

Challenges and Benefits of Learning Business English: A Learner-Centered Case Study at Madyathika Polytechnic

Artika Wina Fitriani¹*, Actinis Muqsitha Paradista²

Program Studi Sarjana Terapan Bisnis dan Manajemen Ritel, Politeknik Madyathika, Indonesia

Program Studi Sarjana Terapan Keperawatan Anestesiologi, Universitas Harapan Bangsa, Indonesia

*E-mail: artikawina05@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi tantangan dan manfaat belajar Bahasa Inggris Bisnis dari perspektif siswa, khususnya di Politeknik Madyathika. Dalam lingkungan global saat ini, bahasa Inggris sangat penting di tempat kerja, terutama dalam bisnis, meningkatkan pentingnya dalam pendidikan tinggi, terutama di sekolah kejuruan. Meskipun memperoleh keterampilan berharga, siswa menghadapi tantangan signifikan seperti kosakata bisnis yang terbatas, kurangnya kepercayaan diri berbicara, kurangnya paparan materi dunia nyata, dan tingkat kemahiran bahasa Inggris yang bervariasi. Penelitian ini melibatkan mahasiswa semester kedua Politeknik Madyathika sebagai partisipan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi kasus kualitatif untuk memahami pengalaman mahasiswa. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi kelas, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan siswa terpilih. Namun, temuan menunjukkan bahwa belajar bahasa Inggris bisnis memiliki keuntungan signifikan bagi siswa. Mereka meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi, meningkatkan kepercayaan diri dalam lingkungan profesional berbahasa Inggris, dan merasa lebih siap untuk pekerjaan di masa depan. Terlibat dalam diskusi, peran-peran, dan simulasi dunia nyata mendorong motivasi dan keterlibatan siswa.

This research explores the challenges and benefits of learning Business English from a learner-centered perspective, specifically at Madyathika Polytechnic. In today's global environment, English is vital in the workplace, particularly in business, elevating its importance in higher education, especially vocational schools. Despite gaining valuable skills, students face significant challenges such as limited business vocabulary, lack of speaking confidence, insufficient real-world material exposure, and varying English proficiency levels. The research involved the second semester students of the Madyathika Polytechnic as the participants. This research uses a qualitative case study method to understand students' experiences. The data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving selected students. Furthermore, the findings indicate that learning business English has significant advantages for pupils. They enhance their communication skills, boost confidence in professional English settings, and feel better prepared for future jobs. Engaging in discussions, role-plays, and real-world simulations fosters student motivation and engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

English has become the primary language used in international business communication in the age of globalization and fast economic integration. Global markets are becoming more integrated; therefore, people need to be proficient in both general and specialized types of communication, especially business English. ESP emerged in the early 1960s as a response to the increasing globalisation of world markets and the growth of English as a commercial lingua franca to facilitate this (e.g. Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) in (Hyland, 2022). Business English is a subset of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that includes the language traits, communication techniques, and contextual information required for professional interactions such report writing, negotiations, presentations, and cross-cultural communication. Business English is widely recognized as the official language of communication in multinational corporations and universities (McKay, 2002) in (Erkir et al., 2025). While debates persist over linguistic dominance, English remains the most commonly used language for international business, education, and commerce (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006) in (Erkir et al., 2025). In order to satisfy the expectations of the workplace, educational institutions, especially polytechnics, are obliged to provide students with pertinent Business English skills.

The goal of business English classes is to improve students' communication skills so they can succeed academically and professionally. These courses promote multicultural competency while concentrating on fundamental corporate writing abilities, such as creating reports, emails, memo, letters, proposals. Effective communication in English improves employability and enables students to thrive in global business settings (Smith-Worthington & Jefferson, 2018) in (Erkir et al., 2025). In order to provide students with the technical and linguistic skills necessary for success in today's interconnected professional world, business English must be incorporated into higher education courses.

As a vocational higher education school, Madyathika Polytechnic strategically prepares students for entry into the workforce right away. Because students are expected to gain practical communication skills that are in line with corporate demands, teaching and learning business English becomes extremely important in this context. Despite the significance of business English, many students face significant obstacles while studying it. These difficulties could be caused by non-linguistic elements like nervousness, lack of confidence, insufficient exposure to real-world business situations, and inefficient training techniques, as well as language limits like poor vocabulary and grammatical competence.

However, there are a number of advantages to studying business English that go beyond language proficiency. It increases students' employability, boosts their self-assurance in professional communication, and cultivates multicultural understanding and critical thinking. Additionally, learning business English makes it possible for students to participate successfully in multinational workplaces and access international employment prospects. These advantages imply that studying business English is still a worthwhile investment for students pursuing vocational education, notwithstanding the difficulties.

