

**NEEDS ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATIVE NEEDS OF THE COMMERCE STUDENTS OF PAKISTAN IN ESP
CONTEXT**

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This study is an analysis of the communicative needs of the undergraduate commerce students in Pakistani context, in which needs analysis is conducted and the areas for improvement in the curriculum and pedagogical strategies for teaching of English are highlighted in light of ESP theories.

1.1 INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

This study falls in the area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which is viewed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) as an approach to language teaching in which learner's reason for learning is the core element of deciding the content and the teaching methodology.

It is a common observation in Pakistan, that when the graduates of Business or Commerce step into the field after completing their education, they are unable to perform successfully. This inability to perform productively is not because they do not have the professional knowledge, but because they lack the communicative skills necessary for their field. It is a great dilemma of Pakistani education system that we are unable to groom the brilliant, intellectual young business professionals, who have a complete mastery over their field, but could not fully make use of their efficiencies because they lack in communicative skills.

The focus of English Language Teaching worldwide is changing from Traditional Syllabus to the more Communicative and Learner Centered syllabus. But unfortunately in Pakistan, the focus has yet not changed and its consequences are quite visible that even after completing higher education and studying English for so many years, the young Business professionals are facing problems in their practical field, just because they are lacking essential communicative skills.

This study is an effort to view the current situation that whether the Undergraduate Commerce students are satisfied with the existing English syllabus as far as their communicative needs are concerned. It is an effort to analyze the actual communicative needs of the Undergraduate Commerce students, to recommend what exactly their required English syllabus is in the current global scenario.

The advancement and development in the field of communication has made this world a global village. The population of this global village can be called as a global community. The people in this community have different languages, but in order to communicate among the people of different languages, a common language or lingua franca is required. Presently, English is serving as the global language, international language or in other words, lingua franca.

Crystal (1997) believes that English has become the dominant language in more than 60 countries of the world and is spoken in every continent. Moreover, British Council has reported that the number of speakers of English as a second language is exceeding than the speakers of English as a first language.

During the last century, the technological inventions like Internet, fax, e-mail, mobile phones etc. have facilitated communication among people of different languages all over the world. This globalization and technology has linked people together and this linking language is English.

Crystal (1997) is of the view that all the scientific and academic advancement in the world as well as more than 80% of the information available on electric retrieval system is represented in English language. It clearly shows the importance of English as Lingua Franca in the global village.

1.2 AIMS

This study aims to:

1. explore the English language needs of undergraduate Commerce students i.e. what are their requirements of communication, and analyzing what sort of English syllabus is required for them.
2. find out the deficiencies in the existing syllabus of English for B.Com, in an ESP perspective.
3. elicit information on students' perception of language needs.
4. recommend the changes in the existing course of English for B.Com, depending on the findings of the study.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study will provide a survey of whether our students of B.Com think that existing syllabus of English is fulfilling their needs of communication or they are not satisfied with it. Other researchers interested in ESP or more specifically EBP in Pakistan can make use of the findings of this study in their work. It can even provide an insight into the need of change in perspective of teaching English in different contexts, in Pakistan.

This study can be helpful for the HEC in determining whether there is a need to change the content of English for B.com and if yes, then what areas do they need to focus more. Educationists can make use of these findings in modifying and improving the existing English syllabus for B.Com.

The survey (needs analysis) can be helpful for the teachers of B.Com English in finding out the needs, interests and requirements of their learners. So they can focus the required area more and modify the existing syllabus and their teaching methods depending on the communicative skills required by their learners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

This section summarizes all the related literature reviewed regarding the entire key topics directly related to this study. It includes the opinion of experts in the field and other related research studies. The sources of this study were books, articles, online journals and some previous researches.

ESP, English for Specific purpose, as the name suggests is the teaching of English for specific purpose and to achieve specific objectives. More precisely, it is the teaching of English for vocational or professional purposes. Tom Hutchinson and Alan Walters in *English for Specific Purposes* (1990 - CUP), described ESP as a framework in which the decisions about the content and pedagogical methodologies depend on the learner's purpose of learning the English language.

Strevens' (1988) definition makes a distinction between four absolute and two variable characteristics. The Absolute Characteristics define what ESP comprises of; i.e. all the contents of the syllabus are designed according to the learner's specific need. The theme and the topics of the content are related to specific occupation. Variable characteristics further narrow down ESP and consider that the language skills must not be taught rather learnt according to the specific methodology.

Dudley and Evans modified Strevens' definition of ESP in 1997, and refined the absolute Characteristics. They have suggested that ESP can be defined to meet the specific communicative needs of the learners, making sure that all the activities incorporate the language appropriate in terms of registers, language skills, grammar, lexis, function and genre.

