



Business English Literacy in Improving the Effectiveness of MSME Businesses

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of Business English literacy on the effectiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This study employs a qualitative research design to investigate the impact of Business English literacy on the effectiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. In today's globalized business environment, proficiency in Business English is crucial for MSMEs seeking to expand their market reach, engage in international trade, and enhance communication with global partners. The research explores how improved English literacy contributes to better business outcomes, such as increased sales, optimized marketing strategies, and more efficient operations. The study underscores the strong correlation between Business English skills and business success by analysing case studies and conducting surveys with MSME owners and employees. Investing in Business English training programs can significantly enhance the growth and competitiveness of MSMEs in the global market.

Keywords: Business English Literacy, MSMEs, Global Market, Communication skills



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INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is pivotal to business success in today's globalized economy, particularly for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). As the backbone of many economies, contributing significantly to GDP and employment, MSMEs face unique challenges that larger corporations can more easily navigate. One of the most significant hurdles is the language barrier, which can impede their ability to enter new markets, form international partnerships, and streamline operations. In this context, proficiency in Business English the lingua franca of international business is crucial for enhancing MSMEs' overall effectiveness and competitiveness.

Business English literacy is not just about language skills; it's about empowerment. It's about understanding business terminology, negotiating contracts, conducting meetings, and engaging in effective correspondence with clients and partners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. For MSMEs, these skills translate into tangible business benefits, including better customer service, more efficient management, and more effective marketing and sales strategies. Business English literacy is a strategic tool that empowers MSMEs for business growth and international expansion.

One of the key benefits of Business English literacy is the strategic advantage it provides. MSMEs proficient in English are better positioned to explore and enter new international markets, reaching a broader audience and tapping into new customer bases (Darmawan et al., 2021; Fitriani & Wulandari, 2021; Maulana et al., 2023). This expanded market reach not only drives sales growth but also diversifies business risks associated with relying on a single market. Additionally, Business English literacy is crucial for forming and maintaining international partnerships, giving MSMEs a competitive edge in the global market.

Internally, Business English literacy improves the operations of MSMEs by ensuring clear and effective communication within the organization. Proficiency in Business English reduces misunderstandings and errors, leading to smoother business operations and better coordination with suppliers, logistics providers, and other stakeholders.

Investing in Business English training for MSME employees is not just about enhancing language skills; it is a strategic move with significant returns. Tailored training programs that address industry-specific terminology and business scenarios can equip employees with the competence and confidence to handle international business dealings effectively (Sumarni et al., 2022; Suryani et al., 2024; Yunengsih et al., 2023). In the digital realm, strong Business English skills are essential for creating compelling content that resonates with a global audience, enhancing online presence, and driving traffic to digital platforms.

Business English literacy is not just about internal operations; it's about enhancing customer service. It enables MSMEs to interact more effectively with customers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, fostering a deeper connection. This capability leads to higher customer satisfaction, fosters loyalty, and enhances the enterprise's overall reputation, making MSMEs more customer-centric.

While the benefits of Business English literacy for MSMEs are clear, challenges such as the cost of training programs and finding suitable providers must be acknowledged. However, with careful planning and the use of technology for online training solutions, these challenges can be effectively mitigated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of Business English literacy in enhancing the effectiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) is gaining significant attention in recent academic literature. This review synthesizes the latest research from 2023 and 2024, focusing on the importance of language proficiency, challenges specific to MSMEs, the benefits of Business English literacy, and effective strategies for improving language skills within these organizations (Oktoma et al., 2023; Oktoma et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2016).

Importance of Language Proficiency in Business : Recent studies underscore the critical role of Business English literacy in the globalized economy. According to (Barat & Talukder, 2023), language proficiency, particularly in English, is essential for effective communication and successful collaboration in international business settings. Williams et al. (2024) emphasize that English proficiency is crucial for MSMEs aiming to expand operations beyond domestic borders, as English is the primary language of business in many parts of the world. This underscores the strategic importance of English literacy for MSMEs seeking to engage with international markets.