However, a crucial problem is that a lot of the current research on business English takes a teacher-centered or curriculum-focused approach, frequently ignoring the experiences, perspectives, and tactics of the learners. Learner-centered approaches, which prioritize students' perspectives, needs, and active participation in the learning process, have gained increasing attention in recent years. Designing successful instructional tactics and enhancing learning outcomes require an understanding of learners' viewpoints.

According to early assessments, students at Madyathika Polytechnic show differing levels of interest and difficulty when learning business English. While some students find it difficult to understand its relevance and intricacy, others see it as quite helpful for their future jobs. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of empirical research that methodically examines the advantages and difficulties of learning business English from the perspective of the students in this particular institutional setting. There is a disconnect between theoretical presumptions and real-world classroom experiences as a result of this absence of focused, learner-centered research.

Furthermore there are some studies conducted previously regarding the topic. This first study was conducted by Muhammad Sam Bahri with article entitled 'The Challenges of Teaching English for Business: A Case Study at LPP Quantum.' This study investigated the challenges faced in teaching English for Business (EFB) to students taking a vocational education program at LPP Quantum (Sam Bahri & Arina Luardini, 2025)

The second study was conducted by Bobokeldieva Maftuna Abdusamad qizi with article entitled 'The Importance of Case Studies in Teaching Business English.' This study explored the role of case studies in Business English instruction, analyzing their advantages, challenges, and implementation strategies. (Maftuna & Qizi, n.d.)

The third study was conducted by Viar Dwi Kartika with article entitled 'Perceived Challenges and Benefits of Business English Learning: A Case Study at Universitas Catur Insan Cendekia'. This study focuses on how fourth semester students in the Faculty of Economics and Business at Universitas Catur Insan Cendekia (UCIC) perceive about the English for Business course. (Kartika, 2025)

Previous researches have identified common challenges such as limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and insufficient exposure to authentic materials. Other studies have highlighted the benefits of Business English, particularly in improving employability and communication skills. The majority of the current research on business English has focused on curriculum design, instructional strategies, and teacher-centered instruction; learners' experiences and perceptions have received less attention. Additionally, few research have examined the advantages and disadvantages of learning business English concurrently in vocational education contexts. By using a learner-centered approach to investigate students' experiences at Madyathika Polytechnic, this study fills up these gaps.

The following research questions serve as a guide for this study in light of the issues that have been identified:

1. What challenges do the students at Madyathika Polytechnic encounter in learning Business English?
2. From a learner-centered perspective, what benefits do students perceive in learning Business English?

The implication of the research is expected to enrich understanding of learner-centered Business English learning by examining both its challenges and benefits in vocational education contexts and the findings may help teachers to develop more effective teaching strategies, relevant materials, and supportive learning environments. In addition, this study may serve as a reference for future research on learner-centered approaches in Business English and other ESP fields.

METHOD

This study uses a case study methodology with a qualitative research design. Because it enables a thorough analysis of participants' experiences, perceptions, and meanings regarding the phenomena being studied, qualitative research is chosen. A case study is a detailed, in-depth investigation of the development of a single event, individual or situation over a period of time, within a real-world context (Oranga & Matere, 2023). Case studies are often utilized to explore and lay bare complex medical conditions and social issues. The qualitative method is especially suitable for capturing the intricacy of students' difficulties and perceived advantages in learning business English in the context of this study. Qualitative research aimed to understand human or social phenomena by providing a detailed and thorough portrayal of individuals in real-world, natural settings (Royadi et al., 2019) and its goal was to describe and analyze social issues comprehensively (Fadli, 2021) in (Binti Abdullah & Andi Baso, n.d.).

Qualitative samples tend to be purposive rather than random. Samples in qualitative studies are usually not wholly prespecified but can evolve once fieldwork begins. The initial choices of participants lead you to similar and different ones; observing one class of events invites comparison with another; and understanding one key relationship in the setting reveals facets to be studied in others (Miles and Huberman, 2014) in (Bouncken et al., 2025).