Hence, ESP aims at designing curriculum for specific disciplines, incorporating specific situations for teaching English language, following different pedagogical techniques from General English and intended specifically for adult learners who already have the knowledge of the language system, based on the learner's need.

David Carter(1983) has distinguished ESP types as English as a restricted language, English for Academic and Occupational Purposes and English with specific topics.

Strevens (1977) states that ESP situations can be distinguished by two core divisions; English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) on one hand and English for Educational Purposes (EAP) on the other. The curriculum dealt by EOP prepares students for lucrative employment in occupations. (Anthony 1997). Learners are being taught in a situation in which they use English as part of their work or profession. However depending on the priorities whether the learners are learning English prior to, during or after the time they are being trained in their profession, there will be differences in courses. The content of English program for someone actually engaged into the profession will be different from the learner who is learning English before getting into the profession.

EAP is the teaching of English at educational institutes based on the skills required for the student's studies. The syllabus of EAP is based on the specific disciplines when the student is specializing in a specific genre at higher levels.

The core term of ESP is needs analysis, which in the linguistic context is viewed as the analysis of the specific needs of the foreign language. Needs Analysis provide a set of procedures to analyze the learner's needs and reason to learn a foreign/ second language. According to Nunan, needs analysis serves three main purposes. It provides a mean of obtaining wider input into the content as well as designing and implementation of a language program. Needs analysis can also be used in developing goals, objectives and content along with it can provide data for reviewing and evaluating an existing program.

Needs analysis procedures made their appearance in language planning during the 1970's. In other areas of adult learning, such procedures have a long tradition. With their adoption and

espousal by the Council of Europe's modern language project, their use in language teaching became widespread. Needs analysis is used as the initial process for the specification of behavioral objectives in these Council of Europe documents. More comprehensive features of the syllabus such as function, notions, topics, lexis and structural exponents are derived from these objectives.

EBP is the English, specially related to international trade. In other words, it is the English designed specifically for the business related individuals according to their needs of communication. The term business communication refers to any communication used to promote a product, a service or organization with the objective of making scale. During the last few decades, explosion in the field of business and communication technology has revolutionized the field of ELT and has radically shifted the attention of the course designers from Teaching English for Academic purposes to the Teaching of English for more Specialized Purposes

In the last few years, first and second language acquisition research into language teaching have led to an increased interest in investigating the most effective ways of improving the ability of workers in using English for Specific Purposes in the work place.

EBP is a dynamic and growing field in the world of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). With the globalization of trade, companies and individuals are now turning towards educational specialists from the field of ESP, or more specifically EBP.

Many non-native English speakers study EBP with the goal of doing business with English speaking countries or getting better jobs in multinational companies or working with companies located in non-native English speaking areas, but nonetheless, using English as a shared second language. English For Business Purpose Courses can play a significant role in developing a clear understanding of how to use International English as a tool for business, as well as interpersonal communication. EBP means different things to different people. For some, it focuses on vocabulary and topics used in the world of business, finance, trade and international relations. For others, it refers to the communication skills needed for typical business communication, such as business presentations, negotiations, meetings, correspondence, official writings etc.

Business communication encompasses a huge body of knowledge including marketing, branding, advertising, customer dealings, interpersonal communication, and online communication etc. whatever form it takes, the objective remains the same i.e. to make a sale. Hence, the importance and need of English for Business Purposes in today's global business environment is more than ever and EBP courses are required to improve the business communication.

Here, an important issue in the Pakistani context is that the educational policies in Pakistan have never been constant. The status of English language has been changing from time to time. Earlier, it was taught just as a subject. And this subject was not offered below the primary level. So, at that time, English was considered a foreign language and no serious effort was made to make the students of Pakistan learn this language. In fact, they were just introduced to the literature in another popular language

In the past, just the elite class and the bureaucrats in Pakistan spoke English. And no need of learning English was felt. Later, English medium schools grew like mushrooms in Pakistan. These English medium schools have, at the same time, benefited and spoiled the status of English in Pakistan. They benefited the English in Pakistan, in the sense that ordinary people, for whom English became the status symbol, also started giving these English medium schools importance. And there was an urge to learn this language among the common men in Pakistan. Hence, the attitude towards learning English language shifted gradually and changing the status of English from foreign to second language.

But this fact is also not ignorable that there are very few quality English medium schools. Most of them are just making business of the name English medium, and the students of these institutes are unable to write or speak in English even after completing their studies.