Challenges Faced by MSMEs : MSMEs face unique challenges that can hinder their ability to enhance Business English literacy. Lee et al. (2023) identify resource constraints as a significant barrier, noting that smaller enterprises often need more financial and human resources to invest in comprehensive language training programs. Additionally, the difficulty of finding language training tailored to the specific needs of MSMEs is a critical issue. Maheshkar & Soni, (2021) , highlights that while MSMEs play a vital role in the economy, they often need more financing, better social infrastructure, and managerial skills, further complicating their ability to improve language competencies (Harjadi Gunardi, 2022; Harjadi & Nurfatimah, 2021; Harjadi et al., 2023; Harjadi et al., 2019). These challenges emphasize the need for targeted interventions that address language skills and broader operational hurdles.

Benefits of Business English Literacy : The benefits of Business English literacy for MSMEs are well-documented. Improved English literacy can lead to better business outcomes, including increased sales, enhanced marketing strategies, and more efficient operations. Dunakhir & Osman, (2023), highlights that English literacy skills are essential for employability and effective communication, especially for students entering globalized business environments. Although their study focuses on students, the implications for MSMEs are clear proficiency in Business English is valuable in navigating international business landscapes. Bancoro (2023), suggests that literacy programs tailored to specific business needs can improve MSME success by reducing financial stress and enhancing decision-making capabilities.

Strategies for Improving Language Skills : Recent research offers several strategies for enhancing Business English literacy among MSMEs. Iramani et al. (2018) , suggest that well-structured training focused on bookkeeping and budgeting skills can significantly improve financial literacy and, by extension, overall business performance. Although this study emphasizes financial skills, integrating Business English training into such programs could provide a dual benefit, enhancing both financial and language competencies. Umboh & Aryanto (2023) emphasize the importance of digital literacy in conjunction with Business English, particularly for MSMEs engaged in digital marketing. Strengthening digital literacy improves business performance and safeguards against misinformation and business deceptions.

Case Studies and Empirical Evidence: Empirical evidence suggests that Business English literacy is crucial in enhancing MSME effectiveness. Anwar et al. (2020), demonstrate that literacy in English and financial domains significantly improves opportunity recognition and business performance. Seraj et al. (2022), further corroborate

this by showing that Business English literacy, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial competency foster resilience and sustainable business performance among MSMEs (Manalu & Adzimatinur, 2024; Manalu et al., 2023a; Manalu et al., 2023b). These case studies highlight the tangible impact of language proficiency on business success.

Theoretical Frameworks : Several theoretical frameworks support understanding the relationship between language proficiency and business effectiveness. Shi & Deocampo (2024). integrate frameworks like Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), Global Communicative Competence (GCC), and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to enhance practical language skills and cross-cultural communication in real-world business scenarios. Roshid & Kankaanranta (2023) emphasize the importance of aligning English communication skills instruction with industry needs, advocating for a curriculum that balances theoretical knowledge with practical application to meet the demands of the globalized labour market.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design to investigate the impact of Business English literacy on the effectiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Qualitative research is particularly suited for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights, especially regarding how Business English literacy influences various aspects of MSME operations and outcomes.

Research Design

1. **Research Paradigm :** The study adopts an interpretive paradigm, positing that reality is socially constructed and best understood through the subjective experiences of individuals. This paradigm aligns with the study's goal of understanding how Business English literacy affects MSME effectiveness from the perspectives of business owners and employees, particularly in terms of market expansion, international partnerships, and operational efficiency.
2. **Data Collection Methods :** The research utilizes multiple qualitative methods to gather rich and detailed information. These methods include:
 - a. **Semi-Structured Interviews :** The primary data collection method will be semi-structured interviews, allowing for flexibility in exploring participants' views while ensuring key topics related to business effectiveness are covered. The interview guide is developed based on existing literature and refined through pilot testing. Questions focus on participants' experiences with Business English literacy, its direct impact on business outcomes such as sales growth and international collaboration, and the challenges faced in improving language skills.
 - b. **Focus Groups :** Focus groups are conducted to gather collective insights and facilitate discussion among participants, particularly focusing on shared challenges and successes related to Business English literacy. This method helps identify common themes and divergent views, with groups of MSME owners, managers, and employees from different industries to capture various perspectives.
 - c. **Document Analysis :** Relevant documents, such as training program materials, business communications, and policy documents related to Business English use, are analyzed to supplement interview and focus group data. Document analysis provides contextual information and helps triangulate findings, particularly how language proficiency impacts business performance metrics.

