i.e., 80 (100%). 65 (81%) stated they needed to read messages in English while reading notes had 60 (75%) respondents. It can be concluded that reading and writing reports and e-mails are important for the business students.

#### 4.1.4 Respondents' Self-Rating Of Their English Language Skills

In the second part of Section B of the questionnaire, the students were asked to rate their English language abilities. The summary of the results are presented in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4 Respondents' Self-Rating Of Their English Language Skills.**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Listening		
Poor	5	6%
Fair	9	11%
Average	13	16%
Good	46	58%
Excellent	7	9%
Reading		
Poor	0	0%
Fair	12	15%
Average	8	10%
Good	50	62%
Excellent	10	13%
Writing		
Poor	10	13%
Fair	8	10%
Average	12	15%
Good	38	47%
Excellent	12	15%
Speaking		
Poor	9	11%
Fair	17	21%
Average	11	14%
Good	33	41%
Excellent	10	13%

**Table 4.4, continued**

Vocabulary		
Poor	20	25%
Fair	18	23%
Average	7	8%
Good	22	28%
Excellent	13	16%
Pronunciation		
Poor	9	11%
Fair	14	17%
Average	15	19%
Good	30	38%
Excellent	12	15%
Grammar		
Poor	16	20%
Fair	8	10%
Average	13	16%
Good	26	33%
Excellent	17	21%

Based on the results shown in Table 4.4, out of the 80 students in the sample, 46 (58%) of the respondents rated their listening skills as good, while 7 (9%) of the respondents rated their listening skills as excellent and 5 (6%) poor respectively. In reading, 50 (62%) rated their reading skills as good while the lowest percentage was 8 (10%). None of the business students rated their reading skills as poor. This could be because most of the business students have basic reading skills as well as English is their second language. For writing, the majority, i.e., 38 (47%) rated their ability as good, while 12 (15%) rated their writing skills as average and excellent respectively. 8 (10%) of the respondents rated their writing ability as fair; this was recorded as the lowest percentage for writing.

Based on the table, the majority, i.e. 33(41%) rated their ability as being good in speaking skills while 9 (11%) rated their speaking skills as poor. Only 10 (13%) respondents rated their speaking skills as excellent. Speaking in English plays a majority role in the business industry and employers wants to hire graduates who are able to speak fluent English

(Moslehifar and Ibrahim, 2012). In terms of vocabulary, 22 (28%) of the respondents rated their vocabulary skills as good while 20 (25%) rated their vocabulary ability as poor. Only 7 (8%) respondents rated their vocabulary ability as being average. For pronunciation, the majority, i.e. 30 (38%) rated their ability as being good, 12 (15%) as excellent and 9 (11%) as poor. In terms of grammar, 26 (33%) of the respondents rated their ability as good, while 16 (20%) rated their grammar ability as poor. There were only 8 (10%) rated their grammar as fair. It appeared that the majority self-rated their skills as good and average.

## **4.2 Analysis Of Research Question One**

*What are the problems faced by business students in using English at the chosen private university?*

The data used to answer this research question was collected through interview sessions and analysis Section C of the questionnaire. Section C pertains to the respondents' English language problems.

### **4.2.1 English Language Problems Faced By Business Students**

This section will describe the English language problems faced by the business students.

### **4.2.2 The Interview Session**

One Academic head, three Business lecturers and three Industrial supervisors participated in the interview.

### **4.2.3 Problems Communicating In English**

According to the Academic head, Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors, business students faced problems communicating in English. During the interview with the Academic head, he had mentioned that students faced major difficulties in speaking followed by listening, writing, and reading. On the other hand, the Business lecturers and

Industrial supervisors had a slightly different view. According to them, students faced problems in speaking followed by writing, listening and reading. Basically, students have problems in all four skills.

#### **4.2.4 Speaking related problems In English**

##### **i. Lack Of Confidence When Communicating In English**

Based on the Academic head's observation, some of the students did display nervousness and lack of confidence when they were communicating in English, especially during presentations. However, according to him, there were also students who were considered weak in their English but were very confident during presentations or when they talked with one another.

From the point of view of the Business lecturers, they agreed that students lack confidence in communicating English. According to them, students were shy to use English when communicating. They were afraid that the listener would not understand their message. According to Business lecturer 1, the main problem was grammar. Their grammar was poor and this impacts the flow of communication. Another problem, which was highlighted, was their pronunciation. Some students pronounced certain words incorrectly and this made them to be very cautious. Business lecturer 1 also stated that students faced difficulties in their use of tenses.

According to the Industrial supervisors, students did display nervousness and lack of confidence. Industrial supervisor 1 who had 14 years of working experience stated that students got nervous when they were aware that their communication level was weak compared to the other trainees who were able to communicate well at the workplace. According to her, students felt very shy as they considered shyness as their weaknesses and communicated in English with low confidence. Some students trembled while communicating with foreign clients. Meanwhile, Industrial supervisor 2 revealed that she

felt students lacked confidence communicating in English due to speaking anxiety. Some of these students did not speak English at all and for most, English was not their first language. These students were not confident enough whenever using English for daily conversations or for work purposes. On top of that, first language interference was a major problem that hindered them from speaking in English. Similarly, Unal's (2014) findings revealed that employees lost their self-confidence when they failed to understand client's accents and pronunciations. According to Unal (2014), this would lead to miscommunication between the employees and the clients.

## **ii. Speaking In English During Formal Presentations, Meetings And Discussions**

This section will look into the problems faced by the business students speaking in English during presentation, meetings and discussions.

According to the Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors, the students did have problems speaking during formal presentations, meetings and discussions. The Business lecturers stated that many students faced problems in these areas. According to the Business lecturers, most of the students tried their best to explain their ideas, although, at times they were lost for words. They tried their best to explain and to make sure that the audience or the person that they were talking to could understand better. During presentations, students had difficulties in explaining business related jargons and often got confused.

Business lecturer 2 stated that communicating in English in basic or casual conversation was also a struggle for some students. Adding on to this, they had to explain charts and reports during presentations. According to her, using charts, graphs and pictures to present required good presentations skills. Many students were not aware on how to give an effective presentation. Students often fail to present well because they were not familiar



with the topic and lack knowledge in business terminologies. There were a few students who were not familiar with the use of linking words such as ‘therefore’, ‘thus’, ‘moreover’, ‘in conclusion’, etc. This would lead to miscommunication between the audience and presenter. In contrast, Business lecturer 3 felt that, some of the students were good in presenting during formal presentations and meetings. They were able to explain the charts, reports and other business related procedures in English because of their prior knowledge as they were exposed to those kinds of procedures. Meanwhile, according to her, there were a few students who did not have any background knowledge about the topic. They also faced difficulties explaining the business terminologies used in reports, charts, tables and graphs. Similarly, Chan’s (2014) findings showed that giving oral presentations was a challenge for the business employees as it requires formal and professional language. Moreover, these business employees had difficulties during Question and Answer sessions (Q&A). In many cases, business employees were asked unexpected questions which they could not answer.

Another issue was that most of the business students reported being anxious during presentations. Based on the observation by Industrial supervisor 3, students felt anxious and were afraid to present in front of large audiences. Many of them did not have the skills to present during meetings as well as during discussions. During group discussions and meetings, these students would remain silent as they felt their colleagues and superiors spoke better. Students were also worried that their superiors would notice their mistakes. Another problem was, students often memorized materials which led to many mistakes in terms of tenses, grammar and pronunciations. Some students tended to use incorrect business terminologies which conveyed a totally different meaning.

Industrial supervisor 3 also stated that students did not have proper planning for their presentations. Many students referred to their notes while presenting, in addition, they did

not make any eye contact with their audience. In meetings and discussions, students did not have the ability to discuss a topic as they had limited vocabulary. They faced problems choosing the right words to express their views and opinions.

Industrial supervisor 2 mentioned that lack of knowledge of grammar and vocabulary were the problems students faced during presentations. Most of the students were not fluent and pronounced words incorrectly. Students were not able to interact with their colleagues and clients because of their poor speaking skills. In addition, students needed time to think in English. According to Industrial supervisor 2, there were numerous complaints from colleagues and clients that students took time to respond when communicating in English. These students needed time to think in their mother tongue before replying in English. The reason that they were thinking in their mother tongue was because they could not find appropriate words to use in English. Many clients had complained that employees often remained silent when they were interacting with each other. The process of remaining silent showed that these students were actually thinking of the words in their mother tongue and took time to translate those words to English.

Industrial supervisor 2 said:

“The process of them remaining silent and not answering to their clients creates a very bad reputation for them and the company. It also portrays that they are not fluent in English”.

This is similar to Moslehifar and Ibrahim’s (2012) findings that most of the employees needed extra time to think in their mother tongue before replying in English when communicating with clients. This showed that employees had difficulties in delivering spontaneous speech in English.

Moreover, according Industrial supervisor 3, these students did not converse in English on a daily basis, therefore they lacked practice in using the language. Lack of practice in the language meant they eventually took a longer time to answer a question. This reflects

the students' attitude whereby they did not see the importance of English for presentations, meetings and discussions. In the interview with Industrial supervisor 1, he mentioned that:

“English is totally a foreign language for some of these students. Because of the lack of practice in English, students faced major problems coming up with suitable words and phrases to use in a specific situation they were in. If only students start to use English on daily basis, for example, at home, workplace, communicating with friends, they can brush up their English and become more confident to converse”.

In the interview with Industrial supervisor 3, he mentioned that most of the students took time to reply in English during discussions and meetings and most of them tended to give short answers. Some students could not maintain long conversations with their colleagues or clients because of their poor proficiency in English. Industrial supervisor 1 mentioned:

“If the student spoke longer, they felt that they have made more grammatical mistakes in their speech. They are afraid that others may look down on them”.

According to Industrial supervisor 1, it was important for the students to have the ability to converse well as it can affect their job and company's reputation. One of the best ways for them to improve their English communication skill was to practice speaking on a daily basis.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies by Kassim and Ali (2010), Wu and Chin (2010), Ghengshesh, Hamed and Abdullah (2011), Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012), Chan (2014) and Unal (2014) that giving oral presentations was one of the major difficulties faced by business employees at the workplace. Another problem was that employees were not familiar with the use of relevant business terminologies for a specific situation at the workplace.

### **iii. Code Switching At The Workplace**

This section will look at the students' practice of code switching between English and another language while communicating with others at the workplace.

All three Industrial supervisors interviewed reported that when students spoke English with clients, supervisors, business lecturers, suppliers and technicians, either foreign or local, they tended to mix English language words with words from their mother tongue, especially Malay. An observation made by the supervisors was that these business students could not have long conversations with clients because they did not have a good command of the English language and after a while, they tended to mix English with their mother tongue such as Tamil, Mandarin and Malay. Moreover, if the student and the client shared the same mother tongue, they would code switch from English to their respective mother tongue or the common language they speak. Industrial supervisor 2 who has 16 years of working experience, said:

“When business students communicate with clients especially from Brunei and Indonesia, the business students would code switch certain words in Bahasa Malaysia”.

This is mainly because the Malay language used in Malaysia is almost similar with the Malay language used in Brunei and Indonesia. The students often code switch and code mix when talking business with them. Some of the students would only communicate in Bahasa Malaysia when interacting with these clients. According to Industrial supervisor 2, although the company had instructed their employees to speak in English when dealing with work matters, the business students still preferred to communicate with their clients in other languages especially in Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin.

The supervisor also stated that there were business students who tried their best to speak in English but quite often, they code switched to Bahasa Malaysia.

According to Industrial supervisor 3, based on his observations many business students code switched to their mother tongue because they were more confident in these languages compared to English. Some business students found it very difficult to pronounce business terms in English and some did not know the appropriate words to use in English. As, the supervisor said:

“Business students in this company prefer Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia because they were able to explain any business dealing to the clients in detail. At times, business students felt clueless on how to give instructions or explain the business terminologies or words in English, therefore they used Mandarin or Bahasa Malaysia”.

Business students spoke to the clients in their mother tongue or code switched just to ensure they were giving out the correct information and the right instructions. Most of the time, the students were afraid that they might leave out an important piece of information if they spoke only in English. In business, it was important for the employees to give the correct information to the respective people they were dealing with. Industrial supervisor 3 also mentioned that:

“Business students will only try their best to speak fully in English with clients from US, Australia, Germany, Britain and so forth, while clients from Malaysia, they often used colloquial English ( Manglish) or Malay”.

The supervisor stated that the business students should build their confidence to speak in English as the language would help them to deal with business and also to increase their chances of getting employed.

Moreover, according to Industrial supervisor 3, when business students faced local clients, they would firstly communicate in English. If they encountered problems such as they did not know the appropriate terms to use, then they would code mix the English language with Bahasa Malaysia hoping that the clients would understand better. This is

particularly obvious when the students and clients shared the same mother tongue. As the supervisor explained:

“When both of the client’s and student’s mother tongue is in Malay, they tend to code switch the language and interact”.

Some clients preferred to speak in Bahasa Malaysia because they felt that the negotiation process would be easier and information could be transferred smoothly compared to English. There were some situations whereby English terms could not be translated into Bahasa Malaysia so the students would code mix both languages. Industrial supervisor 3, also explained that the business students were new to the working environment as a result they were prone to use their mother tongue. Most of the students refused to speak in English because they were weak in the language and they spoke broken English. Hence, they preferred to speak in Malay and Mandarin or Tamil. Code switching was a normal practice in companies. Employees preferred to use Bahasa Malaysia or use their mother tongue when they interacted.

According to Industrial supervisor 1, students should speak in English when discussing business matters, so that they are able to practice the language. If they frequently communicate with colleagues and superiors in English, they will be more confident in using the language. When they have confidence, they will not be anxious to interact with their foreign clients in English. Moreover, most companies encouraged their employees to practice speaking in English in order to improve their fluency. However, there were no signs of improvement as these students still spoke completely in their mother tongue or they tended to code switch and code mix.

Another situation whereby business students code switch and code mix was during presentations and discussions. Business students had to take part in meetings and presentations. The oral presentations are based on the documents or slides they had

prepared. The supervisor will have to ensure that students present according to what has been written in the documents. According to Industrial supervisor 1, business students often started their presentations in Standard English but after a while, they tended to speak Manglish. These students spoke in Manglish because they felt that giving a presentation in English made them feel anxious and awkward. She also said that based on her observation, students were more confident speaking in Manglish rather than Standard English. When they spoke in Manglish they tended to remember important information to be presented.

According to Industrial supervisor 2, code mixing also occurred during the question and answer sessions. While the supervisors asked questions in Standard English, the majority of the business students would answer in Manglish. In fact, the supervisor had encouraged them to answer in Standard English but students still insisted in answering in Manglish. Moreover, a few students could not understand the supervisor's question in Standard English. Student often stayed silent while waiting for the supervisor to translate in Malay.

In this situation, the supervisors had to simplify their English or speak Bahasa Malaysia to them. This is similar to Tsao's (2011) findings whereby the ESP teachers often translated some words or sentences from English to Chinese to help the students understand the lessons better, although the teachers preferred to use solely English in the classrooms.

Code switching and code mixing has been a practice at the workplace. According to Unal's (2014) findings, code switching occurs when employees feel pressured or when they were asked unexpected questions which is similar to the current findings of this study. In these kinds of situations, employees tended to panic and reply in their first language and after a while, they would attempt to reply in English.

#### **4.2.5 Writing-Related Problems**

This section will look into the problems business students faced when writing in English. Some of the problems were that they did not have the ability to write comprehensive documents. They made many grammatical and spelling mistakes. They were not familiar with the business terminologies. The business students also tended to write in Malay and spelt certain words in Malay.

##### **i. Writing Business Documents In English.**

Both Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors stated that the students had major problems writing documents in English such as memos, reports, business letters, proposals and e-mails. Business lecturer 1 stated that the students had poor writing skills. Most of the students did not use the correct style and format required for a particular document. According to Business lecturers, it was important for students to know the format. For example, writing business proposals was very important, as the proposed idea should be convincing and achievable. Many students made poor choice of words and there was no clarity in their writing.

Industrial supervisor 1 reported that students had major problems in spelling and grammar. Many of them made spelling and grammatical mistakes in their documents. Writing reports and e-mails was common in the business industry. Most of the time, students had to write reports for the company and their problems were spelling and grammatical mistakes. According to Industrial supervisor 3, he had advised trainees to thoroughly check their documents before submitting them. Students were supposed to check their spelling using online dictionaries or their smart phones. Unfortunately, many students did not adhere to this and made many errors in their documents.

