

IDENTIFYING STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEEDS: DIGITAL BUSINESS STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

ROMADHON

Politeknik Piksi Input Serang
adhonnro@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examined the English language needs of students studying digital business, aiming to clarify their difficulties and provide recommendations for educators and policymakers. English is essential for communication between multinational corporations, start-ups, and freelancers in the digital business sector, making collaboration, communication, and information sharing easier. Students from various linguistic backgrounds may struggle to assimilate to English language requirements for their academic and professional tasks. The lack of knowledge on the specific English language requirements of students studying digital business was the cause of the current research gap. This study reveals that digital business students prioritize speaking skills, particularly in phone conversations and meeting discussions, as they are crucial for real-time interactions in the digital business environment. Writing skills are deemed less important, with 15% deemed very important. This suggests a shift towards skills better suited for immediate, interpersonal exchanges. The students also rank the functions of English language proficiency most frequently employed in their daily tasks, such as answering meeting questions, participating in discussions, speaking to foreigners by phone, answering working interview questions, scheduling appointments, writing CVs and application letters, writing reports, and responding to emails. The most prominent issues identified were presenting project/term papers orally, executing simulation tasks, attending group talks, and accurately speaking words. Listening skills were also identified as significant, with 55% of respondents stating their difficulty in capturing lecture notes via listening. Reading and analytical skills were identified as the most challenging, with 55% identifying key parts in texts and 35% predicting new vocabulary interpretations from context. Writing skills were identified as the most challenging, with 40% stating their difficulty. These findings emphasized the need for tailored approaches to enhance academic success and prepare students for the dynamic communication demands of the digital business world.

Keywords: business digital students, language learning needs, ESP

INTRODUCTION

Today's globalized culture places a high value on language proficiency, particularly in the field of online commerce (Ushioda, 2017). Due to the ongoing change of industries and the expansion of interconnected networks as a result of technological breakthroughs, English language proficiency is now a need for students who want to pursue employment in the digital business sector (Bergson-Shilcock, 2020). In order to effectively satisfy the different linguistic demands of the students in this topic, it is essential to recognize and comprehend their specific English language needs. The purpose of this essay is to examine the demands of students studying digital business in terms of their English language ability. This study aims to clarify the difficulties they encounter and provide informative recommendations for educators and policymakers.

Students must have a solid command of the English language because the business world has experienced significant change as a result of the rapid improvements in digital

technologies (Taillefer, 2018). In the field of internet commerce, English is used as a universal language for communication between multinational corporations, start-ups, and independent freelancers. Collaboration, communication, and information sharing are all made simpler by this (Hariharasudan & Kot, 2018). As a result, students pursuing a degree in digital business are immersed in a setting that requires not just technological proficiency but also English communication abilities and a comprehension of complex concepts.

A detailed approach is necessary to comprehend the English language requirements of students studying digital business. The procedure begins by acknowledging any linguistic difficulties that students may experience (Ibrahim et al., 2023). It may be challenging for the numerous students from various linguistic backgrounds who enrol in Digital Business department to assimilate to the English language requirements for their academic and professional endeavours. Language barriers may make it more challenging for some persons to comprehend difficult concepts in the English language, engage in productive conversation, and confidently express their ideas. The purpose of this article is to identify the particular subject areas in which students struggle by analyzing their points of view. It will be simpler for educators to offer supportive systems and tailored treatments as a result.

Additionally, understanding the unique linguistic requirements specific to each subject is greatly aided by the viewpoints of students studying digital business (Rao, 2019a). The lexicon of the digital business sector consists of a distinct set of terms and specialized language that encompasses concepts linked to electronic commerce, data analysis, online marketing, and information security. One needs to be fluent in these specialized words to speak effectively inside the particular industry. Through their own experiences, students can provide insight into the precise language skills they feel are required for success in their future occupations, such as mastery of professional writing, negotiation abilities, or presentation skills. By identifying these needs, academic institutions can modify their curricula to give students the linguistic abilities they require to flourish in the realm of digital commerce.