Another very important issue regarding the need of EBP in Pakistan is that our syllabus and books are structure based i.e. they aim to teach the structure and grammar of English language. And no importance is given to the communicative skills. As a result, our students can read English, to some extent they can write in English but they can hardly speak in English. Our education system is planned so that our students, who have a lot of potential, get highly qualified in their respective fields, yet can not communicate effectively in English. Although, their medium of education is English, still they are unable to use this language in their respective professional contexts.

In this scenario, we need to make our learners realize the needs and requirements of learning English language. We need to develop communicative skills among the professionals in their professional context. Most of our highly qualified business, marketing and commerce graduates of the well-known institutes feel difficulty to communicate in English as they step into the practical field.

So, we need to focus on designing and organizing business English courses, to develop effective business communication skills, in order to make our businessmen compete with the international market. In this, importance of learning business English is inevitable and ignoring this will ruin and harm not only the business personnel but economy of Pakistan also. Functional-notional syllabus focused on what the learner needed to do with the language. It was suggested by Finocchiaro and Brumfit that this type of syllabus placed 'the students and their communicative purposes at the center of the curriculum'. (p. 37)

Whereas, Johnson, K. (1982) explained it as "Functional/communicative syllabus adds to rather than replaces the traditional/structural syllabus". The most useful model for analyzing linguistic needs is Munby's *Communicative Syllabus Design* (1978).

Johnson (1982) argued against structural syllabus "they do not allow you to see the practical applications of the language to real life." Functional syllabus teaches the language structures better than the traditional/structural syllabus, because it allows the learner to use these structures in their real life. Structural/traditional syllabus teaches the "rules of grammar" only and the functional/communicative syllabus the "rules for use". Mastery of both is essential for language proficiency.

Abdul Hafeez (1997) in his research *the need of introducing communicative syllabuses for teaching English in Pakistan* found that the communicative syllabuses can cater for the needs of the learners and so it is strongly recommended that communicative syllabuses should be introduced for teaching English in the country as these syllabuses pay due attention to all the language skills and can prepare students to use the language for communicative purposes.

Sheba R.Dayal (2005) in her study *English language learning in the ESP context-an Indian experiment* found that learners showed dissatisfaction with the present course and felt that it does not help them for their future needs. Regarding their perception of language needs, the students felt that they need English for formal and social situations. They ranked the speaking and listening skills as the most needed skills for success.

Ghulam Mustafa Mashori in his research *Some Principles For Designing Communicative Course* found that the principles of setting goals, keeping the objectives in mind, finding the needs,

choosing the right kind of syllabus, emphasizing language use and skills, choosing appropriate themes and topics with proper language functions, the structures, appropriate tests according to the teaching, are very much essential and needed in course designing.

Aleem Shakir and Sadia Haider: in their research *Towards designing for front office department staff at Pakistani hotels*. Had recommended that there is a need to modify the existing syllabus to communicative according to the professional communicative needs of the learners.

A.J. Gillett in research *Designing an EAP Syllabus: English Language Support for Further and Higher Education* suggested that in an EAP course there should be four main sections to the course from which material should be selected depending on student needs and interests. The four main sections were: Academic writing, Academic listening, Academic reading and Seminar skills

All these previous research studies prove the importance of need to change the traditional English courses to more specific ESP courses, to meet the learner's communicative needs. This study is also an attempt to look closely the current status of undergraduate commerce students' communicative needs and their perception about their current English syllabus.

3. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

The main aim of this study is to know the communicative needs of the undergraduate commerce students. A study was conducted to identify the learners' communicative needs. The sample was administered by the questionnaire, which consisted of close-ended questions to find the perception of the students on language ability, language need and their opinion on English as language for communication.

3.1 Population and Sampling:

The target population of this study is all Undergraduate Commerce students of the colleges affiliated with the University of the Punjab. The sample consisted of 80 students enrolled in the II year B.Com in three-degree colleges affiliated with the University of the Punjab, in the district of Lahore. Sampling was done on the basis of convenience of the researcher.

3.2 Instrument:

The required information was extracted directly from the subjects instead of any informants. The only instrument used for this study is a set of questionnaire designed to gather information about the learners' communicative needs. It was a subject-based instrument, i.e. it was to be filled by the subjects themselves. The subjects were required to response in a written form on the questionnaire. It was a closed-ended questionnaire, having selection type items.

The instrument of this study was self-developed and was administered to check the validity and reliability through a pilot study. The required information about the learners included their demographical information as well as their opinion about the kind of content they think is required in their English syllabus and their opinion about the existing English syllabus of B.Com. Questionnaire was the best-suited instrument regarding the validity of our conclusions about the required data.