According to Industrial supervisor 3, it was very frustrating to read documents with spelling and grammatical mistakes. He stated:



“It takes longer time for us to read and comprehend those documents. Some of these students spelt some words according to the way they are pronounced. For example, ‘buy’ was spelt as ‘bye’, and negotiation was spelt as “negotiaatioon”.

Students were not aware that the spelling of certain words was different from their pronunciation. Moreover, their reports, letters and emails were in broken English. They did not write using proper tenses and there were many words written in Bahasa Malaysia.

Industrial supervisor 3 said:

“I often have to meet the students to ask them what they have wrote in their documents. At times, this frustrates me, as students will repeat the same mistakes again”.

The Business lecturers also had received numerous complaints from the supervisors that the process of reading the documents took up most of their time.

Another problem was the tenses used in the documents. According to Industrial supervisor 2, students often used the wrong tenses to write the documents. For example, business plans required them to write in the future tense, but students tended to write the documents in the past tense. On the other hand, to write the minutes of meetings, students used the present tense instead of using the past tense. Unfortunately, most of the students mixed up their tenses and this confused the reader. The supervisor felt that students should be aware of the usage of tenses for different types of documents.

According to previous studies by Kassim and Ali (2010), Wu and Chin (2010), Evans (2010), Ghengshesh, Hamed and Abdullah (2011), Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012), Evans (2013), Chan (2014) and Unal (2014), writing documents such as e-mails, reports, business letters and proposals was considered important at the workplace. Many employees faced problems in writing these documents because of lack of knowledge of business terminologies and poor grammar that were similar with the current findings of this study.

Students also faced problems in writing “negative messages” for companies. For example, some students had to write a letter to a company to send a condolence message. This was a big challenge for them because they had to use the appropriate vocabulary in their messages. According to Industrial supervisor 1, students had to not only satisfy customer needs but also meet their expectations. The students did not know the format of the letter and needed the supervisor’s guidance to draft the letters. The students were afraid that the reader might misunderstand their message. The supervisor stated that, students should know how to write negative messages to their clients. In relation to this, Chan’s (2014) findings also suggested that it is important for employees to be able to write negative messages. In her findings, many employees faced challenges writing negative messages. According to her, writing negative messages requires advanced vocabulary and the messages should be concise. Most of the students do not have the prior knowledge about writing negative messages.

#### **4.2.6 Listening-Related Problems**

##### **i. Understanding The Different Accents And Pronunciations Of The Clients**

Business clients from different countries have different accents and pronunciations that some Malaysian employees are not used to it. According to the Industrial supervisors, generally clients who have strong accents are from Australia, United Kingdom and United States of America (USA) as well as clients from the Middle East and other parts of Asia.

Industrial supervisor 2 reported that Internship students had problems understanding the simple sentences of an Australian client such as “We can’t proceed with the meeting today”. One of the students could not differentiate between “can” and “can’t”. The student understood that the meeting was being held. The supervisor concerned had to explain to her that the meeting would be cancelled. The supervisor mentioned that the student felt the pronunciation of “can’t” by the Australian is different from the way it is pronounced

here in Malaysia. Industrial supervisor 1 also stated that some clients spoke too fast. As a result the business students could not understand the clients' accents. If the clients spoke too fast it hindered their understanding. Miscommunications arise because students were not familiar with the thick accent of these foreign clients. Based from the interview it can be concluded that, many students had difficulties communicating with clients and they tried their best to avoid speaking to them because of the difficulty in understanding clients' accents and pronunciations.

Industrial supervisor 3 also stated that these business students were considered as 'freshers' as they did not have any working experience. Due to this, they had major problems understanding their colleagues, clients and superiors. Although some business students were proficient in English, they still faced difficulties with those clients who spoke very fast. The tone and modulation of speech hinder their understanding. Based on Industrial supervisor's 3 observation, some business student would request the clients or colleagues to repeat their sentences or to speak slowly. For example, "Madam, I don't understand what you are trying to say" and "Please don't speak too fast". The reason the business students asked them to repeat was to ensure that they had understood their questions and could respond accordingly. Another problem was that these students would use non-verbal gestures such as nodding their head, most of the time pretending to understand the conversation. At times, business students would seek help from the supervisors to deal with the clients. Some of the students would ask the supervisors to translate the clients' utterances. In the long run, this led the business students to lose confidence in speaking English and the inability to perform their daily working task well.

In the interview, Industrial supervisor 2 said that, the students also did not understand local colleagues and clients' pronunciation particularly those of different races such as Chinese, Malay and Indian. Some students claimed that their accents were too thick. According to the students, the clients and employees made an attempt to speak at a slow

pace since they were new to the working environment. Although, they spoke at a slow pace, these students still had problems understanding. This frustrated the clients and colleagues because they had to deal with them every day. They felt that speaking at a slow pace interrupts their daily work and it was a waste of time. According to the supervisors, the Malaysian clients and employees preferred to speak in Malay.

Industrial supervisor 3 said that “We rather give instructions in Malay”. They did not have the patience to explain every single thing in detail Malay and Manglish (a combination of Malay and English). From the interview, it was clear that business students preferred to respond in Malay and in Manglish. Most of the time, they asked and answered question using Manglish. For example, “I akan update report itu petang nanti”, “I akan call client”, and “You kena jumpa client dan supervisor”. It was clear that business students used the language that they knew and they were aware that if they spoke in English, miscommunication may arise and cause misunderstanding. To get the job done, colleagues, clients and superiors preferred to speak in Malay or Manglish to ensure the business students understood what was being said.

Industrial supervisor 2 said the following:

“I was surprised with the current level of proficiency of the fresh graduates, they did not even understand simple English as well as never take any initiative to improve their command in English. It was sometimes very embarrassing that they could not even write words in proper English”.

She suggested that employers should make it compulsory for employees to speak in English when dealing with their task as most of their task required them to communicate in English. According to her:

“We cannot run the business without having good command of English. I also think that spoken English classes should be given to them”.

Unal's (2014) findings revealed the same results that employees had problem understanding clients' accents and pronunciation. This kind of problem led to miscommunication between both parties and affected the business communication process. In contrast to this, Evans (2010, 2013) findings revealed that clients who had problems understanding accents and pronunciations in English would immediately switch to Cantonese for business negotiations. This situation occurs when both parties are speakers of Cantonese.

**ii. Understanding Presentations, Meetings, And Discussion Conducted In English**

According to the Industrial supervisors, the students faced problems understanding presentations, meeting and discussions conducted in English. Industrial supervisor 1 noted that the internship students' major problem was the majority of them had to try hard to understand each word spoken by their colleagues or clients. Many of them did not have the ability to comprehend what they had heard, especially if English was not their mother tongue. For example, when the clients or colleagues spoke, many words were not stressed well as they spoke too fast from the perspective of the students whereas it may in fact be a normal rate. Because of this, they were not able to understand the message expressed during a meeting, presentation or during discussions. Industrial supervisor 3 mentioned that the reason why some interns found listening very difficult was that most of them tried very hard to comprehend what the previously used words meant. At times, the interns would remember each word and by the time they recalled those words, they had already lost track of the new words spoken. The supervisor said:

“Interns also try very hard to remember certain words which are similar to their language (Mandarin Language or Tamil Language) and attempting to interpret those meaning”.

Another listening-related problem had to do with students' lack of familiarity with business terminologies. In the interview, the Business lecturers and the Industrial supervisors stressed that the students did not have sufficient knowledge and vocabulary of the business field. For example, some of the words used at the workplace are "payroll", "turnover", "payback period", "repositioning", "venture", "capital" and 'outsourcing'. Some words were simple yet the students failed to recognize the meaning. As such during presentations, business students would actually look up the meaning of the word on the Internet as well as seek assistance from their seniors. This led to communication breakdown as well as interjections during on-going presentations.

Industrial supervisor 3 also stated that the business students did not recognize some words that were used commonly. Some words like "they are", "there are", and "their" confused them. Although they are somewhat similar, each word has a different meaning. In addition, Industrial supervisor 3 stated that sentence stress, word stress and the pronunciation of certain words in spoken English hinder business students' understanding. According to him, understanding different intonation patterns and usage; of stress gives clues to meaning.

#### **4.2.7 Reading-Related Problem**

##### **i. Reading Written Company Reports, Letters, Memos, Business Proposals In English**

The business students have to read reports, letters, memos, business proposals and e-mails written by colleagues, clients, supervisors and other parties such as technicians and suppliers. According to all the three Business lecturers and the three Industrial supervisors, these documents are written in English. Most of the Industrial supervisors and Business lecturers interviewed stated that the students did not face much problem in

reading compared to writing. Students could comprehend what was written. Business lecturer 3 said the following:

“I think reading skills is better than writing skill. Even if a student were known to be a very slow reader, yet the particular student would be able to understand the content at the end. It is not about reading and understanding, the issue is about communicating”

According to Industrial supervisor 3, some of the problems business students faced when reading documents written in English were the difficulties in understanding the business terminologies as well as general vocabulary. The supervisor who has 15 years of working experience said that the business students did not have a good command of English. They had problems understanding simple words written in the documents. He gave an example of situations where students could not understand the written documents.

### **Extract One**

One of the letters received by the business students concerned an insurance policy. In the letter it was written:

“This statement is issued only for the purpose of production to Income Tax Authorities and is not valued for any other purpose nor is it a guarantee that the premium is eligible for Income Tax Allowance. The premium rates for medical rider maybe increased due to medial cost inflation, change of regulation or tax rule, deterioration of portfolio claim experience, and other external/ environmental factors which are non-exhaustive”.

In the extract above, students could not understand business terminologies such as “medical rider”. “deterioration”, and cost “inflation”. The business students had to look up on the Internet the meaning of these terms as well as ask their superiors for clarification. This frustrated the superiors, as they had to explain each term in detail. Some superiors would translate those words to Malay.

Industrial supervisor 2 provided an example of students not understanding a memo.

### **Extract Two**

“Dear all, Recently, it was brought to our attention that some staff did not inform their HOD if they have to attend any meetings / events away from the office, and the Permission form (Out of Office Duty) is not filled up as well. **It is imperative that you inform your HOD so that he/she is aware of your movements.** The Permission form (Out of Office Duty) should be passed to HR for our record and monitoring purpose once the HOD has acknowledged / approved it. This should be done prior to such meetings / events. **Please adhere to the above, and if you have any queries, do not hesitate to contact the HR Department.**”

Students actually highlighted the sentences in bold above and referred to the supervisor to find out the meaning of those words. There were students who did not know words like “**imperative**” “**hesitate**” and “**queries**” which came as a surprise to the supervisors. They felt that the students faced reading problems because of poor understanding of simple vocabulary.

Many students had problems understanding business terminologies. According to Business lecturer 3, the students had forgotten the business terms learnt at school. The business lecturers felt very disappointed because students had spent almost 4 years studying at the university and had so much of exposure through industrial trips and exhibitions.

Industrial supervisor 1 gave another example of a notice received by a student.

### **Extract Three**

In the notice it is written:

“I am writing to inform you that you are now in default of your obligations outlined in our contract. Your company has not only failed to produce the desired amount of product within the agreed time, but the batch of items you did send us are not fit for the purpose. You clearly have not met the required specifications. You have 30 days in which to cure this default, either by refunding us in full or



demonstrating in some way that you can complete what we agreed in a reasonable amount of time. Failure to do so will result in legal action. All of our rights reserved under this notice”

The student who read the notice, came directly to the supervisor to ask for clarifications.

The supervisor stated:

“I had to translate the sentences in Malay for them to have better understanding”.

They clearly did not understand the terminologies used in the letter. The supervisors were very concerned about the future employability of these students as they were very dependent and did not take any initiative to brush up their reading skills. Industrial supervisor 1 felt that these kinds of problems might hinder them from being employed. From the above examples, it appeared that some of the business students had problems in reading and comprehending documents written in English. Similarly, Ghenshesh, Hamed and Abdelfattah’s (2011) study revealed that business students should read technical vocabulary to improve their knowledge. Table 4.5 summarises the English language problems faced by business students at the workplace based on the findings from the interviews.

**Table 4.5 English Language Problems Faced By The Business Students At The Workplace**

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Problems Faced At The Workplace</b>
<b>Speaking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor grammar.</li> <li>• Incorrect pronunciation.</li> <li>• Giving presentations.</li> <li>• Explaining charts and reports during presentation.</li> <li>• Code Switching and Code Mixing.</li> </ul>
<b>Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing documents – memos, reports, business letters, business proposals and E-mails.</li> <li>• Using proper tense.</li> </ul>
<b>Listening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding colleagues, clients and superiors’ pronunciation.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading documents written in English.</li> <li>• Understanding business terminologies and general vocabulary.</li> </ul>

#### 4.2.8 Questionnaire Analysis Of Research Question One

80 final year students participated in the questionnaire survey. The questionnaire survey was conducted as a triangulation method to validate ambiguous responses obtained from the interview sessions. This explains why some of the questions asked in the questionnaire were similar to the interview.

In section C of the questionnaire, the business students were asked on their perceived strengths and weaknesses in English language skills. Each statement in this section of the questionnaire was followed by four options which were Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3) and Strongly Agree (4). In this analysis, responses 1 and 2 were combined and labelled as Disagree and responses 3 and 4 were combined and labelled as 'Agree'. The results are provided in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6 English Language Problems Faced By Business Students**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>
I have difficulty in understanding the supervisor's instructions given in English.	10 (12%)	70 (88%)
I have difficulty in understanding other colleagues' instructions given in English.	15 (19%)	65 (81%)
I can differentiate the English tenses in a sentence	64 (80%)	16 (20%)
I can speak English confidently	72 (90%)	8 (10%)
I have difficulty in understanding written English reports	16 (20%)	64 (80%)
I can write reports in English without using dictionary	59 (74%)	21 (26%)
I have difficulty in conveying message in English (Written )	15 (19%)	65 (81%)
I have difficulty in conveying message in English (Spoken )	20 (25%)	60 (75%)
I have difficulty in reading English reports and memos at face pace.	21 (26%)	59 (74%)
I have difficulty in voicing my opinions in English	15 (19%)	65 (81%)
I can't understand some of my friend's and supervisor's pronunciation.	11 (14%)	69 (86%)
I make a lot of spelling mistakes when writing reports in English.	19 (24%)	61 (76%)
I need time to think in my mother tongue before replying in English.	6 (8%)	74 (92%)

**Table 4.6, continued**

I am not familiar with many business terms (specialist vocabulary)	7 (8%)	73 (92%)
I don't know the appropriate words to use while speaking in English	11 (14%)	69 (86%)
I don't know the appropriate words to use while writing in English.	21 (26%)	59 (74%)
I tend to use words from my mother tongue when I speak or write in English.	27 (34%)	53 (66%)

Based on the results shown in Table 4.6, the business students seem to have major difficulties in English. The most problematic area was speaking skills. Out of the 80 respondents, 72 (90%) disagreed that they could speak confidently. Only 8 (10%) had confidence speaking in English. Similarly in the interview, the Academic head, Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors agreed that students did not have confidence communicating in English.

According to them, most students were shy and afraid of making mistakes. Majority, i.e. 74 (92%) respondents agreed that they needed extra time to think in their mother tongue before replying in English. Only 6 (8%) disagreed with the statement. Moreover, 53 (66%) respondents agreed that they tended to use words from their mother tongue when they spoke or wrote in English while 27 (34%) disagreed with the statement. Likewise, in the interview with the Industrial supervisors, it was stated that many students took time to respond when communicating in English. Moreover, they tended to code switch between English and their mother tongue. According to the supervisors, this happened when they do not have good command of the English language. 69 (86%) respondents agreed that they did not know the appropriate words to use while speaking in English while only 11 (14%) respondents did not have any problem in choosing appropriate words while speaking in English. Further, 65 (81%) respondents agreed that they had difficulties voicing their opinions in English. Only 15 (19%) respondents had no problem voicing

their opinion. Similarly, in the interview, the Industrial supervisors and Business lecturers stressed that students could not present because they lack knowledge in business terminologies. They did not know the appropriate word to use.