It has been extensively researched how English is acquired in a range of situations, including academic, professional, and digital ones (Tomlinson, 2023). However, little research has been done on the specific English language requirements of students studying digital commerce. Despite numerous studies looking at language requirements in more general corporate contexts (Li, 2014; Mognhode & Woldemariam, 2015; Taillefer, 2018), the specific difficulties and needs of academics in the field of digital business have not received enough attention.

The importance of having high English language skills in the context of commercial and professional settings has been emphasized in previous studies (Roshid & Kankaanranta, 2023). Language barriers, more specifically difficulties with vocabulary acquisition, correct grammatical usage, and effective communication, have been described as the challenges non-native English speakers experience in professional contexts. Academic research has also looked at the influence of technology on the process of language acquisition as well as the potential of digital tools and resources to enhance language proficiency (Chun et al., 2016). However, the aforementioned research programs have not yet given particular attention to the English language requirements of students studying digital business.

Lack of knowledge of the particular linguistic constraints and requirements that students of digital business must cope with is the cause of the current research gap. Data analysis, information security, digital advertising, and electronic commerce are just a few of the specialized disciplines that fall under the umbrella of "digital business," each of which has

unique linguistic requirements (Hendricks & Mwapwele, 2023). A full investigation of the special vocabulary and jargon specific to digital business has not yet been done, despite past research examining language requirements in traditional business situations.

The purpose of this study is to fill a research gap and offer significant insights on the English language requirements of students studying digital business. The purpose of this study is also to pinpoint the particular linguistic barriers that people encounter by examining their viewpoints, experiences, and expectations. Along with identifying the critical specialized language abilities they believe are necessary, it also tries to discuss the students' preferences which can be facilitating language learning. By filling in this information gap, researchers may create focused interventions and specially crafted language-learning programs that can successfully impart English language proficiency to students of digital business. This would enable them to excel in their field of work.

METHOD

A descriptive qualitative research method was used in this study. Since this study's explanation involves a thorough explication of the nature of the phenomena, qualitative research is the most appropriate research approach to apply (Creswell, 2022). In gathering the data, the researcher utilized a questionnaire adapted from a needs analysis questionnaire developed by (Workineh, 2018). This questionnaire was adapted and modified based on the components of investigating ESP needs (Prachanant, 2012). The researcher also modified the language written in the questionnaire to be simpler and more readable for the students. The questionnaire consisted of 3 parts. In the first part, it was intended to know the students' English language skills need. In the second part, it was intended to know the Functions of English language that students' use in the class and the last part was about the problems encountered by the students in their English language learning. The research data was obtained from a sample of 20 students in the digital business department at Politeknik Piksi Input Serang. These students were in their second and fourth semester of the academic year 2022/2023. The data analysis was conducted through data collecting, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2020). All the data then were analyzed qualitatively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion of this study are based on the responses to a 38-question questionnaire.

FINDINGS

Each tool utilised in this study is meant to address a specific research question on how digital business students see the value of English language proficiency, what concepts students need in ESP material, and how they have difficulties learning English. The researcher utilised Google form that was accessible online to distribute the questionnaire.

The English Language Skills Need of Digital Business Students

The first part of the questionnaire asks students studying digital business their opinions on how important English language proficiency is. The following table shows how respondents' responses were distributed:

Table 1. The English language skills need of digital business students

No	English Language Skills	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Less Important	Not Important
1	Listening	8 (40%)	6 (30%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)
2	Speaking	12 (60%)	6 (30%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3	Writing	3 (15%)	6 (30%)	7 (35%)	4 (20%)	0 (0%)
4	Reading	6 (30%)	7 (35%)	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	0 (0%)
	Total	29 (36.3%)	25 (31.3%)	17 (21.3%)	9 (11.3%)	0 (0%)

The results highlight a clear emphasis on "Speaking" skills among the Digital Business students, with a substantial 60% indicating it as very important. This underscores the paramount significance of verbal communication in their academic and future professional contexts. Conversely, "Writing" skills were deemed less crucial, with only 15% marking it as very important. This disparity could reflect a pragmatic approach, acknowledging the heightened demand for real-time interactions in the digital business realm. Moreover, the pronounced preference for "Speaking" aligns with the fast-paced nature of business environment (Kankaanranta & Salminen, 2013), where effective oral communication is indispensable for negotiation, collaboration, and problem-solving. The distribution of responses indicates a recognition of the diverse communication demands within their field of study and future careers.