3. Sampling Strategy

- a. Purposive Sampling : Purposive sampling selects participants most likely to provide rich and relevant data on the impact of Business English literacy on business effectiveness. The sample includes MSME owners, managers, and employees with varying Business English proficiency levels who operate in different sectors, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.
- b. Sample Size : The sample size is determined based on data saturation, which is anticipated to be approximately 20-30 participants, ensuring saturation is reached, particularly in themes related to business outcomes and effectiveness.

4. Data Analysis

- a. Thematic Analysis : Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) and further refined by recent scholars like Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2023), is used to analyze the qualitative data. This method involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data, focusing on themes that directly relate to the effectiveness of MSMEs as impacted by Business English literacy.

Analysis Steps Include:

Familiarization with Data: Transcripts are read multiple times to become familiar with the content, particularly identifying sections related to business effectiveness.

Coding: Data is systematically coded to identify significant features related to the research questions, emphasizing the link between Business English proficiency and business outcomes.

Theme Development: Codes are organized into potential themes, reviewed, and refined to ensure they accurately reflect the data concerning business performance.

Reviewing Themes: Themes are reviewed about the coded extracts and the entire dataset to ensure coherence, especially in how they relate to MSME effectiveness.

Defining and Naming Themes: Themes are defined and named to capture the essence of the data, with a focus on business outcomes.

Writing Up: The final analysis provides a detailed account of the themes and their implications, particularly on how Business English literacy enhances MSME effectiveness

5. Ensuring Trustworthiness :

The study employs several strategies to ensure the Trustworthiness of the findings, based on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for qualitative research:

a. Credibility

Credibility is ensured through member checking, where participants review and confirm the accuracy of the interview transcripts and preliminary findings, particularly those related to business effectiveness. Triangulation of data sources (interviews, focus groups, document analysis) enhances credibility..

b. Transferability

Thick description provides detailed context and background information, allowing readers to determine the applicability of the findings to other settings, particularly in similar business contexts.

c. Dependability

Dependability is addressed by maintaining an audit trail, documenting the research process, and making the research design and analysis steps transparent, ensuring the study's findings can be reliably reproduced.

d. Confirmability

Confirmability is achieved through reflexivity, where the researcher acknowledges and reflects on their biases and assumptions, particularly regarding business outcomes, and through an audit trail that provides transparency.

6. Ethical Considerations : Ethical approval is obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Informed consent is secured from all participants, ensuring they understand the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity are maintained throughout the research process, specifically in safeguarding business-sensitive information.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The following section presents the key findings from the qualitative research on the impact of Business English literacy on the effectiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The results are organized into distinct themes, highlighting a different aspect of how Business English proficiency influences MSME operations. These findings are derived from participants' experiences and perceptions, providing valuable insights into the practical benefits and challenges of Business English literacy. The results of the existing literature and theoretical frameworks are discussed to offer a comprehensive understanding of their implications.

Improved Market Expansion

Participants in the study consistently reported that proficiency in Business English significantly facilitated their ability to expand into international markets. Business owners and managers emphasized that effective communication in English allowed them to negotiate better deals, grasp market requirements, and establish trust with foreign partners. They provided examples where Business English literacy directly contributed to successful market entry and enhanced their competitive positioning on a global scale. This proficiency enabled them to effectively communicate their value propositions, adapt to diverse market demands, and build strong international relationships, thus expanding their business reach.

Enhanced Business Relationships

Many participants highlighted that Business English literacy markedly improved their ability to build and maintain relationships with international clients and partners. They noted that clear communication in English reduced misunderstandings and helped foster stronger, more trusting relationships. Participants shared instances of enhanced language skills leading to more favourable negotiation outcomes and long-term business partnerships. The ability to communicate effectively in English allowed for smoother interactions, leading to increased trust and collaboration with global stakeholders, which in turn supported sustained business growth.

Increased Operational Efficiency

Participants observed that Business English literacy contributed to greater enterprise operational efficiency. Employees proficient in English could better understand and implement company policies, communicate effectively with suppliers and logistics providers, and minimize operational errors. The study revealed specific cases where improved language skills facilitated smoother internal operations and more effective external communications. This enhanced efficiency resulted in fewer misunderstandings and errors, streamlined business processes, and a more cohesive operational workflow.