Another problematic area was writing. Out of 80 respondents, 65 (81%) agreed that they had difficulties conveying messages in English (written) while 15 (19%) respondents did not face this problem. 61 (76%) respondents made a lot of spelling mistakes when writing reports in English while only 19 (24%) respondents did not. Further, 59 (74%) respondents claimed that they could not write reports without using a dictionary while 21 (26%) agreed that they could write reports without referring to the dictionary. This is in contrast with the findings from the interview with Industrial supervisor 3. The supervisor stated that many students did not refer to dictionaries while writing. 59 (74%) of them did not know the appropriate words to use while writing in English while 21 (26%) disagreed with the statement.

In addition, the students faced problems in listening to English. 70 (88%) respondents agreed that they had difficulties in understanding the supervisor's instructions given in English. Only 10 (12%) understood the instructions well. 65 (81%) respondents agreed that they had difficulties understanding their colleague's instructions given in English. 15 (19%) disagreed with that statement. 69 (86%) respondents agreed that they could not understand their friend's and supervisor's pronunciations while 11(14%) of the respondents did not face this problem. The findings of this section of the questionnaire are similar to the findings of the interviews. Students faced major problems in understanding instructions in English. As stated in one of the interviews, the supervisors had to speak in Malay to ensure that students function effectively at the workplace.

In terms of reading, 59 (74%) respondents agreed that they had difficulty in reading reports and memos at a face pace while 21 (26%) disagreed. 64 (80%) of the respondents had difficulties understanding written English reports while 16 (20%) of them did not

face this problem. Meanwhile, 64 (80%) of the respondents could not differentiate the tenses in a sentence. Only 16 (20%) had no problems in differentiating tenses in a sentence. Similarly in the interview, Industrial supervisor 2 stated that students could not differentiate the tenses when reading business documents. 73 (92%) of the respondents agreed that they were not familiar with many business terms (specialist vocabularies), while 7 (8%) disagreed with that statement. In the interview, Industrial supervisor 3 mentioned that business students lack knowledge on general vocabulary and business terminologies.

### **4.3 Analysis Of Research Question Two**

*What are the English Language needs of the business students?*

#### **4.3.1 The Interview Session**

The data used to answer this research question were collected through interviews with the Academic Head, Business Lecturers and Industrial supervisors as well as questionnaires with the business students.

According to the Academic head, Business Lecturers and Industrial supervisors, students did not have the necessary language skills to communicate effectively at the workplace. It is important for the students to enhance their speaking, writing, listening and reading skills to communicate effectively at the workplace.

#### **4.3.2 Speaking In English**

##### **i. Avoiding Code Switching And Code Mixing When Speaking.**

Industrial supervisor 1 stated the best way for the students to stop from code switching is for them to start speaking in English with their colleagues. According to her:

“This will be a great help for the students to practice speaking in English and become more confident in using the language”.

According to Industrial supervisor 2:

“Once students are confident in using English, they won’t hesitate to speak in English with foreign clients”.

Another way to minimize code switching is to ensure that superiors and clients respond in English although the students may have asked a question in Bahasa Malaysia. Industrial supervisor 2 stated:

“My trainees usually speak to me in Manglish or most of the time in Bahasa Malaysia. When this happens, I will only answer them in English. Likewise, if I have any questions for them, I will make sure I converse only in English”.

This can help them to develop the habit of speaking in English. The supervisor also stated that during discussion, presentations and meetings, she and her colleagues would always try their best to give immediate feedback if the students make mistakes in their pronunciation.

## **ii. Giving Oral Presentations During Meetings And Discussion.**

According to the Academic head, Business lectures and Industrial supervisors, it is vital for students to be able to present orally in English during meetings and discussions. The Academic head stated that presentations are very important because they sell ideas and products. In addition, Business lecturer 1 stated that students needed to learn how to present new ideas and give their opinions on the topic of discussion.

In the interview, Industrial supervisor 2 emphasized that students needed to develop the skills of instructing, explaining and demonstrating to their clients and colleagues. In terms of discussion, the Industrial supervisor mentioned that students needed to know the proper method of discussing work- related issues formally and informally. Business lecturer 3 stated that students needed to know the type of talks they are expected to give. They

should be aware of the differences between seminar, forum, conference, formal and informal presentations and so forth.

Chen and Wu (2010), Wu and Chin (2010), Kassim and Ali (2010), Ghengshesh, Hamed and Abdelfattah (2011), Moslehifar and Ibrahim (2012), Chan (2014) and Unal (2014) agreed that giving oral presentations is one of the important components of speaking skills in the business industry. Employees need to give oral presentations during meetings and discussions. They need to give clarification and organize their ideas in order to deliver effective presentations.

### **iii. Engaging In Small Talk**

According to Industrial supervisor 3, one of the best ways to get students to engage in small talk and maintain long conversations is through communicating with colleagues and superiors on various topics. The students should be able to express their views and ideas on various topics in English. These topics may include latest news in the market and latest trends.

According to Industrial supervisor 2 having small talk and maintaining a lengthy conversation is very important. Clients expect the employees to start the conversation with small talk. These conversations may be in both formal and informal situations. In addition, Business lecturer 1 said that small talk is like a bonding ritual between the employee and the client. According to her, small talk helps both parties to be relaxed and to be able to start a good conversation on any topic. Business lecturer 2 stressed that students needed to know the techniques of turn-taking. Many students failed to realize the appropriate way of turn-taking in a conversation.

In the interview, Business lecturer 2 added:

“Small talk is the first step in connecting with others and developing a meaningful relationship in business”.

According to Business lecturer 3, students needed to know that small talk is a technique of talking, connecting with others and it helps establish good rapport with business clients, colleagues, friends, supervisors and so forth. She added that:

“Some of the interesting topics that employees can talk about are: movies, books, culture, the weather, important news in the media”.

#### **iv. Other Relevant Speaking skills**

In the interview, the Academic Head, Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors stressed the importance of speaking skills in the business industry.

According to the Academic Head, he felt that business students needed to have negotiation skills. Many of the students were not aware of the proper way of negotiating in business. It was important for them to be able to negotiate when dealing with business. Negotiation is an important process to avoid misunderstanding, arguments and disputes and to reach agreement and consensus. Furthermore, Industrial Supervisor 1 stressed that students needed to learn negotiating a tricky situation as well as the expressions of negotiating. This is in line with Kassim and Ali's (2010) findings that negotiation is an important process in business. According to Kassim and Ali (2010), employees need to know the strategy of negotiation and using appropriate business terminologies.

Moreover, Industrial supervisor 1 stated that students need to improve their command of the English language. She also stressed that it was important for them to be able to speak politely with their prospective clients. Students needed to learn the techniques of speaking politely when dealing in business. According to Industrial supervisor 1, some students still have problems in speaking politely. In addition, Industrial Supervisor 1 stressed that students do not speak politely to their colleagues. She stated that:



“I felt they were rude. Some of the words uttered were, Ok lah! Saya buat lah! Macam mana ni!”

The students' tone and modulation were not appropriate with the workplace. Further, the Academic head stressed that he had received numerous complaints from the Industrial supervisors. According to the Academic head:

“some students will give short replies such as Ok! I see! Nanti I update lah! Industrial supervisors found that it was impolite to give such replies. Needless to say, they do not use proper vocabulary to speak”.

In addition, the Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors mentioned that students needed to know telephoning skills. There are different types of situations whereby employees need to speak with the client on the phone regarding products purchase, negotiating for business dealing, persuading clients to buy a product and so forth.

According to Industrial supervisor 3:

“There is a situation whereby students needed to set an appointment with a client. One of the responses given by a student was “Jap uh! I take your number now! Your name? From where?”

According to Industrial Supervisor 3, students needed to learn the ways to speak politely on the phone. Students need to know how to take a message and leave a message on the phone. They need to learn suitable phrases for telephoning skills such as “I would like to speak to...please”, “Would you mind....?”, “Do you think you could....?”, “I won't be able to attend ..because..”? These kinds of phrases sound more polite and create a good atmosphere for both parties on the phone. Industrial supervisor 2 added that students should be able to solve problems related to business on the phone. They also needed to know the techniques of exchanging information on the phone. Similar to Moslehifar and Ibrahim's (2010) findings, employees need to have telephoning skills to discuss with clients about job related matters such as projects and business plans.

According to Industrial supervisor 2, students also should learn how to resolve conflicts at the workplace. They should be able to communicate effectively when dealing with problems. Students need to learn the relevant terms and phrases in order for them make complaints, and apologize appropriately. Moreover, Industrial supervisor 2 stated that:

“Students did not know how to solve conflicts at the workplace. One of the students had an argument with a colleague. Instead of resolving the conflicts, the student replied “I do not know what to do!”, “Tak Kisah!” Many students faced problems at the work place, as they were not aware of how to resolve conflicts when dealing with clients and colleagues”.

### **4.3.3 Writing In English**

#### **i. Writing Business-Related Documents In English**

Industrial supervisor 2 pointed out that:

“If students do not know how to write documents such as memos, letters, reports and e-mails, they should ask help from their superiors and colleagues”.

According to her, it is important for business students to know how to write business-related documents in English. The industrial supervisor further elaborated that all documents should be proof read and edited before they submit them to their respective supervisors. According to Business lecturer 3, students should refer to the dictionary or their smartphones to check for spelling and correct business terminologies before writing. Another effective way is to make them read their own reports and identify their mistakes.

According to Industrial supervisor 3, students need to know the format of writing documents such as business proposals, letter, memos, e-mails and minutes of meetings. They should know the conventions of writing these documents. In addition, students needed to learn how to write short and concise sentences so that their message is clear for the reader. According to him:

“It should be a) clear -the reader should be able to see exactly what you meant, b) complete- it must contain all necessary information, c) concise- it should have a straightforward message and not waste the reader’s time, d) courteous- it must be written in a sincere and polite tone and e) correct- it should not be distracted by mistakes in grammar, punctuation or spelling”.

In the interview with Business lecturer 2, she stated that students needed to know the different types of documents. For example, in the case of business letters, the students should be aware of different types of business letters such as business letters for enquiries, complaints and adjustments, order and sales letters, credit and reminders/collection letters. In the case of memos, student needed to know the format of a memo, the purpose of the memo and the appropriate tone to use in the memo. In addition, students needed to learn business terminologies so that they would be able to write the documents effectively. It was vital for them to have knowledge of business terminologies, as they would be using those terms daily at their workplace.

Similarly, Evans (2013) and Chan (2014) found that writing business document such as e-mail, memos and business letters is important at the workplace. Most of the documents are in English and employees should be aware of the format of different types of documents. According to Chan (2014), employees need to know how to write each business document using correct tenses and with suitable business terminologies.

## **ii. Writing Negative Messages**

Industrial supervisor 1 stressed that students need to know how to write and respond to negative messages. Most of the time, students do not want to write or reply to negative messages. Some of the examples of negative messages are letter of condolences, complaints letters, letter of apology and letter of sympathy. She stated that, negative messages should be delivered with a proper tone, and be clear and concise. The supervisor pointed out that if the message is not delivered in a proper manner, the situation may

worsen because the recipient might misunderstand the message. This can cause a negative effect to the organization. According to Industrial supervisor 2:

“Writing negative messages is a tedious task as the recipients are being told exactly what they do not want to hear. Negative messages include delivering a bad news or refusing a request of a client in an organisation or a company”.

In her findings, Chan (2014) mentioned that it is important for employees to have knowledge of writing negatives messages. There are situations whereby employees have to deliver negative messages to their clients and other companies.

#### **4.3.4 Listening And Understanding In English**

##### **i. Understanding Different Accents**

Industrial supervisor 1 stated that the students did not understand many clients’ accents and pronunciations. For the students to be familiar with different accents and pronunciations, they need to watch movies and business videos. Business lecturer 3 also stressed that students need to watch videos from English language teaching websites. They can listen to people speaking in different accents from different parts of the world. Students also need to ask for clarification if they are not able to understand the conversation. They should learn key phrase such as “Pardon me Sir/ madam, Could you please repeat?” or “Excuse me Madam, could you speak slowly” or “Could you spell that for me?” It is important for the students to ask the clients if they are in doubt rather than nodding their head pretending to understand.

#### **4.3.5 Reading In English**

##### **i. Reading Documents In English**

It is important for students to be able to read and understand documents such as reports, business letters, business proposals, business contracts and memos in English. According to the Business lecturers, students should read more documents to improve their reading

skills. According to them by reading these documents, students will be familiar with the format, business terminologies, grammar and spellings.

Moreover, Industrial supervisor 1 mentioned that students need to learn skimming and scanning skills while reading documents. Students should know how to skim when reading documents. They should be able to identify the general ideas and main ideas of a document. They should also be able to look for specific information in the document. This saves a lot of time and students will have productive hours at the workplace. The findings are in line with Wu and Chin's (2010) findings that employees need to learn how to scan and also do search reading, for example, searching for information on selected topics.

Industrial supervisor 2 mentioned that students need to read business articles, business journals, business contracts and proposals in order for them to be familiar with the different types of documents. Moreover, these kinds of documents contain many specialist vocabulary related to business. They would also be exposed to the different formats of the documents. Students would become more critical readers and more knowledgeable. Thus, they would be able to write more effectively at the workplace as well. Likewise, Wu and Chin's (2010) findings suggested that business employees need to read research reports, financial news, financial product descriptions and financial related websites. By reading different types of business documents, employees would have a vast knowledge of business as well as technical terms.

## **ii. Interpreting Non-Linear Texts**

One of the issues highlighted by Industrial supervisor 1 was that business students need to interpret charts, graphs, tables and diagrams. It is important for students to be able to read or interpret because these kinds of charts and graphs will be included in their

presentation. Based on the Industrial supervisor’s observation, many students failed to interpret these charts, graphs, tables and diagrams accurately.

Business lecturer 3 also stated that some students are not aware of the different types of charts and graphs. It is important for students to be able to identify and interpret graphs and charts. They need to know the techniques to interpret such data. Business lecturer 3 pointed out that:

“Students need to know how to read and interpret specific points from a graph, they should be able to extract information from tables of data, read and interpret information from pie chart, bar chart and pictograms and finally read and interpret scale diagrams”.

All of these are considered important at the workplace. Table 4.7 summarises the English language needs of the business students based on the findings from the interviews.

**Table 4.7 English Language Needs Of Business Students**

<b>Skills</b>	<b>English Language Needs</b>
<b>Speaking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid Code Switching and Code Mixing.</li> <li>• Engage in small talks and maintain long conversations with clients, colleagues and superiors.</li> <li>• Giving oral presentations.</li> <li>• Negotiating with clients.</li> <li>• Techniques of speaking politely when dealing with business.</li> <li>• Techniques of using the telephone for business dealings.</li> <li>• Resolving conflicts at the workplace.</li> </ul>
<b>Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of different types of business documents- memos, letters, reports and E-mails.</li> <li>• Business terminologies.</li> <li>• Writing negative messages.</li> </ul>
<b>Listening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding different accents and pronunciations.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to different formats of business documents.</li> <li>• Exposure to different types of graphs and charts.</li> <li>• Techniques to interpret graphical data – charts, graphs, tables and diagrams.</li> </ul>

### 4.3.6 Questionnaire Analysis Of Research Question Two

In the third part of Section B of the questionnaire, students were asked which English language skills they would like to improve on. The results are presented in Table 4.8.

**Table 4.8 English Language Skills Respondents Want To Improve On**

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Listening		
Strongly Disagree	10	13%
Disagree	9	11%
Agree	25	31%
Strongly Agree	36	45%
Reading		
Strongly Disagree	4	5%
Disagree	12	15%
Agree	16	20%
Strongly Agree	48	60%
Writing		
Strongly Disagree	3	4%
Disagree	9	11%
Agree	22	28%
Strongly Agree	46	57%
Speaking		
Strongly Disagree	2	3%
Disagree	8	10%
Agree	12	15%
Strongly Agree	58	72%
Vocabulary		
Strongly Disagree	4	5%
Disagree	17	21%
Agree	18	23%
Strongly Agree	41	51%
Pronunciation		
Strongly Disagree	2	3%
Disagree	11	13.5%
Agree	11	13.5%
Strongly Agree	56	70%
Grammar		
Strongly Disagree	5	6%
Disagree	4	5%
Agree	28	35%
Strongly Agree	43	54%

Based on the results shown in Table 4.8, the majority i.e. 70 (87%) wanted to improve their speaking skills. 68 (85%) of the respondents wanted to improve their writing skills. Further, 64 (80%) of the respondents wanted to improve their reading skills while 61 (76%) wanted to improve their listening skills. Similarly, the majority of the respondents wanted to improve their grammar 71 (89%), pronunciation 67 (83.5%) and vocabulary 59 (74%). It can be concluded that students wanted to improve the four major language skills while integrating vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar.