Functions of English Language Needs of Digital Business Students

The findings of the Digital Business Students' ranking of the functions of English language proficiency that are most frequently employed in their daily tasks are displayed in table 2.

Table 2. Need in ESP material of digital business students

No	English Language Skills / Scenarios	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Less Important	Not Important
1	Able to ask and answer meeting questions	6 (30%)	6 (30%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)
2	Participating in meeting discussions	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)
3	Speaking to foreigners in English by phone	7 (35%)	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)
4	Able to answer English working interview questions	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)
5	Able to schedule appointments with foreigners	6 (30%)	5 (25%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)
6	Able to write CV and application letters	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)
7	Able to write reports	7 (35%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)
8	Writing and responding to emails	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)
	Total	45 (28.1%)	45 (28.1%)	26 (16.3%)	34 (21.3%)	15 (9.4%)

The results indicate that Digital Business students place considerable importance on skills related to effective communication within various business scenarios. Notably, being able to speak to foreigners in English by phone (35% rated as very important) and participating in meeting discussions (25% rated as very important) emerged as the most vital language skills for these students. Moreover, skills like writing reports and writing and

responding to emails received varying degrees of importance, with 35% and 25% respectively indicating them as less important. Interestingly, a notable preference towards oral communication skills is evident, showcasing a proactive approach in scenarios involving verbal interaction. Overall, these findings underline Digital Business students' recognition of the significance of effective communication (Rao, 2019), with a clear inclination toward honing skills that directly involve interpersonal interaction and potentially impact business outcomes.

Problems Encountered by Digital Business Students

This section outlines the issues that students of digital business face while learning English in a classroom.

Table 3. Speaking skills difficulties of digital business students

No	Speaking Problems	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Presentation of project/term papers orally	8	40%
2	Executing simulation tasks /interviews/role plays/dialogues	5	25%
3	Attending group talks	3	15%
4	Saying what you want fast	2	10%
5	Saying words accurately	2	10%
	Total	20	100%

The findings shed light on their perceived challenges in the area of speaking skills within the classroom. Notably, the students identified "Presentation of project/term papers orally" as the most prominent issue, with a substantial 40% indicating its significance. Following closely, "Executing simulation tasks/interviews/role plays/dialogues" garnered 25% of responses, highlighting its relevance in honing practical communication skills. Moreover, "Attending group talks" (15%) and "Saying what you want fast" (10%) were also recognized as noteworthy areas of concern. Interestingly, "Saying words accurately" received equal emphasis, also at 10%. These findings reflect a comprehensive insight into the specific speaking challenges students encounter in an academic setting, offering valuable guidance for tailored educational strategies.

Table 4. Listening skills difficulties of digital business students

No	Listening Problems	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Capturing lecture notes via listening	11	55%
2	Understanding accented conversations	3	15%
3	Comprehending class lectures	7	35%
	Total	20	100%

The survey results highlight distinct listening challenges encountered by students in the classroom. "Capturing lecture notes via listening" emerged as the most significant hurdle, with a notable 55% of respondents indicating its difficulty. "Comprehending class lectures" followed closely behind, with 35% of respondents acknowledging its challenges. Conversely, "Understanding accented conversations" was identified as a listening problem by 15% of students, indicating that while it presents a challenge, it is comparatively less formidable.

These findings underscore the need for tailored support and strategies to enhance students' listening skills in academic contexts.

Table 5. Reading skills difficulties of digital business students

No	Reading Challenges	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Analyzing diagrams and figures	2	10%
2	Quickly identifying key parts in texts	11	55%
3	Predicting new vocabulary interpretations from context	7	35%
	Total	20	100%

The results reveal distinct challenges related to reading and analytical skills faced by students in the classroom. "Quickly identifying key parts in texts" emerged as the most prevalent difficulty, with a significant 55% of respondents highlighting its challenges. Following closely, "Predicting new vocabulary interpretations from context" was acknowledged as a concern by 35% of students. In contrast, "Analyzing diagrams and figures" presented challenges to a smaller percentage, at 10%. These findings underline the importance of tailored approaches to enhance students' reading and analytical capabilities, particularly in swiftly comprehending text and contextual vocabulary interpretation.