The questionnaire had two sections. Section A covered the Demographic details of the learners, like on medium of instruction, mother tongue, educational background, etc. Section B contains questions about learners' current situation of communication and Section C deals with the learners' perception of communicative needs and pedagogy of English. Hence, this questionnaire covers all the main points required for needs analysis in an ESP context, i.e. needs, wants and lacks.

It was a reliable instrument as the results obtained were consistent. And a valid instrument too, because it gave us the exact information we required. There was no ambiguity in interpretation of the items in questionnaire. The subjects did not find any difficulty in interpreting the questions.

The instrument was administered in the classrooms of B.Com Part II, of the degree colleges affiliated with the University of the Punjab, in the district of Lahore. Data was collected only once by the researcher from the subjects by meeting them personally.

The data collected was first coded and then statistically analyzed. The results of the needs analysis are shown in the form of tables. It was a Categorical data and Interpretation of data was done by percentages and bar graphs.

4. FINDINGS:

The analysis of Section A of questionnaire shows that the sample consisted of heterogeneous group of students coming from both Urdu and English medium, with different educational background. Little number of students had attended any English course, which could have been an intervening variable in this study.

SECTION A

Gender	Male 37.5%	Female 62.5%	
Age	15-20 73.75%	21-25 26.25%	
Educational Background	FA 30%	FSc. 36.25%	I.Com 33.75%
Medium of Instruction at school level	English 45%	Urdu 55%	
Spoken English course	Attended 17.5%	Not attended 82.5%	
Institutes	Hailey College of Commerce 43.75%	Leadership College of Commerce 13.75%	Leads Institute of Commerce 42.5%

SECTION B

Sr. No.	Questions	Options					
		Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking	Grammar	Presentation
1	The most emphasized skill in existing syllabus of English	10.5%	29%	5%	4.5%	45%	6%
2	The most ignored skill in existing syllabus of English	5.2%	4.8%	8%	56.5%	2%	23.5%

3	The most required skill in English for the profession you want to opt.	1.6%	10%	3%	62%	1.4%	22%
4	The skill you lack the most.	1.3%	2%	3%	71.7%	2%	20%
5	The skill which must be focused more.	1.2%	3%	7%	67%	1.8%	20%

SECTION C

Sr. No	Questions	Options	
		Agree	Disagree
1	Do you think your existing syllabus of English has enabled you to communicate well?	15.6%	84.4%
2	Existing syllabus of English fulfills the communicative needs of the profession you want to opt?	23%	77%
3	Existing syllabus of English needs to be changed?	83.5%	16.5%
4	Do you think you can communicate well in English and give presentations in English?	18.6%	81.4%
5	Do you feel you face problem only in oral communication, and can do well in written communication in English?	78.6%	21.4%
6	Do you think that the teaching of English in classroom should be based on lecture method and solving grammatical exercises?	10.4%	89.6%
7	Do you think that the teaching of English in classroom should be based on discussions and presentations?	85%	15%

The findings of the study indicate that our syllabus of English for Commerce students targets grammar and writing skills only, paying no heed to the most required skills i.e. speaking and presentation. Further, it is evident through the analysis of this study that the majority of the sample believes that they lack in speaking skills the most, which again is an alarming statement for the course developers of English for Elementary level as well that the students feel difficulty speaking English at Graduation level. It refers to the lack of skill teaching at Elementary level too.

Moreover, the findings of the study indicate that majority of the learners believe that the syllabus content and pedagogy of English must focus on developing the Speaking and presentation skills in students rather than the structural contents.

5. Conclusion

This study is a preliminary step towards identification of the language needs for English of B.Com students studying in degree colleges affiliated to the University of the Punjab as perceived by a sample of 80 students. The findings indicate that knowledge of English is a decisive factor for success and that a general English course does not help students achieve the required proficiency in English language. The survey conducted in this particular course i.e. B.Com suggests that the learners have a very clear idea of their needs and wants of language.

Hence all these findings prove that the existing syllabus of English for B.Com is based on structural and traditional approaches of teaching English, and this existing syllabus is not satisfying the communicative needs of the learners. The study proves that the undergraduate commerce students want a change in their English syllabus from traditional to the more communicative one. In light of this data analysis, the change in English syllabus and pedagogy from structural to more communicative is strongly recommended. As per requirements of the needs of learners, they must be taught not just to comprehend English language, but to speak and communicate well.

So, it is concluded that the curriculum designers must take into account this need of the students and must develop such a curricula and pedagogical strategies through which the learners may not only have command over English language, but they may be able to converse and present their ideas in public speaking, paving their way for a successful future.

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