#### **4.4 Analysis Of Research Question Three**

*What recommendations can be made for the design of an English language course for the business students?*

The data to answer this research question were collected through the analysis of the interviews and the questionnaires.

##### **4.4.1 The Interview Session**

One Academic head, three Business lecturers and three Industrial supervisors were interviewed and they gave their suggestions on what could be included in the proposed English for Business syllabus.

##### **4.4.2 Recommendation Of Topics For The Proposed English For Business Syllabus**

According to the Academic Head, Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors, it is important to have a Business English course for the students to improve their English language. This course would help them deal with issues at the workplace. The general recommendations given by them were, that the course needs to include speaking, writing, listening and reading skills and to integrate vocabulary and grammar in the course.



### **i. Speaking Skills**

According to Industrial supervisor 2, one of speaking skills that can be included in the course is effective communication at the workplace. Students should learn to socialize with clients, superiors and colleagues. Industrial supervisor 2 stated that:

“They should be able to engage in small talks and keep long conversations going. Some of the activities that can be included are ice-breaking sessions, learning the general techniques of turn-taking. Students can practice these skills through role-play”.

Moreover, Industrial Supervisor 1 suggested that the course should include techniques to conduct an effective oral presentation. According to her:

“One of the activities that can be conducted is to generate a focused discussion and debates as business students take sides for and against. This kind of activity will help students to boost their confidence to speak in public”.

Further, the Academic head, Industrial supervisors and Business lecturers gave some recommendations to include negotiation and telephoning skills in the ESP course. They stressed that negotiation skills are important in the business industry. According to Industrial supervisor 2:

“Many of us think that negotiating skill involves bargaining. In fact, the most important skill in negotiation is effective relationship building”.

On the other hand, Industrial supervisor 1 stated that:

“I have read many books on Business English and based on my experiences, some of the negotiation skills that needed to be included in an ESP course are, i) Positions and Interests which is to discuss techniques for planning and preparing for a negotiation, ii) Questioning and Clarifying which involves the importance of asking different types of questions to clarify and probe, iii) Bargaining which involves the important techniques and strategies for the bargaining stage of negotiation and finally iv) Clinching the deal that involves the techniques of closing stage of a negotiation and learn useful phrases for reaching an agreement”

Likewise, Chen and Wu's (2010) findings suggested that a Business English course should specifically include oral presentation skills and negotiation skills as communication skills are vital in the business industry.

Business lecturer 1 suggested that telephoning skills can be included in the course. According to her, students need to learn the basic skills and techniques for using the telephone in business. According to her:

“The activities that students can practice using telephone are getting people to do things, requesting something, offering to help, asking permission, taking messages, planning and making calls. The course should teach students in using different kind of phrases for different situations”.

Industrial supervisor 3 suggested that the course should include the techniques of conducting an effective meeting. Many students are unable to engage themselves in a meeting. According to him:

“It is important for the lesson to introduce useful language for small talks and conducting effective meeting. Some of the activities that can be included are i) learning phrases and techniques for managing a meeting, ii) getting involved in a meeting which involves learning some techniques of interrupting and clarifying in a meeting, iii) brainstorming involves students learning the techniques of generating ideas through brainstorming and finally iv) evaluating which involves learning useful phrases for making suggestions, agreeing and disagreeing. Moreover, students can learn the techniques of closing a meeting”.

According to Industrial supervisor 3, these activities can be done in the form of a role-play or group work. Similarly, Tsao (2011), Evan (2013) and Chan's (2014) findings stressed that an ESP course should reflect real-life work scenario by using suitable teaching materials and methods.

## **ii. Writing Skills**

In terms of writing, the Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors stated that the course should include writing Business documents in English such as reports, proposals, letters, e-mail messages and memos. Business lecturer 2 stated that:

“Students should be exposed on how to summarise business reports and letters. They should be able to learn using notes to write a report.”

According to Business lecturer 1, students should learn to plan and edit business documents in English, in other words proper data organization. Moreover, she stated that the course should teach students to use correct punctuation for writing business documents in English.

Further, Industrial supervisor 1 recommended that:

“The course should include skills of writing negative messages such learning the strategies and techniques of delivering bad news”.

Industrial supervisor 1 mentioned that students should learn to write persuasive messages.

According to her:

“By having the ability writing persuasive and marketing messages, business students can develop the ability to build powerful partnerships with clients while earning their trust”.

According to Wu and Chin’s (2010) and Evan’s (2010) findings, Business English course should include writing professional documents for the learners. This would enable the learners to improve their writing skills thus ensuring the lesson is interesting and efficient.

### **iii. Listening And Reading Skills**

For listening skill, all of the interviewees suggested that the course should have activities for students to listen to different accents and pronunciations related to the business field. Industrial supervisor 2 suggested that:

“Watching videos on YouTube is one of the effective ways to improve students’ understanding. There are many types of videos in you tube that students can learn and understand different accents from all over the world”.

Industrial supervisor 3 stressed that students can listen to telephone conversations and extracts from meetings. By listening to different kind of texts, students will be able to improve their listening skills as well as broaden their business knowledge.

Finally for reading skills, the Academic head highlighted that the course should include instruction on how to skim and scan business documents. It should also include techniques of interpreting non-linear texts such as diagrams, tables, charts and graphs.

Industrial supervisor 1 stated the ESP course should include articles about technology, advice on solving problems and articles about companies. Moreover, she added that the course should encourage students to read different kind of emails.

According to the interviewees, it is effective if the course is learner-centred rather than teacher-centered. This is because the goal of the proposed course is to maximize the students’ learning of Business English. Thus, students will need to participate in all the activities that are included in the Business English course. Furthermore, they suggested that the Business English course should be included as a component in their business degree programme. It could be conducted once a week for a duration of 3 hours. According to them, this encourages the students to practice the language. It helps them to prepare for their internship and job in the future. Table 4.9 summarises the general

recommendations for the proposed English for Business syllabus based on the findings from the interviews.

**Table 4.9 General Recommendations For The Proposed English For Business**

**Syllabus**

<b>Skills</b>	<b>General Recommendations For The Proposed Syllabus</b>
<b>Speaking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective communication at the workplace.</li> <li>• Negotiating in various situations and learning useful phrases for reaching an agreement.</li> <li>• Requesting something, offering to help, taking messages, planning and making calls using the telephone.</li> <li>• Conducting effective meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Techniques of writing business documents such as business plans, letters and memos and E-mails.</li> <li>• Editing and summarising business documents.</li> <li>• Learning the techniques of writing negative messages such as learning the strategies of delivering bad news</li> </ul>
<b>Listening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching YouTube videos- to understand different accents and pronunciations.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skimming and scanning business documents.</li> <li>• Interpreting non-linear text such as diagrams, tables, charts and graphs.</li> <li>• Business articles on technology, advice on problem-solving and about companies.</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include business terminologies (specialist vocabulary).</li> </ul>

**4.4.3 Questionnaire Analysis For Research Question Three**

For research question three, students were asked about their learning preferences in Question 4, 5 and 6 of Section B of the questionnaire. For Question 7, business students were asked about the kinds of English language skills to be included in the English for Specific Purposes course. The information gathered in this part of questionnaire is used to identify the skills that should be the focus of a proposed Business English course for business students at the private university.

#### 4.4.4 Questionnaire Analysis Of Students' Learning Preference

In Questions 4, 5 and 6 of Section B, the students were asked to state their English language preferences. The business students' learning preference is summarised in Table 4.10.

**Table 4.10 Learners' Learning Preference**

Variable	Frequency	Percentages
Would you like to enrol in an English course:		
Yes	80	100%
No	0	0%
When do you think is the best time to have the course:		
Everyday	2	3%
Every two days	10	13%
3-4 times a week	15	18%
Once a week	53	66%
How do you prefer to learn:		
Individual	72	90%
In pairs	80	100%
In small groups of 3-5	80	100%
More than 5 people in a Group	68	85%

Based on the results presented in Table 4.10, all 80 (100%) of the respondents mentioned that they would like to enroll in an English course. Among those who wanted to enroll for the English course, the majority, i.e. 53 (66%), preferred to have the English course once a week, while the lowest were 2(3%) respondents who would like to have the course every day. This result is consistent with the interviews. According to the interviewees, the best option to conduct the ESP course is once a week for a duration of 3 hours. All 80 (100%) of the respondents preferred to work in pairs and in small groups of 3 to 5 members while 72 (90%) preferred to work individually. The results indicated that the respondents preferred to have a mixture of individual, pair and group work for the English course.

#### 4.4.5 Questionnaire Analysis on the recommendations of topics for the proposed English for Business Syllabus

In Question 7 of Section B, the students were asked to indicate the English language skills they would like to emphasize in the proposed English for Business syllabus. Each statement given in this section of the questionnaire was followed by four options which were Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3) and Strongly Agree (4). In this analysis, responses 1 and 2 were combined and labelled as Disagree and responses 3 and 4 were combined and labelled as 'Agree'. A summary of the results is provided in Table 4.11.

**Table 4.11 Recommendations Of Topics For The Proposed English For Business Syllabus**

Statement	Disagree	Agree
Giving Oral Presentations	4 (5%)	76 (95%)
Participating effectively in group discussion	9 (11%)	71 (89%)
Face to face negotiation	10 (13%)	70 (87%)
Memo writing	23 (29%)	57 (71%)
E-Mail writing	22 (28%)	58 (72%)
Business report writing	7 (9%)	73 (91%)
Writing business proposals	5 (6%)	75 (74%)
Analysing reports, contracts and charts	8 (10%)	72 (90%)
Reading quickly ( Skimming)	10 (13%)	70 (87%)
Reading critically (Scanning)	9 (11%)	71 (89%)
Listening for accurate understanding (different accents and pronunciations)	18 (23%)	62 (77%)
Making polite conversations with prospective clients	14 (18%)	66 (82%)
Communicating via Telephone (Telephone skills)	19 (24%)	61 (76%)
Dealing with clients' objections	14 (18%)	66 (82%)
Learning business terms (Specialist Vocabulary)	7 (9%)	73 (91%)

Based on the results summarised in Table 4.8, it is noted that for speaking skills, the majority, i.e. 76 (95%), of the respondent agreed to have oral presentation as one part of the activities in the proposed English for Business syllabus, while only 4 (5%) disagreed.

70 (87%) wanted the syllabus to include negotiation skills. This is consistent with the results from the interviews. According to Industrial supervisor 1, negotiation is an important skill in the business industry. Business students should be able to negotiate with their clients in order to reach an agreement and seal a business deal.

Further, 66 (82%) of the respondents preferred the English for Business syllabus to include techniques to deal with clients' objections as well as to make polite conversation with prospective clients. Industrial supervisor 1 stated in one of her interviews that a few students could not speak politely to the colleagues. According to Industrial supervisor 1, these students are considered as rude and they do not know how to use appropriate phrases for objections and speaking politely. Therefore, it is rational for the proposed course to include these skills. Additionally, 61 (76%) of them wanted the syllabus to include telephoning skills. Similarly, in the interview with Business lecturer 1, she stated that students should know the etiquette of telephoning skills.

In terms of writing, 75 (94%) of the respondents wanted to learn how to write business proposals, 73 (91%) for business report writing, 58 (72%) for e-mail writing and 57 (71%) for memo writing. Additionally, in the interview with Industrial supervisor 3, he stressed that students need to know the conventions of writing these documents. Therefore, it is vital for the English for Business syllabus to include these writing skills.

Further, for reading skills, 72 (90%) of the respondents would like to learn how to analyse and interpret reports, charts and contracts. These findings are consistent with the interview with Industrial supervisor 3. According to him, many business students faced problems interpreting non-linear texts. Their major difficulties are understanding business terminologies and general vocabulary. Moreover according to Industrial supervisor 1, students needed to know how to interpret different kinds of non-linear texts accordingly. In addition, 71 (89%) of them wanted the proposed ESP course to include instruction on how to read critically (scanning) and 70 (87%) wanted to learn how to read quickly



(skimming). Similarly, Industrial supervisor 1 stressed that business students should be able to identify general and main ideas of a business document.

In terms of listening, 62 (77%) of them would like to learn how to listen for accurate understanding. It is important for the business students to be exposed to various accents and pronunciations. Based on the previous findings of this research, many students had problems in understanding local and foreign clients', colleagues' and superiors' accents. In addition, during the interview with Industrial supervisor 2, she mentioned that students can improve their listening skills by watching videos on YouTube.

The findings from the questionnaire are in line with the responses provided in the semi-structured interviews which were conducted with the Academic Head, Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors. Respondents of the study agreed that a Business English course should be proposed which included relevant skills for students to function effectively at the workplace.

#### **4.4.6 Proposed English For Business Syllabus For Business Students At The**

##### **Private University**

##### **Name**

The proposed course will be called "English for Business Purposes".

##### **Syllabus Timeline**

This syllabus will cover a 14-week timeline. The reason for choosing 14 weeks is that most universities in Malaysia follow a 14-week semester system. The first week will usually be for introduction and the last week is for evaluation.

##### **Class Duration (3 hours a week)**

The proposed course will be a three- hour face-to-face meeting with the students once a week. Face to face meetings are most effective for this Business English course as the

teacher can provide immediate feedback to the students. Moreover, the business students indicated a preference for a 3 hour class per week.

### **Course content**

The proposed course relates to the English language used in the business field. The rationale for this is that once the business students have completed this course, they should be able to handle real life situations at their workplace.

### **Methodology**

Based on the data analysis, business students and the business lecturers preferred a learner-centered approach. Therefore, learner-centered approach will be the most suitable methodology for this course. This approach permits students to achieve their learning objectives. It will also prepare students for their employment.

### **Teaching Activities**

The activities will be designed based on the findings from the questionnaires and interview sessions. The activities will provide guidance for the students to perform effectively at the workplace. Some of the activities include presentations, discussions, writing business documents, listening and watching YouTube videos and reading relevant business documents.