The participants were selected purposively from second-semester students in Madyathika Polytechnic, all of whom had completed the English for Business course. A total of 60 students from three study programs, Business Management, Office Administration, Constructive Management were involved in this research. A purposive sampling technique is used to select participants who can provide rich and relevant information. The criteria for participant selection include: students who have taken or are currently taking Business English courses, students who are willing to share their learning experiences, students representing varying levels of English proficiency. To obtain comprehensive and credible data, this study employs multiple data collection techniques such as interviews, observation and field notes. The classroom observation was conducted within a month. During the study, the researcher

observed four business English classes' meetings to study the students' learning experiences, challenges and perceived benefits. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants, lasting approximately 20-30 minutes each. Semi-structured interviews are the primary data collection method. A set of open-ended questions designed to explore key aspects of the study. This technique allows the researcher to explore participants' experiences while maintaining flexibility to probe deeper into relevant issues. The interview questions focus on students' challenges, perceived benefits, motivation, and attitudes toward Business English learning. Classroom observations are conducted to gain insights into the actual learning process. A structured format used to record classroom activities and student behaviour. The researcher observes students' participation, interaction, and engagement during Business English lessons. This method helps to validate the data obtained from interviews by comparing what students say with what they do. Documentation includes relevant materials such as course outlines, teaching materials, and students' assignments. These documents provide contextual information that supports the analysis and interpretation of data. The main instrument in this study is the researcher herself, as is typical in qualitative research. The researcher plays a central role in collecting, analysing, and interpreting data.

The principles of the thematic analysis technique, such as coding of data, searching for themes, refining the themes, and reporting the findings, are relatable to other qualitative methods, such as discourse analysis (Flick, 2022) in (Naeem et al., 2023). Data analysis in this study follows a thematic analysis approach, which involves identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns within the data. The process consists of several steps: Data Familiarization, Data Coding, Theme Development and Interpretation. The researcher reads and re-reads interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data when doing data familiarization. Relevant data are coded into meaningful units. Codes are assigned to segments of data that represent specific ideas or themes. Codes are grouped into broader categories or themes, such as linguistic challenges, psychological barriers, and perceived benefits. The themes are interpreted in relation to the research questions and theoretical framework. From a critical perspective, thematic analysis allows for flexibility and depth. However, it also requires careful judgment to avoid subjective bias, which must be addressed through rigorous validation procedures.

Denzin (1978) in (Damico & Tetnowski, 2014), offered an additional explanation of the triangulation method. In general, he defined triangulation as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (1978; p. 291). He identified four types of triangulations: across data sources (e.g., participants), across data collection methods (e.g., observations, interviews, document analyses), across and among different data collectors (e.g., investigators), and across different theoretical perspectives (e.g., constructivist vs. behaviorist). Methodological triangulation was employed by the author. The author uses data collection methods as mentioned above, including interview, observation and document analyses. (Fitriani et al., 2025).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to the interview data, students at Madyathika Polytechnic generally have a positive opinion of the English for Communication and Business course. The majority of participants characterized the educational process as engaging, pleasurable, practical, and pertinent to future career preparation. The students admitted that the course helped them become more proficient communicators, particularly in speaking, pronunciation, business terminology, and formal communication.

Despite these positive perceptions, the interviews also reveal a number of difficulties that the students faced. Understanding business-related language, speaking insecurity, fear of making mistakes, pronunciation issues, and writing challenges are the most prevalent challenges. Another recurrent concern was anxiety during speaking exercises in the classroom and presentations. Overall, the results show that studying business English offers vocational students' substantial practical advantages while also posing linguistic and psychological difficulties that affect the learning process.

Thematic Examination of Interview Information

1. Students' Business English Learning Experiences

The majority of students found their English for Communication and Business classes enjoyable due to the inclusion of real-world exercises such as dialogues, presentations, and simulations. They reported gaining skills in product promotion, interviewing, and formal business communications. A key finding was that the hands-on, interactive learning environment fostered active participation, indicating that practice-oriented and learner-centered training enhances engagement and comprehension of business English applications.

2. Challenges Faced by Students in Learning Business English

The interviews revealed the main obstacles that students have when learning business English:

- a. **Difficulty Understanding Business Vocabulary:** Students frequently have trouble memorizing and pronouncing technical terms.
- b. **Speaking Anxiety and Lack of Confidence:** A lot of people were anxious and afraid of making mistakes when speaking, especially when it came to pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and peer evaluation.
- c. **Writing Difficulties:** Issues with formal business styles, sentence structuring, and spelling led to writing difficulties.

The classroom environment was noisy, making it difficult to focus during instruction. The results show that learning business English is greatly impacted by both linguistic and psychological aspects, such as anxiety and vocabulary mastery. The idea that emotive variables are important in second language learning is supported by the fact that speaking exercises may put students with little exposure to English under special pressure.

3. Students' Perceptions of Teaching Methods

The majority of participants found instructional strategies beneficial, particularly valuing speaking exercises, debates, presentations, and interactive activities. These approaches fostered active engagement and made learning more comprehensible. The results indicate that communicative and practical teaching methods enhance confidence and student participation, suggesting that business English instruction in vocational schools could greatly benefit from these methods.