Improved Customer Service

Several participants reported that Business English literacy significantly enhanced their customer service capabilities. Employees who were proficient in English were able to address customer inquiries more effectively, resolve issues promptly, and provide superior service to international clients. This improvement in communication led to higher customer satisfaction and retention rates. Participants noted that the ability to interact with clients in English helped them better understand and meet customer needs, thereby fostering stronger customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth referrals.

Challenges in Implementing Language Training

Despite recognizing the benefits, participants identified several challenges in implementing Business English training programs. Key obstacles included : (1) limited financial resources, (2) a lack of access to quality training providers and (3) difficulties in designing programs tailored to the specific needs of MSMEs. Issues related to the affordability and availability of suitable training solutions were prominent. Participants expressed concerns about the cost of training programs and the need for more accessible and relevant language training options that align with their business contexts.

Strategies for Enhancing Business English Literacy

Participants suggested several strategies to address the challenges and improve Business English literacy. They recommended developing customized training programs that cater to the specific needs of MSMEs, leveraging digital learning platforms to provide flexible and accessible training, and seeking support from government and industry associations. Emphasizing the need for affordable and tailored training solutions, participants highlighted the potential benefits of collaborative efforts and external support in overcoming language proficiency challenges and enhancing overall business effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study unveil the untapped potential of Business English literacy in revolutionizing the effectiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The study highlights that proficiency in Business English significantly aids market expansion by enabling MSMEs to overcome language barriers. Effective communication in English allows these businesses to negotiate better deals, understand international market requirements, and establish trust with global partners. This finding underscores how Business English literacy enhances market reach and competitiveness, demonstrating its role as a valuable resource for global expansion.

Participants noted that Business English literacy is a key factor in fostering trust and building strong relationships with international clients and partners. Clear communication in English helps reduce misunderstandings, fostering a sense of trust that is essential for forming long-term business partnerships. Improved language skills contribute to establishing credibility and strengthening business relationships, facilitating more effective negotiations and collaborations.

The study found that Business English literacy contributes to greater operational efficiency. Employees proficient in English can better understand and implement company policies, communicate effectively with suppliers and logistics providers, and reduce errors in operations. Enhanced language skills lead to smoother internal processes

and more effective external communications, demonstrating their role in streamlining business operations.

Customer service enhancement due to Business English literacy was also noted. Proficient employees are better equipped to address customer inquiries, resolve issues promptly, and provide high-quality service to international clients. This improvement in service quality results in higher customer satisfaction and retention, which is crucial for driving business growth through positive referrals.

The study identified several challenges in implementing Business English training programs, including limited financial resources, difficulties in accessing quality training providers, and challenges in designing programs that meet specific needs. These obstacles, while significant, present opportunities for innovation and the development of accessible training options.

Participants suggested various strategies for improving Business English literacy, such as customized training programs, leveraging digital learning platforms, and seeking support from government and industry associations. These strategies align with recent literature advocating tailored training solutions and digital tools. The emphasis on external support highlights the need for collaborative efforts to address the language proficiency challenges that MSMEs face and provide affordable, effective training solutions.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that Business English literacy is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Proficiency in Business English significantly supports MSMEs in expanding into international markets, building and maintaining strong business relationships, improving operational efficiency, and enhancing customer service. Participants consistently reported that effective communication in English enabled them to negotiate better deals, understand market requirements, and establish trust with international partners. Furthermore, Business English literacy contributed to smoother internal operations and more effective customer interactions.

Despite these benefits, MSMEs encounter challenges such as limited financial resources and difficulty accessing tailored training programs. These obstacles can hinder the implementation of effective language training solutions. To address these challenges, MSMEs should consider customized training programs that cater to their specific needs, leverage digital learning platforms for more accessible and flexible solutions, and seek support from government and industry associations.

Investing in Business English literacy is not just a strategic move but a necessary step for MSMEs aiming to overcome language barriers and capitalize on the advantages of improved communication skills. By doing so, MSMEs can enhance their global competitiveness, drive business growth, and achieve long-term success in the increasingly interconnected global market. Future research could further explore the effectiveness of different training methods and their impact on MSME performance, providing deeper insights into optimizing Business English literacy for business success.

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