1.	Name of course/Module: English for Business Purposes
2.	Course code: -
3.	Name of Academic Staff: -
4.	Rationale:  Success in the world of work depends to a large extent on the ability to communicate. It is important for students to appreciate the importance of communication in the running of business organisations and business transactions. Students will be motivated to learn how to communicate more effectively. Many errors in the workplace as well as failures to deal with customers and suppliers have been due to poor business communication.
5.	Semester and Year offered: -
6.	Credit Value: 3 Credit Hours

7.	Prerequisite (if any): None
8.	<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>This course introduces the communication skills expected in a general business environment, including interpersonal and group presentation, non-verbal and written communication, electronic communications as well as techniques for adjusting to the communicative culture of various business organizations. It will teach students to communicate in a clear, courteous, concise and correct manner at the personal and professional levels by taking the students through topics and specific areas of coverage.</p>
9.	<p>Course learning objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance students' communication skills at the workplace.</li> <li>• Develop effective listening skills.</li> <li>• Develop effective oral presentation skills.</li> <li>• Expose students to interpretation of graphical data.</li> <li>• Present the different formats and conventions in writing business correspondence.</li> <li>• Raise students' confidence and provide them with necessary language resources to participate in business meetings.</li> <li>• Negotiate strategically in formal and informal settings.</li> <li>• Expose students to effective telephone communication.</li> <li>• Develop vocabulary related to jobs and companies</li> <li>• Enhance students' reading skills to read business related materials and to extract relevant information.</li> </ul>
10.	<p>Learning Outcomes:</p> <p>At the end of the semester, the students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate effectively at the workplace.</li> <li>• Listen effectively at the workplace.</li> <li>• Present information in an organized and engaging way.</li> <li>• Interpret non-linear text such as charts and graphs.</li> <li>• Write business memos, e-mails, proposals and letters using the correct format and conventions.</li> <li>• Participate effectively in meetings.</li> <li>• Negotiate strategically at the workplace.</li> <li>• Use the telephone effectively on the job.</li> <li>• Use a good range of vocabulary for matters connected to their field and most general topics.</li> <li>• Read and interpret business related-texts.</li> </ul>
12.	<p>Mode of delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutorial</li> <li>• Practical</li> <li>• Class activities</li> </ul>
13.	Assessment Methods and Types:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class participation 10%</li> <li>• Continuous Assessments and Tests 20%</li> <li>• Workshops, Project Paper and Presentation 30%</li> <li>• Final examination 40%</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total 100%</li> </ul>
14.	Content outline of the course/module
	Topics
	<p>1. Communication at the Workplace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process of communication</li> <li>• Interpersonal communication barriers</li> <li>• Communication in Organisations</li> </ul>
	<p>2. Listening and Etiquette Skills/Professionalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans and participation in Productive meetings</li> <li>• Technology to facilitate collaboration</li> <li>• Listening in the workplace (You-Tube Videos)</li> </ul>
	<p>3. Business presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective oral presentations</li> <li>• Content organization</li> <li>• Visual aids planning and multimedia presentations</li> <li>• Delivery and Follow up</li> </ul>
	<p>4. Analysis and Interpretation of Business Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracting and summarising information from business related text</li> <li>• Identifying main points of business excerpts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Skimming</li> <li>- Scanning</li> <li>- Inferring</li> <li>- Predicting</li> <li>- Format and tone</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Analysis and Interpretation of Graphical Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charts e.g. pie, organizational, flow charts</li> <li>- Graphs e.g. bar, line</li> <li>- Tables</li> <li>- Diagrams</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>5. Business meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning meetings</li> <li>• Conducting effective meetings</li> <li>• Agenda</li> <li>• Minutes of meeting</li> </ul>
<p>6. The writing process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematic writing process</li> <li>• Business report writing</li> <li>• Writing process for E-mail messages and Memos</li> <li>• Smart and Safe E-mails</li> </ul>	
<p>7. Positive letters and Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power of business letters and process of writing</li> <li>• Structure and characteristics of business letters</li> </ul>	
<p>8. Persuasive and Marketing Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persuasion and how to use it effectively and ethically</li> <li>• Persuasive message writing and requesting favours and action</li> <li>• Effective sales planning and composing marketing messages</li> </ul>	
<p>9. Negative Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies and techniques for delivering bad news</li> <li>• Ways to refuse typical requests</li> </ul>	
<p>10. Negotiation and telephone skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business negotiations</li> <li>• Telephone skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Etiquette in making and receiving calls</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>11. Business Reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Reports</li> <li>• Information from primary sources</li> <li>• Information from secondary sources</li> <li>• Data documentation and illustration</li> </ul>	
<p>12. Informal Business Reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data interpretation</li> <li>• Data organization</li> <li>• Informational reports writing</li> <li>• Concluding and making recommendations</li> </ul>	

	<p>13. Proposals and Formal Reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal and informal proposal preparation</li> <li>• Effective business plan preparation</li> <li>• Formal report writing</li> </ul>
	<p>14. Evaluation</p>
	<p>Main References supporting the course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guffey, M. E., &amp; Loewy, D. (2010). Essentials of business communication. Mason, OH: South-Western/Cengage Learning.</li> <li>• Taylor, S. (2005). Communication for business: A practical approach. Harlow, England: Pearson Higher Education.</li> <li>• Cotton, D (2001). Business class. Harlow, England: Longman.</li> </ul> <p>Other references</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kolin, P.J. (2004). Successful writing at work. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company</li> <li>• Guffey, M.E. (2002). Business English. Ohio: South Western Publishing</li> </ul>

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the analysis of data to answer the research questions of this study. To answer the first research question, the English language problems faced by the business students were identified through interview sessions and a questionnaire survey. The interview sessions with seven respondents looked into the English language problems in detail. For research question two, the English language needs of the business students were identified through the interview sessions with seven respondents. Finally, for research question three, the language skills that needed to be focused on in the recommended ESP syllabus were identified through both interview sessions and a questionnaire survey. A brief description of the proposed ESP syllabus was also provided in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This research was undertaken with the purpose of answering the following research questions:

- i. What are the problems faced by business students in using English at the chosen private university?
- ii. What are the English language needs of the business students?
- iii. What recommendations can be made for the design of an English language course for the business students?

In this final chapter, a summary of the findings is provided. Suggestions for future research work are also put forward.

#### **5.1 Summary Of The Findings**

This section summarises the findings of the study.

##### **5.1.1 Problems Faced By Business Students In Using English**

###### **i. Speaking Related Problems In English**

Lack of confidence when communicating in English, speaking in English during formal presentations, meetings, discussion and code switching at the workplace were some of the problems faced by the business students.

It appeared that business students displayed nervousness and a lack of confidence when communicating in English. This problem occurred due to the fact that they possess poor grammar skills and experienced difficulties in understanding tenses. These students also



trembled when communicating with foreign clients due to the lack of confidence in communicating in the language. Some of these business students do not speak English at all as the language is not their mother tongue.

Speaking in English during formal presentations, meetings and discussions were some of the other challenges that the business students faced. The business students' main problem was explaining charts and reports during presentations as they were not familiar with the topic. A lack of knowledge of business terminologies also contributed to this issue. This presents a risk as it may lead to miscommunication between the audience and presenter. However, only one interviewee, Business lecturer 3, stated that a few students were good in presenting charts and graphs during meetings and formal presentations as these students were exposed to those kinds of procedures prior to their industrial training. Moreover, lack of knowledge of grammar and vocabulary also presented another challenge for some of these business students. These students were not fluent in the English language and often pronounced words incorrectly, thus they were unable to communicate with their clients and colleagues effectively.

Furthermore, business students took some time to respond when they were communicating in English as they could not find suitable words to use. The process of remaining silent showed that these students were thinking of the words in their mother tongue and took time to translate those words into English. Many clients had complained that business students often stayed silent while they waited for a response. In some cases, business students would have a prolonged conversation with their clients and colleagues due to their poor proficiency in English. Industrial supervisor 3 mentioned that the lack of practice in the language would eventually result in students being incompetent. In Ghengshesh, Hamed and Abdulfattah's (2011) study, many business students experienced major issues speaking out in oral presentations, short talks and group discussion. Similarly, Kassim and Ali (2010) stated that employees in the business sector

did not have the ability to express their opinions and ideas to international clients as well as to speak fluently during oral presentations, meetings and delivering public speeches. It appears that business students as well as business employees in the business industry are facing challenges delivering oral presentations, conducting meetings and having discussions.

In addition, code-switching at the workplace was also a problem. Most of the companies encouraged their employees to speak in English when conducting business. Unfortunately, these business students often code switch from English to Bahasa Malaysia. In some cases, these business students would respond only in Bahasa Malaysia, although the clients spoke in English. In his interview, Industrial supervisor 3 stated that business students were more confident speaking in the language that they were familiar with, such as Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia. This situation occurred when clients and the business students shared the same mother tongue. In fact, business students found it very difficult to pronounce business terms in English. Another situation that often occurred during question and answer sessions was code mixing. When their supervisors posed a question in Standard English, these business students would answer in “*Manglish*” (colloquial English). Moreover, there were situations whereby business students remained silent when they were questioned by the supervisors. In such situations, the supervisor preferred to speak in Bahasa Malaysia. Code-switching and code-mixing are common practices in many companies as English is not their mother tongue or first language.

## **ii. Writing Related Problems**

Business students also seemed to experience several problems writing in English. Based on the findings, many business students could not write reports, memos, business letters, proposals and e-mails in English as they were not familiar with the format of these

documents. From the findings, it is evident that these students made numerous spelling mistakes when writing. In most cases, students often spell words according to the way they pronounce it. In addition, their reports were written in broken English as there were many grammatical errors and incorrect usage of business terminologies. At times, these students did not proofread their reports before submitting them to their respective Industrial supervisors. The incorrect usage of tenses in the documents were another issue they faced. The business students often got confused when choosing the tenses to use. It is important for business students to be aware of the usage of tenses with different types of documents. According to Chan (2014) business employees also face challenges in writing English documents such as business proposals, letters and business plans due to their incompetence with regard to English vocabulary and knowledge pertaining to business terminologies. These documents require them to apply advanced vocabulary. In Chan's (2014) findings, employees also experience difficulties writing minutes of meetings as they were not aware of its format. Thus, it is necessary to equip business students with the knowledge of writing documents before they proceed with their industrial training.

### **iii. Listening Related Problems**

Business students also experience difficulties understanding foreign accents and pronunciations. This is due to the fact that foreign clients from different countries possess different accents and pronunciations. Some business students could not understand clients that are mainly from Australia, United Kingdom, United States of America, the Middle East and even those from Malaysia.

Based on the findings, business students could not comprehend their clients' accents if they spoke too fast which often contributed to miscommunication. Therefore, in some cases, business students tried to avoid speaking to these clients. Business students also

often pretended to understand the conversations by using non-verbal gestures such as nodding their head which could also pose a problem. Hence, these business students would seek help from their respective supervisors to deal with the clients. There were situations whereby the supervisors had to translate the clients' utterances.

In addition, the findings also revealed that business students also experienced major issues understanding presentations, meetings and discussions conducted in English. According to the Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors, many of these business students did not possess sufficient business knowledge and related terminologies. Moreover, during on-going presentations, these students often looked- up for meanings on the internet as well as to seek help from their seniors which eventually resulted in communication breakdown and interruptions.

#### **iv. Reading Related Problem**

The findings of the study also revealed that business students also faced problems reading in English. Some of these business students had problems understanding reports, letters, memos and business proposals written in English, mainly contributed by their lack of knowledge of business terminologies and general vocabulary.

Based on the findings from the interviews, industrial supervisors noted that business students often seek help from their superiors when they do not comprehend the written reports. At times, these superiors would be frustrated as they need to explain each term in detail. According to the superiors, these business students were unable to understand simple words written in English. Industrial supervisors are concerned for the future employability of these business students. They have recommended that the necessary steps be taken to improve these business students' English.

Based on the findings of the questionnaire surveys, the major problem that the business students faced was speaking. The issues pertaining to speaking English are listed accordingly: inability to speak confidently, the need for time to think in their mother tongue before replying in English, usage of words from their mother tongue when speaking in English, difficulties choosing appropriate words while speaking in English and finally inability to voice out their opinions.

In terms of writing in English, business students encountered major problems in conveying their message. They also made many spelling mistakes while writing their reports in English. Moreover, these business students were unable to write business documents in English as they did not know the appropriate and accurate words to use. Furthermore, these business students had to refer to a dictionary while writing.

In terms of listening, business students had difficulties understanding the supervisor and colleagues' instruction given in English. In reading, business students had difficulty reading reports and memos at a fast pace. Some of the business students experience difficulties differentiating tenses in a sentence. In addition, these business students were not familiar with the business terms. These were some of the reasons that contributed to their reading problem.

In conclusion, business students encountered difficulties in the four major skills which are speaking, writing, listening and reading. The findings from the questionnaire surveys were consistent with the findings from the semi-structured interviews. (See Table 4.6)

### **5.1.2 English Language Needs Of The Business Students**

#### **i. Speaking in English**

The interviewees agreed that it is necessary for students to avoid code switching and code mixing. One of the best ways to start is to develop the discipline to communicate with

their colleagues and supervisors in English. This will eventually lead students to develop the habit of speaking in English.

Moreover, Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors also stated that business students must be able to present orally in English during meetings and discussions. It is important for business students to acquire the knowledge and skills related to instructing, explaining and demonstrating as these would come in handy when dealing with their clients and colleagues. In addition, business students need to be able to express their views and ideas on various topics in English such as the latest business news in the industry.

The Academic head stated that it is necessary for business student to acquire appropriate negotiation skills. Negotiations skills are considered to be vital in the business industry. According to the Academic head, business students need to learn the techniques of negotiating. Moreover, the Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors stressed that business students need to also acquire telephone communication skills. It is important for business students to be equipped with knowledge on telephone etiquette. There are situations whereby business employees need to use the telephone when dealing with clients.

## **ii. Writing In English**

Based on the findings, writing in English seemed to be another major issue faced by the business students. Therefore, business students need to be able to write business related documents in English. According to Industrial supervisor 3, business students should be aware of the format of writing documents in English such as memos, e-mails, business proposals, letters and minutes of meetings. These students should be able to write short and concise sentences. In addition, they should be exposed to various business terminologies in order to write effectively.

### **iii. Listening In English**

All of the interviewees agreed that it is crucial for business students to improve their listening skills. Business students need to improve their listening skills by watching business related videos. They would expose themselves to different accents of people from various parts of the world. It will be an effective strategy as students would be able to speak fluently once they improve their listening skills.

### **iv. Reading In English**

According to the interviewees, business students were required to read and understand business documents written in English. By reading all of these business documents, students are able to familiarize themselves with the format, business terminologies, grammar and spelling. Thus, their speaking and writing skills could be improved as well.

From the findings of the questionnaire data, the majority of the students were interested to improve their skills in speaking, writing, listening and reading as well as enhancing their grammar, vocabulary and punctuation. This is consistent with the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews. The respondents from the interviews agreed that it is important for business students to be proficient in all the major skills.

## **5.1.3 Recommendation For The Design Of An English Language Course For The Business Students**

### **i. Speaking Skills**

Based on the findings, the general recommendations of topics given by the interviewees and the business students for the design of an English course were effective communication at the workplace, the hows of conducting an effective presentation, negotiating in various situations and the acquisition of phrases for reaching an agreement, telephone communication skills such as requesting something, offering to help, taking

messages and making calls using the telephone. Moreover, the English course should also include the hows of conducting an effective meeting. Besides that, the business students suggested that the course should include the techniques of dealing with clients' objection and making polite conversation with the clients.

## **ii. Writing Skills**

Some of the recommendations given by the interviewees and business students in relation to writing skills were that the course should include techniques of writing business documents in English. Some of the business documents mentioned by the interviewees were memos, business letters, proposals and e-mails. Business lecturer 1 suggested that the course should include planning and editing document. Besides that, Industrial supervisor 1 recommended that the writing of negative messages to be included in the course as well as writing persuasive and marketing messages.

## **iii. Listening And Reading In English**

In relation to listening skills, Industrial supervisor 2 recommended that the course includes the watching of YouTube videos to ensure a better understanding of different accents and pronunciation. Furthermore, business students wanted the course to teach them on how to listen for accurate understanding. When it comes to listening, business students' main concern is the accents and pronunciations of foreign clients.

Based on the findings pertaining to reading skills, the Academic Head emphasized that the course should equip business students with the skills of skimming and scanning business documents. Moreover, he suggested that the techniques of interpreting non-linear text such as charts, tables and diagrams would be a good topic to be included in the course. On the other hand, business students suggested that the course should also comprise business terminologies (specialist vocabulary) in the lessons.



Findings from the questionnaire data revealed that all of the business students were interested to enroll in the English course. In terms of approach, the interviewees suggested that a “learning-centered” approach is the most effective teaching approach. Moreover, the majority of the business students exhibited different learning preferences such as individually, pair or in groups (See Table 4.10). In terms of duration, the interviewees suggested that a 3- hour course, once a week, would be suitable for the students.

Based on the recommendations given by the business students in the questionnaire survey as well as in the Academic Head, Business lecturer and Industrial supervisors’ semi structured interviews, an outline of the proposed ESP syllabus was constructed (See Section 4.4.6). The outline of the proposed ESP syllabus, which includes all the skills suggested by both sets of participants, is designed to help business students function effectively in their industrial training and future workplace.

## **5.2 Implications Of The Study**

Based on the findings of the study, there are few implications that can be put forward. First, this study demonstrated the importance of needs analysis in Business English. Business English syllabus planning should begin with analysing students’ needs and wants. Based on their needs and their future language use, the objectives of the syllabus can be determined. Various participants such as the Academic head, Business lecturers, and Industrial supervisors were involved in sharing their perception on the English language problems, needs and suggestions of developing business students’ competence and skills to meet the needs at the workplace. Since, there were no any English courses offered to these business students, this study provided some insights to improve their proficiency.

It is clear that there was a connection between the problems business students faced in using English and the skills they would like to improve on. There is a need for students

to improve in the four major skills: speaking, reading, listening and writing. From the findings of the study, a holistic syllabus which includes topics that are relevant to the English language problems and needs of the business students is designed.

In this study, the participants indicated a preference for a learner-centered approach. According to Shen (2008), “a learner-centered approach is considered to be the cornerstone for successful learning” (p.58). By employing a learner-centered approach, business students would be responsible for their own learning with minimal guidance from their teacher. Furthermore, students would be more motivated and interested in learning as they will be interacting with each other. Therefore, a learner-centered approach would be an ideal approach through which to conduct the English for Business course.