This finding supports communicative language teaching theory, which emphasizes authentic interaction as a key factor in language acquisition. The results also reinforce the argument proposed by Sam Bahri (2025) that vocational students learn more effectively when English instruction is directly connected to workplace contexts and professional communication. Similarly, Kartika (2025) argued that practical and interactive teaching methods help students connect classroom learning with workplace communication needs.

4. Benefits of Learning Business English

The interviews highlight the main advantages of learning business English for students, such as enhanced communication abilities, greater self-assurance while speaking English, workplace readiness, and increased knowledge that opens up more career options. The results show that students consider business English to be crucial for professional development and employability, highlighting its academic and practical importance for vocational students.

This is supported by Smith-Worthington & Jefferson, (2018) who argue that Effective communication in English improves employability and enables students to thrive in global business settings.

5. Students' Motivation in Learning Business English

According to the research, students are strongly motivated by their aspirations for their future careers, which mainly center on enhancing their English language skills, succeeding in their careers, being ready for the working world, increasing their employment options, and honing their communication abilities. The primary motivator is found to be instrumental motivation, with students realizing that English is essential for both successful international communication and job progress.

6. Students' Suggestions for Improving Business English Learning

The interview findings demonstrate that Business English learning at Madyathika Polytechnic provides meaningful benefits for students, particularly in improving communication skills and workplace readiness. Students generally have positive perceptions toward the subject because the learning activities are practical, interactive, and relevant to real-life business situations.

The study identifies significant challenges faced by learners of Business English, including speaking anxiety, lack of confidence, limited vocabulary mastery, and pronunciation difficulties, which necessitate emotional and linguistic support. It highlights the effectiveness of communicative and

practice-based teaching methods in vocational education, with students responding positively to interactive classroom activities. Additionally, students are motivated by career-related goals, recognizing the importance of English proficiency for future employment. Despite challenges such as understanding business vocabulary and writing difficulties, benefits include improved communication skills and increased confidence. The findings emphasize the need for learner-centered, supportive teaching approaches to enhance learning outcomes and prepare students for professional communication.

The observation took place during the English for Communication and Business session at Madyathika Polytechnic. By analyzing student engagement, classroom interaction, learning behavior, and reactions throughout the teaching and learning process, the observation served to corroborate and authenticate the interview findings. The observation covered a number of topics, such as students' confidence, engagement, language challenges, instructional strategies, and perceived advantages of learning business English.

The learning environment was generally lively and participatory, according to the observations made in the classroom. During class activities, particularly speaking practice, role-playing, dialogue performances, group discussions, and presenting sessions, the majority of students shown excitement. When the speaker employed hands-on exercises that mirrored actual business scenarios, like interviews, business communications, presentations, and workplace discussions, the students seemed more engaged. This result corroborates the findings of the interviews, which revealed that a large number of students said the course materials were applicable to actual business settings and future career preparation.

Several students actively participated in speaking exercises during the observation at Madyathika Polytechnic, but many showed hesitation and anxiety when speaking in English, which is consistent with interview findings that speaking was their most difficult skill because of low confidence and fear of making mistakes. One of the challenges was new business language, which led to requests for translations and explanations from the teacher. Students needed help before turning in assignments like business emails because they had trouble with spelling, punctuation, and structure.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that students at Madyathika Polytechnic generally perceive learning Business English positively because it supports their communication skills, academic development, and professional readiness. Learner-centered and communicative activities such as presentations, simulations, discussions, and business communication practices were found to increase students' engagement and provide meaningful learning experiences relevant to workplace demands. However, students still encounter several challenges, including limited business vocabulary mastery, pronunciation difficulties, speaking anxiety, fear of grammatical errors, and low self-confidence during communication activities.

These findings indicate that both linguistic competence and psychological factors significantly influence students' success in learning Business English. The study also highlights the importance of practice-oriented and experiential teaching methods in vocational education. Therefore, it is recommended that the Business English curriculum at Madyathika Polytechnic provide more structured speaking practices, business simulations, role plays, and real-world communication tasks to improve students' confidence, fluency, and workplace communication competence. In addition, lecturers should create a supportive classroom atmosphere that reduces anxiety and encourages active participation.

This study is limited to a small number of participants within one vocational institution; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all Business English learners. Furthermore, the research focused mainly on students' perceptions without examining lecturers' perspectives or quantitative measurement of language improvement.

Future studies are recommended to involve larger participant groups, include multiple institutions, and combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain broader and more comprehensive findings regarding the effectiveness of Business English learning in vocational education contexts.

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