Table 6. Writing skills difficulties of digital business students

No	Writing Challenges in the Classroom	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Writing phrases with proper punctuation, grammar, and spelling	3	15%
2	Creating paragraphs and organizing ideas	8	40%
3	Notetaking from books, texts, articles, tables	1	5%
4	Summarizing thorough reports/notes	3	15%
5	Making reports, memos, company correspondence	5	25%
	Total	20	100%

The finding indicated that "Creating paragraphs and organizing ideas" is identified as the most challenging writing skill, with 40% of respondents indicating its difficulty. "Making reports, memos, company correspondence" follows with 25%, while "Writing phrases with proper punctuation, grammar, and spelling," "Notetaking from books, texts, articles, tables," and "Summarizing thorough reports/notes" present challenges to 15%, 5%, and 15% of students, respectively.

DISCUSSION

The outcomes of this study indicated the Digital Business students' discerning approach to English language skills. The resounding prioritization of "Speaking" skills as highly important (60%) indicates their acute awareness of the value of real-time verbal interactions in professional contexts. On the other hand, the comparatively lower emphasis on "Writing" (15%) suggests a shift towards skills better suited for immediate, interpersonal exchanges. This nuanced perspective aligns well with the rapidly evolving digital business landscape, where virtual meetings and dynamic discussions dominate. These findings signify the

importance of tailored language curricula that resonate with the students' preferences while aligning with the demands of their future professional roles (Hossain, 2015). Balancing communication skills to encompass both verbal fluency and written proficiency will likely better equip these students for comprehensive success in the digital business area.

It also underscores the nuanced preferences of Digital Business students regarding English language skills. The emphasis on speaking skills, particularly in phone conversations and meeting discussions, resonates with the practical nature of the business landscape, where real-time communication and collaboration are vital (O'Daniel & Rosenstein, 2008). The comparatively lower prioritization of writing skills suggests a potential shift towards oral communication's dynamic demands. This aligns with the contemporary business environment, where virtual interactions often dominate (Okonkwo & Awad, 2023). However, it's important to recognize the multifaceted nature of language skills; neglecting writing and other forms of communication could hinder comprehensive proficiency. In conclusion, these insights advocate for tailored language learning programs that align with students' needs while emphasizing the holistic development of all language facets crucial for success in the digital business arena.

To sum up, these findings collectively emphasize the diverse and complex nature of language skill challenges encountered by digital business students. In terms of speaking skills (Table 3), it is evident that "Presentation of project/term papers orally" stands out as a significant difficulty. Moving to listening skills (Table 4), "Capturing lecture notes via listening" emerges as the most prominent challenge. In reading skills (Table 5), "Quickly identifying key parts in texts" is identified as the most significant challenge. Lastly, in writing skills (Table 6), "Creating paragraphs and organizing ideas" is the primary challenge. Addressing these challenges effectively requires a multifaceted approach that includes targeted instruction and support for oral communication (Diachkova et al., 2021), listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing proficiency (Mauludin, 2021). Such an approach will not only enhance academic success but also better prepare students for the dynamic communication demands of the digital business world (Yoestara, 2017).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study was undertaken to gain insights into the specific needs, functions, and challenges of English language learning among students of Digital Business. The goal was to establish a foundation for gathering a broader range of input to shape the content, design, and implementation of an English language program tailored to these students.

While it's important to note that this study does not aim to encompass the entire scale of students studying Digital Business, the researcher believes that the selected sampling frame provides a reasonably representative sample of those studying in Indonesian universities offering Digital Business programs. A needs analysis is a crucial step in curriculum development and is a prerequisite for syllabus development in English language teaching.

The insights derived from this study can serve as valuable guidelines for designing a specialized English language syllabus for students of Digital Business, with the ultimate goal of enhancing their language skills and competencies. It is expected that the conclusions drawn from this investigation will prove useful to policymakers, planners, and relevant educational institutions, providing them with a clearer understanding of the English language requirements for students studying Digital Business in Indonesian universities.

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