In terms of the language teachers, they will have a deeper understanding of how business students learn and can equip themselves with knowledge of the topics related to business. The teachers would be able to select the learning materials to meet students’ real world demands. As Shen (2008) stated “an ESP teacher acts as the organizer, course manager, monitor, adviser and facilitator” (p.56).

Based on the findings, it is suggested that the teaching hours of the English for Business course is three hours. This provides sufficient time for the ESP teachers to provide the necessary professional training for the business students. Moreover, the participants of this study suggested many useful activities to be conducted in the English for Business course. Conducting activities through role-play can help students to practice the language used in business setting. Besides, reading authentic business materials such as articles and magazines would be beneficial for them to gain knowledge on the current business trend and latest updates in the market. In addition, incorporating English lesson through YouTube would improve their English language skills. As Kassim and Ali (2010) stated “learning English through YouTube enables students to acquire a range of transferable

skills. These include research skills, collaborative working, problem solving, technology, and organisational skills” (p.175)

### **5.3 Suggestions For Further Research**

This study elicited the necessary information on the English language problems and the needs of the business students at a private university. Through the identification of their language problems and needs, an outline of a proposed ESP course is put forward. Based on the findings obtained, there are a few recommendations that could be taken into consideration for further research.

Firstly, this study applies a triangulation method of semi-structured interviews with the Academic head, Business lecturers and Industrial supervisors, and questionnaire surveys with the business students. However, it could be further improved by interviewing the business students at the private university. Moreover, the study is solely based on one private university. In the future, researchers could conduct a “needs analysis” with the final year business students from other universities in Kuala Lumpur, hence, a larger data set could be collected to derive more comprehensive findings.

Furthermore, ESP researchers could conduct a need analysis to identify the effectiveness of the proposed syllabus on the business students. This could be done as an evaluation of the ESP course. As Basturkmen (2010) states, needs analysis is conducted at the end of the ESP course to assess progress future planning. Hence, ESP researchers could revise the syllabus if necessary.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This study is conducted to identify the English language problems and needs of the final year business students at a private university. A triangulation method which consists of semi-structured interviews and questionnaire surveys were used. Based on the findings of the three research questions, a syllabus for an English language course was proposed. It is hoped that the study sheds some light on how to improve the English language skills of these students. Hence, this study could contribute towards preparing business students for their industrial training or job, where their professionalism would be largely dependent on their language proficiency.

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## **Appendix A**

### Semi Structure Interview Questions for Academic Head

1. Do the business students have any problems communicating in English? If yes, what kinds of communication problems do they have? Please provide examples.
2. Do the business students display nervousness or lack of confidence when communicating in English?
3. Do you think the students have the necessary English language skills to communicate in English?
4. What are the skills they are lacking?
5. What are the skills that need to be developed/enhanced for the students to function effectively at the workplace?
6. In your opinion, how do you think the business students' can improve their English communicative skills?
7. Would having an English for Specific Purposes courses help to improve the business students' English language skills? If yes, which skills would you like them to improve on?
8. If you were to design an English for Specific Purposes course for these business students, what areas/topics/skills (macro and micro) would you focus on?

## **Appendix B**

### Semi Structure Interview Questions for Business Lecturers

1. Do the business students have any problems communicating in English? If yes, what kinds of communication problems do they have? Please provide examples.
2. Do the business students display nervousness or lack of confidence when communicating in English? Please explain with examples.
3. Do you think the students have the necessary English language skills to communicate effectively at the workplace? Please elaborate.
4. What are the skills they are lacking?
5. Do the business students have problems in explaining charts, reports and other business related procedures in English? Please do explain with examples.
6. Do the business students have problems reading written English reports/ letters/ memos/ business proposals done by the company (the workplace of the students' internship)? If yes, what problems do they face?
7. Do the business students have problems writing English reports/ letters/ memos/ business proposals? If yes, what problems do they face?
8. What are the skills that need to be develop/ enhanced for the students to function effectively at the workplace?
9. In your opinion, how do you think the business students' can improve their English language skills?
10. Would having English class (English for Specific Purposes) help to improve the business students' English language skills? If yes, which skills would you like them to improve on?
11. If you were to design an English for Specific Purposes course for these business students, what areas/ topics/ skills (macro and micro) would you focus on?

## **Appendix C**

### Semi Structure Interview Questions for Industry Supervisor

1. Do the business students have any problems communicating in English? If yes, what kinds of communication problems do they have? Please provide examples.
2. Do the business students display nervousness or lack of confidence when communicating in English? Please explain with examples.
3. Do you think the students have the necessary English language skills to communicate effectively at the workplace? Please elaborate.
4. What are the skills they are lacking?
5. Do the business students have problems in explaining charts, reports and other business related procedures in English? Please do explain with examples.
6. Do the business students have problems reading written English reports/ letters/ memos/ business proposals done by the company (the workplace of the students' internship)? If yes, what problems do they face?
7. Do the business students have problems writing English reports/ letters/ memos/ business proposals? If yes, what problems do they face?
8. Do the business students have problems understanding Presentations, Meetings and Discussion conducted in English? Please do explain with examples.
9. Do the business students have problems understanding the different accents and pronunciations of their clients? If yes, please explain the problems with examples.
10. Do the business students code switch between English and other languages while communicating with others at their workplace? When does it happen? Please provide examples.

11. What are the skills that need to be develop/ enhanced for the students to function effectively at the workplace?
12. In your opinion, how do you think the business students' can improve their English language skills?
13. Would having English class (English for Specific Purposes) help to improve the business students' English language skills? If yes, which skills would you like them to improve on?
14. If you were to design an English for Specific Purposes course for these business students, what areas/ topics/ skills (macro and micro) would you focus on?

## Appendix D



**UNIVERSITY  
OF MALAYA**  
*The Leader in Research & Innovation*

Dear Students,

First and foremost, let me express my heartfelt appreciation and thanks for your time and co-operation in participation in this study.

This survey is being administered to gain information on the English language needs and challenges business students are likely to face in the workplace.

Your view matter! Please complete this questionnaire, which will take about 15 minutes to answer.

Please be assured that what you share in this questionnaire will be treated in the strictest of confidence and will in no way reveal your identity as an individual. I would like to emphasize that your participation in the survey is absolutely invaluable to me.

Thank you again.

Daksayani a/p Ganeson

TGB 120059

## ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES FOR BUSINESS STUDENTS

### SET A: Profile of Respondents

*Instruction: Please tick (✓) the relevant box or write in the space provided. You may tick (✓) more than one box where necessary.*

1. Gender            Male             Female

2. Age                18-21 yrs     24-27 yrs     28 yrs and above

3. Highest education level is

Professional certificate             Diploma             STPM

4. Mother tongue \_\_\_\_\_

5. I can also speak

Malay     Mandarin     Hokkien     Iban

Tamil     Cantonese     English     Hindi

Other (s) \_\_\_\_\_

6. In my opinion, my overall English language proficiency is

Excellent     Good     Average

Poor             Very Poor

## Section B: Language Ability

Instruction: You can tick (✓) more than once where appropriate.

1. In a day, I use English to communicate with others

Always  Sometimes  Seldom  Rarely  Never

At work, (internship), I use English to

Speak to Lecturers  Colleagues  Internship Supervisors

Clients  Others \_\_\_\_\_

Listen to Lecturers  Colleagues  Internship Supervisors

Clients  Others \_\_\_\_\_

Write Reports  E- Mails  Messages

Notes  Others \_\_\_\_\_

Read Reports  E- Mails  Messages

Notes  Others \_\_\_\_\_

2. I rate my English Skills in.....(please tick (✓) in only one box for each item)

	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
Listening					
Reading					
Writing					
Speaking					
Vocabulary					
Pronunciation					
Grammar					

3. What English Skills do you think you need to improve in ( please tick (✓) in only one box for each item)



	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Listening				
Reading				
Writing				
Speaking				
Vocabulary				
Pronunciation				
Grammar				

4. Would you enrol in an English Course (English for Specific Purposes-ESP) if one is offered at your college?

Yes  No

5. If yes, how frequently should classes be held?

Every day  Every two days  3-4 times a week

Once a week  .

6. The teaching- learning activities in the ESP course should be conducted...*(You may tick*

*more than one box)*

Individually  In small groups of 3-5

In pairs  More than 5 people in a group

7. Which of the following should be included in the English for Specific Purposes course?

*(Please circle the corresponding number to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree for each of the following statements).*

<b>Strongly Disagree</b> <b>1</b>	<b>Disagree</b> <b>2</b>	<b>Agree</b> <b>3</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b> <b>4</b>
--------------------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------

Giving Oral Presentations	1	2	3	4
Participating effectively in group discussion.	1	2	3	4
Face to face negotiation	1	2	3	4
Memo Writing	1	2	3	4
E-Mail Writing	1	2	3	4
Business Report Writing	1	2	3	4
Writing Business Proposals	1	2	3	4
Analysing reports, contracts and charts.	1	2	3	4
Reading quickly (Skimming)	1	2	3	4
Reading critically (Scanning)	1	2	3	4
Listening for accurate understanding	1	2	3	4
Making polite conversation with prospective clients	1	2	3	4
Communicating via Telephone ( Telephone skills)	1	2	3	4
Dea ling with clients' objections	1	2	3	4
Learning business terms ( specialist vocabulary)	1	2	3	4
Others:				

### Section C: Problems in English Communication

Please circle the corresponding number to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Some of the statements specifically refer to experiences during your recent internship.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b> <b>1</b>	<b>Disagree</b> <b>2</b>	<b>Agree</b> <b>3</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b> <b>4</b>
--------------------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------

I have difficulty in understanding the supervisor's instructions given in English.	1	2	3	4
I have difficulty in understanding other colleagues' instructions given in English.	1	2	3	4
I can differentiate the English tenses in a sentence.	1	2	3	4
I can speak English confidently.	1	2	3	4
I have difficulty in understanding written English reports.	1	2	3	4
I can write reports in English without using the dictionary.	1	2	3	4
I have difficulty in conveying messages in English (Written)	1	2	3	4
I have difficulty in conveying messages in English (Spoken)	1	2	3	4
I have difficulty in reading English reports and memos at a fast pace.	1	2	3	4
I have difficulty in voicing my opinions in English.	1	2	3	4
I can't understand some of my friends' and supervisor's English pronunciation.	1	2	3	4
I make a lot of spelling mistakes when writing reports in English.	1	2	3	4
I need time to think in my mother tongue before replying in English.	1	2	3	4
I am not familiar with many business terms ( specialist vocabulary)	1	2	3	4

I don't know the appropriate words to use while speaking in English.	1	2	3	4
I don't know the appropriate words to use while writing in English.	1	2	3	4
I tend to use words from my mother tongue when I speak or write in English.	1	2	3	4
Others:				

## **Appendix E**

### **Interview Transcript of Academic Head**

**Interviewer = I**

**Academic Head = AH**

**I** : Do the business students have any problems communicating in English? If yes, what kinds of communication problems do they have? Please provide example.

**AH** : Yes, of course they do. Many of the business students faced problem communicating in English. The major skills were speaking, listening, writing and reading.

**I** : Alright. Do they display nervousness or lack of confidence when communicating in English?

**AH** : Yes. Based on my observation, some of the students did display nervousness and lack of confidence when they were communicating in English, especially during presentations. But, there were also students who were weak in their English but they were very confident during presentations. Even when they are speaking to each other.

**I** : Noted. So, do you think the students have the necessary English language skills to communicate in English?

**AH** : Nope, they don't. They need to improve on their proficiency. There are many things for them to learn.

**I** : What are the skills they are lacking?

**AH** : As I have mentioned earlier, the four major skills and grammar.

**I** : What are the skills that need to be developed/ enhanced for the students to function effectively at the workplace?

**AH** : Of course they need to improve their skills in the four major area, speaking, listening, reading and writing. For speaking, students need to be able to speak in English during meetings and discussions. In my point of view, oral presentations are very important because they sell ideas and products. Moreover, they must be able to negotiate. Negotiation skills considered as an important process to avoid misunderstandings, arguments, disputes and to reach agreement and consensus. Up to date, I have received numerous complaints from the Industrial supervisors. One of the complaints...business students didn't speak politely. Some students will give short replies such as Ok! I see! Nanti I update lah! Industrial supervisors found that it was impolite to give such replies. Needless to say, they do not use proper vocabulary to speak.

**I** : In your opinion, how do you think the business students can improve their English communicative skills?

**AH** : Well, students should attend a business English course. I believe the course would provide them with the necessary skills to be competent.

**I** : Would having an English for Specific Purposes course help to improve the business students' English language skills? If yes, which skills would you like them to improve on?

**AH** : Yes. They should improve their listening, reading, speaking and writing skills. As well as grammar and vocabulary.

**I** : If you were to design an English for Specific Purpose course for these business students, what areas/topics/skills (macro and micro) would you focus on?

**AH** : It is important for the course to include negotiation and telephoning skills. Like I have mentioned earlier negotiation is important. For reading, the

course should include instruction on how to skim and scan business documents. It should also include techniques of interpreting non-linear texts such as diagrams, tables, charts and graphs.

**I** : Thank you for your comprehensive feedback Sir.

## **Appendix F**

### **Interview Transcript of Business Lecturer 1**

#### **I : Interviewer**

#### **Business Lecturer 1 : BL 1**

**I** : Do the business students have any problems communicating in English? If yes, what kinds of communication problems do they have? Please provide examples.

**BL 1** : Yes, they do. Students faced major problems in speaking, writing followed by listening and reading.

**I** : Do the business students display nervousness or lack of confidence when communicating in English? Please explain with examples.

**BL 1** : Yes, of course they do. Many students display nervousness and lack of confidence when they communicate in English. The students' main problem was grammar. Most of the time, their grammar was poor and this has impacted the flow of communication. Moreover, students had difficulties pronouncing words in English. They also had problems in tenses.

**I** : Do you think the students have the necessary English language skills to communicate effectively at the workplace? Please elaborate.

**BL 1** : No, they don't have the necessary skills to communicate in English. They are lacking of many skills.

**I** : What are the skills they are lacking?

**BL 1** : Firstly, students have problems speaking during formal presentation, meetings and discussion. The students often tried their best to explain ideas, but they were lost of words. Moreover, they often got confused in explaining business terminologies.



- I** : Noted. Do the business students have problems in explaining charts, reports and other business related procedures in English? Please do explain with examples.
- BL 1** : Yes, this is very relevant to the business students. Explaining charts and reports in English are important. However, many of these students faced difficulties. They had difficulties explaining business terminologies.
- I** : Do the business students have problems reading written reports/ letters/ memos/ business Proposals done by the company (the workplace of the students' internship)? If yes, what problems do they face?
- BL 1** : Yes, but it is not a major problem compared to writing and speaking. Most of the students could understand written reports, their only problem was understanding business terminologies.
- I** : Do the business students have problems writing English reports/letters/memos/business proposals? If yes, what problems do they face?
- BL 1** : Yes, they do. Most of the students did not use the correct style and format required for a document. It was important for students to know the format. One example, writing business proposals was very important, as the proposed idea should be convincing and achievable. These students made poor choice of words and there was no clarity.
- I** : What are the skills that need to be develop/ enhanced for the students to function effectively at the workplace?
- BL 1** : Students need to improve in speaking, writing, listening, reading and also vocabulary and grammar. Students need to learn on giving effective presentations during meetings and discussions. It is crucial for them to be able to speak effectively. Moreover, students should be able to engage

themselves in small talk. Small talk is like a bonding ritual between the employee and the client. Small talk helps them to be relaxed and to be able to start a good conversation on any topic. They need to learn telephoning skills as well.

**I** : In your opinion, how do you think the business students can improve their English language skills?

**BL 1** : The best way is for them to enrol in an English course like a Business English course.

**I** : Would having an English for Specific Purposes course help to improve the business students' English language skills? If yes, which skills would you like them to improve on?

**BL 1** : Yes, it would definitely help them a lot. They need to improve on speaking, writing, listening, reading, grammar and vocabulary.

**I** : If you were to design an English for Specific Purpose course for these business students, what areas/topics/skills (macro and micro) would you focus on?

**BL 1** : Every skill is important. I would like to highlight that, the course should have telephoning skills. They need to learn the basic skills and techniques for using the telephone in business. The activities that students can practice using telephone are getting people to do things, requesting something, offering to help, asking permission, taking messages, planning and making calls. The course should teach students in using different kind of phrases for different situations. In listening, students need to be exposed to various accents and pronunciations. For writing, students should learn to plan and edit business documents in English, in other words proper data organization. The course should teach students

to use correct punctuation for writing business documents in English. The course should be conducted at least 3 hours in a week. Students should have full participation in the course.

**I** : Thank you for your comprehensive feedback.

## **Interview Transcript of Business Lecturer 2**

**I : Interviewer**

**Business Lecturer 2 : BL 2**

**I** : Do the business students have any problems communicating in English?  
If yes, what kind of communication problems do they have? Please provide examples.

**BL 2** : Yes, they do. They faced problem in speaking, writing, listening and reading.

**I** : Do the business students display nervousness or lack of confidence when communicating in English? Please explain with examples?

**BL 2** : Yes, they do. Students did display nervousness and lack of confidence while communicating in English. They aren't confident.

**I** : Do you think the students have the necessary English language skills to communicate effectively at the workplace? Please elaborate.

**BL 2** : No, they don't. They need to improve in many areas to communicate effectively at the workplace.

**I** : What are the skills they are lacking?

**BL 2** : Students had problems speaking during presentations, meetings and discussions. They made silly mistakes and very frequent they were lost of words. Most of them were shy too. They struggled to maintain a momentum with their clients. They struggled to communicate basic and casual English.

**I** : Do the business students have problems in explaining charts, reports and other business related procedures in English? Please do explain with examples.

**BL 2** : Yes, they had to explain charts and reports during presentations. Using charts, graphs and pictures to present required good presentations skills. Many student were not aware on how to give an effective presentation. Most of the time, they fail to present well because they were not familiar with the topic and lack knowledge in business terminologies. Some were not familiar with the use of linking words such as ‘therefore’, ‘thus’, ‘moreover’ , ‘in conclusion’, etc. It would lead to miscommunication between students and clients.

**I** : Do the business students have problems reading written reports/ letters/ memos/ business Proposals done by the company (the workplace of the students’ internship)? If yes, what problems do they face?

**BL 2** : Yes, but it is not a major problem compared to writing and speaking.

**I** : Do the business students have problems writing English reports/letters/memos/business proposals? If yes, what problems do they face?

**BL 2** : Yes, they do. Students made many grammatical and spelling mistakes in the business documents. Some wrote in Malay. It is important for them to be aware of the proper format of a business doc. I have received numerous complaints from their supervisors. For the supervisors, reading took up most of their time.

**I** : What are the skills that need to be develop/ enhanced for the students to function effectively at the workplace?

**BL 2** : All skills. Grammar, writing, reading, listening, speaking, vocabulary. Students to be able to present orally for meetings and discussions. Moreover, they should be able to engage themselves in small talks. Small talk is the first step in connecting with others and developing a meaningful

relationship in business. They need to have knowledge on negotiation and telephoning skills. They need to know the different types of documents. In the case of business letters, the students should be aware of different types of business letters such as business letters for enquiries, complaints and adjustments, order and sales letters, credit and reminders...collection letters. For memos, student needed to know the format of a memo, the purpose of the memo and the appropriate tone to use in the memo. Students need to learn business terminologies to write the documents effectively. It is crucial for them to have knowledge of business terminologies, as they would be using those terms at the work. For reading, students need read more business documents to be proficient.

**I** : In your opinion, how do you think the business students can improve their English language skills?

**BL 2** : By enrolling in an English course like Business English.

**I** : Would having an English for Specific Purposes course help to improve the business students' English language skills? If yes, which skills would you like them to improve on?

**BL 2** : Yes, of course. I would like them to improve in all skills.

**I** : If you were to design an English for Specific Purpose course for these business students, what areas/topics/skills (macro and micro) would you focus on?

**BL 2** : Having an ESP course will help students to deal with issues at the workplace like conflicts. For writing, the course should include writing business docs such as reports, proposals, letters and e-mails. Students should be exposed on how to summarise business reports and letters. They

should be able to learn using notes to write a report. This should be a learner – centered course. This can maximize their learning.

**I** : Thank you for your comprehensive feedback.

## **Interview Transcript of Business Lecturer 3**

**I : Interviewer**

**Business Lecturer 3 : BL 3**

**I** : Do the business students have any problems communicating in English? If yes, what kinds of communication problems do they have? Please provide examples.

**BL 3** : Yes, they do. They have problems in speaking, writing, listening and reading.

**I** : Do the business students display nervousness or lack of confidence when communicating in English? Please explain with examples?

**BL 3** : Yes, they do display nervousness and lack of confidence when communicating in English.

**I** : Do you think the students have the necessary English language skills to communicate effectively at the workplace? Please elaborate.

**BL 3** : No, they don't. They faced a lot of problems at the workplace.

**I** : What are the skills they are lacking?

**BL 3** : All skills. Speaking, writing, reading, listening and grammar.

**I** : Do the business students have problems in explaining charts, reports and other business related procedures in English? Please do explain with examples.

**BL 3** : Not really. I felt business students were doing well in presenting. They were able to interpret the non-linear texts. Only a few students did not have any background knowledge about the topic. Nevertheless, they faced problems explaining business terminologies used in reports, tables, graphs and charts.



**I** : Do the business students have problems reading written reports/ letters/ memos/ business Proposals done by the company (the workplace of the students' internship)? If yes, what problems do they face?

**BL 3** : Yes, they do. Only a few students had major problems in reading documents. I think reading skills is better than writing skill. Even if a student were known to be a very slow reader, yet the particular student would be able to understand the content at the end. It is not about reading and understanding, the issue is about communicating. Many students had problems understanding basic business terminologies. These students had forgotten the business terms learnt at school. I am very disappointed because students had spent almost 4 years studying at the university and had so much of exposure through industrial trips and exhibitions.

**I** : Do the business students have problems writing English reports/letters/memos/business proposals? If yes, what problems do they face?

**BL 3** : Yes, they do. Students do not know the format of writing business documents.

**I** : What are the skills that need to be develop/ enhanced for the students to function effectively at the workplace?

**BL 3** : All skills. These include speaking, writing, reading, listening, grammar and vocabulary. For speaking, students needed to know the type of talks they are expected to give. They know the difference between seminar, forum, conference, formal and informal presentations. Students need to know that small talk is a technique of talking, connecting with others and it helps establish good relationship with clients, colleagues and supervisors. Some of the interesting topics that employees can talk about

are: movies, books, culture, the weather, important news in the media. For writing, students should refer to the dictionary or their smartphones to check for spelling and use correct business terminologies. They need to read their own reports and identify their mistakes. In order for them to understand and listen better, students need to watch videos from English language teaching websites. They can listen to people speaking in different accents from different parts of the world. Students also need to ask for clarification if they don't understand. They should learn phrase such as "Pardon me Sir/ madam, Could you please repeat?" or Excuse me Madam, could you speak slowly" or "Could you spell that for me?."

Students need to ask the clients if they are in doubt rather than nodding their head pretending to understand. For reading, students need to be able to identify and interpret the graphs and charts. They need to know the techniques. Students need to know how to read and interpret specific points from a graph, they should be able to extract information from tables of data, read and interpret information from pie chart, bar chart and pictograms and finally read and interpret scale diagrams.

**I** : In your opinion, how do you think the business students can improve their English language skills?

**BL 3** : Creating an English course for them.

**I** : Would having an English for Specific Purposes course help to improve the business students' English language skills? If yes, which skills would you like them to improve on?

**BL 3** : Yes, it will be beneficial.

- I** : If you were to design an English for Specific Purpose course for these business students, what areas/topics/skills (macro and micro) would you focus on?
- BL 3** : Speaking, reading, writing, listening, grammar and vocabulary. The course should be a learner-centered course. Student should have plenty of time practising the language.
- I** : Thank you for your comprehensive feedback.

## **Appendix G**

### **Interview Transcript of Industrial Supervisor 1**

#### **I : Interviewer**

#### **Industrial Supervisor 1 : IS 1**

**I** : Do the business students have any problems communicating in English?  
If yes, what kind of communication problems do they have? Please provide example?

**IS 1** : Yes, they do. They have problems in speaking, writing, reading, listening and grammar.

**I** : Do the business students display nervousness or lack of confidence when communicating in English? Please explain with examples.

**IS 1** : Yes, they do. Most of the time, students got nervous when they knew ...their communication level was weak compared to friends who were able to communicate well at the workplace. These students felt very shy as they considered shyness as a weaknesses and they communicate in English with no confidence. In fact, some students trembled while communicating with foreign clients.

**I** : Do you think that students have the necessary English language skills to communicate effectively at the workplace? Please do explain with examples.

**IS 1** : No, they don't. English is totally a foreign language for some of these students. Because of the lack of practice in English, students faced major problems coming up with suitable words and phrases to use in a specific situation they were in. If only students start to use English on daily basis, for example, at home, workplace, communicating with friends, they can brush up their English and become more confident to converse. If the

student spoke longer, they felt that they have made more grammatical mistakes in their speech. They are afraid that others may look down on them. It was important for the students to have the ability to converse well as it can affect their job and company's reputation. They can improve their English communication skill by practice speaking the language on a daily basis.

**I** : What are the skills they are lacking?

**IS 1** : The four major skills. Speaking, writing, reading and listening.

**I** : Do the business students have problems in explaining charts, reports and other business related procedures in English? Please do explain with examples.

**IS 1** : Yes, they do.

**I** : Do the business students have problems reading written English reports /letters/memos/ Business proposals done by the company (the workplace of the students' internship)? If yes, what problems do they face?

**IS 1** : Yes, they do. Look at this notice for an example.... The student who read the notice, came directly to me to ask for clarifications. I had to translate the sentences in Malay for them to have better understanding. They clearly did not understand the terminologies used in the letter. I am very concerned on the future employability of these students as they are very dependent and did not take any initiative to brush up their reading skills. These kinds of problems might hinder them from being employed.

**I** : Do the business students have problems writing English reports/letters/memos/ business proposals done by the company (the workplace of the students' internship)? If yes, what problems do they face?

**IS 1** : Yes, they do. Students had major problems in spelling and grammar. They made spelling and grammatical mistakes in their documents. Writing reports and e-mails was common in the business industry. These students had to write reports for this company and their problems were spelling and grammatical mistakes. Students also had problem writing negative messages. Students also faced problem in writing negative message like sending a condolence message. They needed to know appropriate vocabulary. Students needed to meet customers' needs and satisfaction. In many cases, students did not know the format of the letter and we had to guide them to draft those letters. These students are afraid that miscommunication may occur.

**I** : Do business students have problems understanding Presentations, Meetings and Discussion conducted in English? Please do explain with examples.

**IS 1** : Yes, they do. They tried hard to understand each word spoken by their colleagues or clients. They couldn't comprehend what they have heard. This occurred especially when English wasn't their mother tongue. According to the students when they spoke, many words weren't stressed. Because of this, they were not able to understand the message expressed during a meeting, presentation or during discussions.

**I** : Do the business students have problems understanding different accents and pronunciations of the clients? If yes, please explain the problems with examples.

**IS 1** : Yes, they do. Especially clients from UK and US.

**I** : Do the business students code switch between English and other languages while communicating with others at the workplace? When does it happen? Please provide examples.

**IS 1** : Yes, plenty of times. From English to Bahasa. Students should speak in English when discussing business matters. They are able to practice the language and be more confident. When they have confidence, they will not be anxious to interact with their foreign clients in English. Companies encouraged their employees to practice speaking in English in order to improve their fluency. Sadly, there were no signs of improvement as these students still spoke completely in their mother tongue. Or the code switch and code mix. They code switch and code mix was during presentations and discussions. They had to take part in meetings and presentations. Presentation is based on slides they had prepared. We will have to ensure that students present according to what is in the documents. These students often started their presentations in Standard English but after a while, they tended to speak Manglish. They spoke in Manglish because they felt that giving a presentation in English made them feel anxious and weird. Based on my observation, students were more confident speaking in Manglish rather than Standard English. In Manglish they tended to remember important information to be presented.

**I** : What are the skills that need to be developed/enhanced for the students to function effectively at the workplace?

**IS 1** : All skills.... Students need to stop from code switching in order for them to start speaking in English with their colleagues. This will be a great help for the students to practice speaking in English and become more confident in using the language. Students need to improve their command

of English language. It is important for them to be able to speak politely with clients. Students need to learn the techniques of speaking politely when dealing in business. Some students have problems in speaking politely. Students do not speak politely to the colleagues. I felt they were rude. Some of the words uttered were, Ok lah! Saya buat lah! Macam mana ni! Their tone and modulation were not appropriate with the workplace. For writing, students need to be able to write negative messages. Most of the time, students do not want to write or reply to negative messages. These negative messages are letter of condolences, complaints letters, letter of apology and letter of sympathy. Negative messages should be delivered with proper tone, clear and concise... For example, if the message is not delivered in a proper manner, the situation may worsen because the receipt might misunderstand the message. It affects the organization. For listening students need to watch movies and business videos to be familiar with different accents and pronunciations. Students need to learn skimming and scanning skills while reading documents. They should be able to identify the general ideas and main ideas of a document. They need to be able to look for specific information in the document. This can save time and students will have productive working hours. Moreover, Business students need to interpret charts, graphs, tables and diagrams. It's crucial for them to interpret because these kinds of charts and graphs will be in their presentation. Based on my observation, many students failed to interpret these charts, graphs, tables and diagrams.

- I** : In your opinion, how do you think the business students' can improve their language skills?



- IS 1** : Enrol in an English course.
- I** : Would having an English for Specific Purposes course help to improve the business students' English language skills? If yes, which skills would you like them to improve on?
- IS 1** : Yes, of course. All skills.
- I** : If you were to design an English for Specific Purpose course for these business students, what areas/topics/skills (macro and micro) would you focus on?
- IS 1** : For speaking, students should include how to conduct an effective oral presentation. One of the activities that can be conducted is to generate a focussed discussion and debates as business students take sides for and against. This kind of activity will help students to boost their confidence to speak in public. They should learn negotiation skills. I have read many books on Business English and based on my experiences, some of the negotiation skills that needed to be included in an ESP course are, i) Positions and Interests which is to discuss techniques for planning and preparing for a negotiation, ii) Questioning and Clarifying which involves the importance of asking different types of questions to clarify and probe, iii) Bargaining which involves the important techniques and strategies for the bargaining stage of negotiation and finally iv) Clinching the deal that involves the techniques of closing stage of a negotiation and learn useful phrases for reaching an agreement. In addition, The course should include skills of writing negative messages such learning the strategies and techniques of delivering bad news. Also, students should learn writing persuasive messages. By having the ability writing persuasive and marketing messages, business students can develop the ability to build

powerful partnerships with clients while earning their trust. The ESP course should include articles about technology, advice on solving problems and articles about companies. The course should encourage them to read different kind of emails.

**I** : Thank you for your comprehensive feedback.

## **Interview Transcript of Industrial Supervisor 2**

### **I: Interviewer**

#### **Industrial Supervisor 2: IS 2**

**I** : Do the business students have any problems communicating in English? If yes, what kind of communication problems do they have? Please provide example?

**IS 2** : Yes they do. Problems in speaking, writing, listening and reading.

**I** : Do the business students display nervousness or lack of confidence when communicating in English? Please explain with examples.

**IS 2** : Yes, they do. Most of the time students lacked of confidence communicating in English due to speaking anxiety. They do not speak English at English was not their first language. Therefore, they weren't confident enough to use the language. Their first language interference was a major problem that hindered them from speaking English.

**I** : Do you think students have the necessary English language skills to communicate effectively at the workplace? Please elaborate.

**IS 2** : No, they don't.

**I** : What are the skills they are lacking?

**IS 2** : In all skills. Speaking, writing, listening and reading and grammar. For speaking, lack of knowledge of grammar and vocabulary were the problems students faced during presentation. They weren't fluent and pronounced certain words incorrectly. Students were not able to talk with their colleagues and clients because of their poor speaking skills. And students needed time to think in English. There were plenty of complaints from colleagues and clients that students took time to respond when using English. Students

needed time to think in their mother tongue before using English. Most of the time, the reason that they were thinking in their mother tongue was because they can't find suitable words to use in English. My clients had complained that employees stayed silent when they were interacting with each other. This showed that these students were actually thinking of the words in their mother tongue and took time to translate the words to English. I feel the process of them remaining silent and not answering to their clients creates a very bad reputation for them and the company. It also portrays that they are not fluent in English.

**I** : Do the business students have problems in explaining charts, reports and other business related procedures in English? Please do explain with examples.

**IS 2** : Yes, they do.

**I** : Do the business students have problems reading written English reports /letters/memos/ Business proposals done by the company (the workplace of the students' internship)? If yes, what problems do they face?

**IS 2** : Yes, they do. Look at this example of a memo (a memo is given to the Interviewer). Students actually highlighted the sentences and referred to us to find out the meaning of those words. They didn't know words like "**imperative**" "**hesitate**" and "**queries**" which is quite surprising. We feel students faced reading problems because of poor understanding of simple vocabularies.

**I** : Do the business students have problems writing English reports/letters/memos/ business proposals done by the company (the workplace of the students' internship)? If yes, what problems do they face?

- IS 2** : Yes. They have problems writing business docs. Students often used the wrong tenses to write these documents. For example, business plans requires them to write in the future tense, but students tend to write the documents in the past tense. To write minutes of meetings, students used the present tense instead of using past tense. Most of the students mixed up their tenses and this confused the reader. I felt students should be aware of the usage of tenses for different types of documents.
- I** : Do business students have problems understanding Presentations, Meetings and Discussion conducted in English? Please do explain with examples.
- IS 2** : Yes, they had problems understanding meetings and discussion whenever it is conducted in English.
- I** : Do the business students have problems understanding different accents and pronunciations of the clients? If yes, please explain the problems with examples.
- IS 2** : Students had problems understanding the simple sentences of an Australian client such as We can't proceed with the meeting today. One of the students could not differentiate between "can" and "can't". She had the perception of the meeting being held. I had to explain to her that the meeting would be cancelled. According to the students, this student felt the pronunciation of "can't" is different from the way it is pronounced here in Malaysia. The students also did not understand local colleagues and clients' pronunciation particularly those from different races such as Chinese, Malay and Indians. These students claimed their accents were too thick. The students said, the clients and employees made an attempt to speak at a slow pace since they were really new to the working environment. However, these students still had problems understanding. This frustrated my clients and colleagues

because they had to face them almost all day. They felt that speaking at a slow pace disturbs their daily work and it is wasting their time. As a results, Malaysian clients and employees preferred to speak in Malay. I was surprised with the current level of proficiency of the fresh graduates, they did not even understand simple English as well as never take any initiative to improve their command in English. It was sometimes very embarrassing that they could not even write words in proper English. I think it should be compulsory for employees to speak in English when dealing with their task as most of their task required them to communicate in English. We cannot run the business without having good command of English. I also think that spoken English classes should be given to them.

**I** : Do the business students code switch between English and other languages while communicating with others at the workplace? When does it happen? Please provide examples.

**IS 2** : Yes, most of the time. Students tend to code switch from English to Bahasa or to Mandarin or in Tamil. They also code mix. When business students communicate with clients especially from Brunei and Indonesia, the business students would code switch certain words in Bahasa Malaysia”. This is mainly because the Malay language used in Malaysia is almost similar with the Malay language used in Brunei and Indonesia. Students often code switch and code mix when talking business with these clients. Some would only speak in Bahasa Malaysia when talking with these clients. Although the company had instructed their employees to speak in English when dealing work matters, these students preferred to communicate with their clients in other languages especially in Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin. Something which they felt comfortable with. There were students who tried their best

to speak in English but most of the time they code switch to Malay. Code mixing also occurred during the question and answer sessions. When I asked questions in Standard English, the majority of the business students would answer in Manglish. I have encouraged them to answer in Standard English but they still insisted in answering in Manglish. Moreover, a few students could not understand my question in Standard English. Student often stayed silent while waiting for me to translate in Malay.

**I** : What are the skills that need to be develop/ enhanced for the students to function effectively at the workplace.

**IS 2** : Speaking, writing, listening, reading, grammar and their pronunciation. For speaking, students should stop code switching. Once students are confident in using English, they won't hesitate to speak in English with foreign clients. Another way to minimize code switching is to ensure that superiors and clients reply respond in English although they may have asked a question in Bahasa Malaysia. One example, my trainees usually speak to me in Manglish or most of the time in Bahasa Malaysia. When this happens, I will only answer them in English. Likewise, if I have any questions for them, I will make sure I converse only in English. This develops the habit of speaking in English. During discussion, presentations and meeting, my colleagues and I would always try our best to give our feedback if the students make mistakes in their pronunciation. Students needed to develop the skills of instructing, explaining and demonstrating to their clients and colleagues. For discussion, students needed to know the proper method of discussing their work- related issues formally and informally. Moreover, students should engage in small talks. Having small talk and maintaining a lengthy conversation is very important. Most clients expect the employees to start the conversation with

small talk. Conversations can be formal and informal situations. Telephoning skills is important too. Students should be able to solve problems at work using phone. They need to know the techniques of exchanging information on the phone. They need to know how to resolve conflicts at the workplace. They should be able to communicate effectively when dealing with problems. They need to know terms and phrases in order for them make complaints, and apologize appropriately. Most students did not know how to solve conflicts at the workplace. One of the students had an argument with a colleague. Instead of resolving the conflicts, the student replied “I do not know what to do!”, “Tak Kisah!” Many students faced problems at the work place, as they were not aware of how to resolve conflicts when dealing with clients and colleagues. For writing, if students do not know how to write documents such as memos, letters, reports and e-mails, they should ask help from their superiors and colleagues. It is important for business students to know how to write business- related documents in English. These documents should be proof read and edited before they submit it to us. Students need to learn how to write negative messages. Writing negative messages is a tedious task as the recipients are being told exactly what they do not want to hear. Negative messages include delivering a bad news or refusing a request of a client in an organisation or a company. For reading, students need to read business articles, business journals, business contracts and proposals in order for them to be familiar with the different types of documents. These docs have specialist vocabulary related to business. They can have a knowledge to the different formats of the documents. They will be a critical readers and more knowledgeable. In a long run, they would be able to write more effectively at the workplace as well.



- I** : In your opinion, how do you think the business students can improve their English language skills?
- IS 2** : By enrolling in a Business English course.
- I** : Would having an English for Specific Purposes course help to improve the business students' English language skills? If yes, which skills would you like them to improve on?
- IS 2** : Yes. For Sure. Every skills is important.
- I** : If you were to design an English for Specific Purpose course for these business students, what areas/topics/skills (macro and micro) would you focus on?
- IS 2** : One of speaking skills that can be included in the course is effective communication at the workplace. They can learn to socialize with clients, superiors and colleagues. They should be able to engage in small talks and keep long conversations going. Some of the activities that can be included are ice-breaking sessions, learning the general techniques of turn-taking. Students can practice these skills through role-play. The course should have negotiation skills. Many of us think that negotiating skill involves bargaining. In fact, the most important skill in negotiation is effective relationship building. For listening, watching videos on YouTube is one of the effective ways to improve students' understanding. There are many types of videos in you tube that students can learn and understand different accents from all over the world.
- I** : Thank you for your comprehensive feedback.

## **Interview Transcript of Industrial Supervisor 3**

### **I: Interviewer**

#### **Industrial Supervisor 3: IS 3**

**I** : Do the business students have any problems communicating in English? If yes, what kind of communication problems do they have? Please provide example?

**IS 3** : Yes, they do. In speaking, writing, listening and reading.

**I** : Do the business students display nervousness or lack of confidence when communicating in English? Please explain with examples.

**IS 3** : Yes, they do display nervousness and lack of confidence. This is very obvious among the business students.

**I** : Do you think students have the necessary English language skills to communicate effectively at the workplace? Please elaborate.

**IS 3** : No, they don't. They lacked in many skills.

**I** : What are the skills they are lacking?

**IS 3** : For speaking, students felt anxious and were afraid to present in front of large audiences. They do not have the skills to present during meetings and discussions. During group discussions and meetings, these students would remain silent as they felt their colleagues and superiors spoke better than them. Students were worried that their superiors would notice their mistakes. These often memorized materials which led to many mistakes in terms of tenses, grammar and pronunciations. Students did not have proper planning for their presentations. Students referred to their notes while presenting. They did not make any eye contact with their audience. While for meetings and discussions, students couldn't discuss a topic as they do not have

sufficient vocabulary. They can't express their views and opinions. These students did not converse in English daily, therefore they lacked practice in using the language. They took a longer time to answer a question. This shows their attitude whereby they did not see the importance of English for presentations, meetings and discussions. Most of the students took time to reply in English during discussions as tended to give short answers. These students could not maintain long conversations with their colleagues or clients because of their poor proficiency in English.

**I** : Do the business students have problems in explaining charts, reports and other business related procedures in English? Please do explain with examples.

**IS 3** : Yes, they do. They had difficulties interpreting non-linear texts.

**I** : Do the business students have problems reading written English reports /letters/memos/ Business proposals done by the company (the workplace of the students' internship)? If yes, what problems do they face?

**IS 3** : Students had difficulties in understanding the business terminologies as well as general vocabulary. Business students did not have a good command of English. They couldn't understand simple words written in the documents. Take a look at this example of letter (gives a letter to the interviewer). The students had to look up on the Internet the meaning of these terms as well as ask us for clarification. This situation frustrated us, as we had to explain each term in detail. Some of us had to translate those words to Malay.

**I** : Do the business students have problems writing English reports/letters/memos/ business proposals done by the company (the workplace of the students' internship)? If yes, what problems do they face?

**IS 3** : Yes, they do. I always advise them to check their documents in detail before submitting. I have encouraged them to check their spelling using online dictionaries or their smart phones. However, many students did not listen to this and many mistakes in their docs. It was very frustrating to read documents with spelling and grammatical mistakes. It takes longer time for us to read and comprehend those documents. Some of these students spelt some words according to the way they are pronounced. For example, ‘buy’ was spelt as ‘bye’, and negotiation was spelt as “negotiaation”. They weren’t aware that the spelling of certain words was different from their pronunciation. Plus, their reports, letters and emails were in broken English. They never use proper tenses and there were many words written in Malay. I often have to meet the students to ask them what they have wrote in their documents. At times, this frustrates me, as students will repeat the same mistakes again.

**I** : Do business students have problems understanding Presentations, Meetings and Discussion conducted in English? Please do explain with examples.

**IS 3** : Yes, they do. For example, some of the words used at the workplace are “payroll”, “turnover”, “payback period”, “repositioning”, “venture”, “capital” and ‘outsourcing’. Some words were simple yet he students failed to recognize the meaning. During presentations, business students will search meaning of the word on the Internet or ask for out help. This causes miscommunication and interrupts on-going presentation. Words like “they are”, “there are”, and “their” confuses them. Although they somewhat similar, each word has a different meaning. Moreover, the sentence stress, word stress and the pronunciation of certain words in English hinders business students’ understanding. Understanding different intonation

patterns and usage of stress gives clues to meaning. Thus, they should learn how to differentiate it.

**I** : Do the business students have problems understanding different accents and pronunciations of the clients? If yes, please explain the problems with examples.

**IS 3** : These students were considered as Freshers as they did not have any working experience. Because of this, they had major problems understanding their colleagues, clients and superiors. Although some students were good in English, they still faced difficulties with those clients who spoke very fast. The tone and modulation of speech hinder their understanding. Based on my observation, some business student would request the clients or colleagues to repeat their sentences or ask them to speak slowly. For example, “Madam, I don’t understand what you are trying to say”. “Please don’t speak too fast”. This to ensure they had understood their questions and could respond properly. Plus, these students would use non-verbal gestures such as nodding their head, most of the time pretending to understand the conversation. They will ask us to translate the clients’ utterances. Thus, they lose confidence in speaking English and can’t perform their task well. At times, we rather give instructions in Malay. Many of us don’t have the patience to explain every single thing in detail Malay and Manglish. From the interview, it was clear that business students preferred to respond in Malay and in Manglish. For example, “I akan update report itu petang nanti”, “I akan call client”, “You kena jumpa client dan supervisor”. It was clear that business students used the language that they knew and they were aware that if they spoke in English, miscommunication may arise and cause misunderstanding. In order

of us to get the job done, colleagues, clients preferred to speak in Malay or Manglish to ensure the business students understood our conversation.

**I** : Do the business students code switch between English and other languages while communicating with others at the workplace? When does it happen? Please provide examples.

**IS 3** : Based on my observations many business students code switched to their mother tongue because they were more confident in these languages compared to English. It very difficult for them to pronounce business terms in English and some did not know the appropriate words to use in English. Business students in this company prefer Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia because they were able to explain any business dealing to the clients. At times, business students felt clueless on how to give instructions or explain the business terminologies or words in English, therefore they used Mandarin or Bahasa Malaysia. They speak to the clients in their mother tongue or code switched just to ensure they were giving out the correct information and the right instructions. They are that they might leave out an important piece of information if they spoke only in English. Business students will only try their best to speak fully in English with clients from US, Australia, Germany, Britain and so forth, while clients from Malaysia, they often used colloquial English ( Manglish) or Malay. Business students should build their confidence to speak in English as the language would help them to deal with business and also to increase their chances of getting employed. When they faced local clients, they will speak in English. They would code mix the English language with Bahasa Malaysia if they have any problem. Students feel that clients will understand them better. This happens when the students and clients shared the same mother tongue. When both of

the client's and student's mother tongue is in Malay, they tend to code switch the language and interact. Some clients preferred to speak in Bahasa Malaysia because they felt that the negotiation process would be easier and information could be transferred easily. Some words can't be translated into Bahasa thus they code mix. These students were new to the working environment, therefore they code mix or code switch. Most of the students refused to speak in English because they were weak in the language. They preferred to speak in Malay and Mandarin or Tamil. Code switching was a normal practice in companies. Employees preferred to use Bahasa Malaysia or use their mother tongue when they interact.

**I** : What are the skills that need to be develop/ enhanced for the students to function effectively at the workplace.

**IS 3** : Everything. All skills. For speaking, students should engage in small talks and maintain long conversations is through communicating with colleagues and superiors on various topics. They need to express their views and ideas on various topics in English. These topics may include latest news in the market and latest trends. Telephoning skills and negotiating is important too. There is a situation whereby students needed to set an appointment with a client. One of the responses given by a student was Jap uh! I take your number now! Your name? From where? Students need to learn to speak politely on the phone. They should be able to take a message and leave a message on the phone. They need to learn suitable phrases for telephoning skills such as "I would like to speak to...please", "Would you mind....?", "Do you think you could....?", "I won't be able to attend ..because.."? These kinds of phrases sound more polite and create a good atmosphere for both parties on the phone. They need to know how to write business proposals,

letter, memos, e-mails and minutes of meetings. They should know the conventions of writing these documents. Need to learn how to write short and concise sentences so that their message is clear for the reader. It should be a) clear -the reader should be able to see exactly what you meant, b) complete- it must contain all necessary information, c) concise- it should have a straightforward message and not waste the reader's time, d) courteous- it must be written in a sincere and polite tone and e) correct- it should not be distracted by mistakes in grammar, punctuation or spelling.

**I** : In your opinion, how do you think the business students can improve their English language skills?

**IS 3** : Practice using the language on a daily basis.

**I** : Would having an English for Specific Purposes course help to improve the business students' English language skills? If yes, which skills would you like them to improve on?

**IS 3** : Of course it will. Speaking, reading, writing, listening, grammar and pronunciations.

**I** : If you were to design an English for Specific Purpose course for these business students, what areas/topics/skills (macro and micro) would you focus on?

**IS 3** : The course should include how to conduct an effective meeting. Many students are unable to engage themselves in a meeting. It is important for the lesson to introduce useful language for small talks and conducting effective meeting. Some of the activities that can be included are i) learning phrases and techniques for managing a meeting, ii) getting involved in a meeting which involves learning some techniques of interrupting and clarifying in a meeting, iii) brainstorming involves students learning the techniques of



generating ideas through brainstorming and finally iv) evaluating which involves learning useful phrases for making suggestions, agreeing and disagreeing. Moreover, students can learn the techniques of closing a meeting. These activities can be done in the form of a role-play or group work. Students can listen to telephone conversations and extracts from meetings. By listening to different kind of texts, students will be able to improve their listening skills. This can widen their knowledge.

**I** : Thank you for your comprehensive feedback.