

Students' Perception on Learning Business French subject: A needs analysis approach

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Abstract

This paper examined the current teaching process of Business French subject in Mandalay University of Foreign Languages (MUFL). The study was conducted on 49 students from final-year French major of MUFL to analyze their perceptions on current situation of Business French learning whether the subject can effectively impact on students' satisfaction. The result of the questionnaires was evaluated by quantitative method approach that is easy to evaluate needs of the students. Based on data analysis of the questionnaires, it was found that (1) regarding the purpose of learning Business French, students want to add a more specific focus on their language proficiency; (2) the students prefer practical exercises rather than theoretical learning when they study Business French; (3) engaging with News, Journals, Internet online related documents is really effective in teaching process; (4) the students are really interested in lessons of intercultural communicative competence and (5) the overall outcome of learning Business French meets the students' learning target. The overall results in this study indicated that the students' perception on learning Business French was positive.

key words: Business French, needs analysis, effectiveness and communicative, outcome of learning Business French

Introduction

Today, Language is important in communicating with each other in society. The major languages including English, Chinese and French are particularly significant and valuable for the purpose of expanding business environment. The second most learned language after English is French language due to extreme effect of geographical spread for trade and investment matters. In this connection, French language has played an important role as a second language and has developed for communicative prospects in business environment.

As a result, Business French is especially necessary for office communication procedures such as email writing and business networking but also making advanced business meeting, negotiating in trade and investment agreement that is mainly used in international networking. Thus, the importance of Business French is dramatically increased and it will be able to improve relationships and networking in the business world. The main reason of Business French is to improve student's communication skills and to boost their professional skills for their future career. Therefore, today Business French Language teaching should be included topics not only basic four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing for business letters and emails and also practical exercises like group work, presentation and situational dialogue.

Furthermore, another reason of learning Business French is for the students who want to add a more specific focus to their language proficiency. In Myanmar, Business French module was officially approved and operated at Yangon and Mandalay University of Foreign Languages in 2014. After a period of 6 years, it is needed to periodically determine and evaluate whether the Business French teaching is in accordance with the latest development trend or not. This study evaluated final year students' satisfaction in quality of module, faculties' proficiency and teaching material and so on. In detail, the study mainly focuses current situation and requirements in Business French module in MUFL in line with the students' perception on future development in business communication in today's economy.

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Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this research is to contribute further development in teaching process at MUFL to meet students' needs. This study examined the current situation of learning Business French based on the students' perception, and recommends for further improvement in teaching process.

Research Questions

To achieve its aim and objective, this study has developed the main research questions:

1. What is the students' main reason to learn Business French as a subject?
2. Which items are the effective way of learning and the outcome of Business French from the perspectives of students' satisfaction?

Literature review

There are several studies that focus on the effectiveness and student's satisfaction of Business French subject. In this study, the literature review will be presented with reviewing existing different literatures and findings done by various scholars. The study will be able to fill the gap in the literature in the area of students' perception on learning of French language from the effective teaching perspective. This literature review will examine an argument approach on how Business French is important into integrating of French language and analyses students' attitude on learning and to determine their ability and wiliness to learn toward further improvement in teaching.

This study is framed within students' perception on learning Business French with needs analysis regarding their reflections on the subject. French is the leading language in Europe (Shryock 1997-2008), and it is also official language in 29 countries. It has a long history as a second language of many countries and international organizations including United Nations. In 2011, the Bloomberg stated that the French language ranked third useful language for business after English language and Chinese.

Dudley-Evans (1998) and Weng (2009) mentioned that Business language is especially necessary for business trade and investment activities. In the past, French language teaching mainly depended on traditional method to focus student-oriented learning. But today teaching methods have been changed by new and updated technologies. Thus, teachers should consider new technology, method and sustainable learning to enhance effective teaching (Chen 16-33). Tira NurFitria (2019) stated that new technology approach would affect both teacher and students in practical learning in Business French. Liu (2010) illustrated that the way of Business language is needed for reforming and adjusting in curriculum, teaching methods and creating better teaching materials.

In term of communication, Ellis & Johnson (2003:3) stated that the effective communication skill and ability is particularly needed in business environment. Munby (1978) pointed that teaching process should be in accordance with students' needs such as learning motivation, satisfaction and fulfill their study objectives. Concerning needs analysis, Ellis and Johnson (1994) suggested that needs analysis is to identify the students' necessity of future development in learning. In addition, Hamp-Lyons (1999) and Sullivan & Girginer (2002) also stated that needs analysis mainly studies the students' perceptions or experiences of specific focus on the courses.

The study discussed needs analysis framework and ideas from the paper on Empirical Study on Business English Teaching and Development in China- A needs analysis approach was written by Dai Guiyu and Liu Yang (2016) with the review of the development history of Business English in China. The study also referred some literatures and discussions from MUFL who emphasis the effectiveness of teaching Business French module.

Methodology of the study

The quantitative approach and analytical and descriptive styles were engaged in this study. Participants in this study were final-year (1st Semester) students of French major at MUFL. Questionnaires were completed by online survey, after the 1st semester of the academic year 2019-2020. Data were collected through students' questionnaires which investigated their attitudes towards learning Business French. The questionnaires were administered to the 49 students. This study will not discuss re-engineering teacher's structure, rebuild of teaching curriculum, any change of module hour limitation and also the teaching policies. So, this research proposes alternative approach in learning Business French for students studying French for both short-term and long-term with enhancing relations between teachers and students.

Needs analysis on Business French learning

The study referred needs analysis framework by the Dai Guiyu & Liu Yang (2016) mentioned in the paper of "An Empirical study on business English teaching and development in China- A needs analysis approach". Definition of needs analysis refers to the methods through interviews, questionnaires and other means of research methods can be realized to investigate the objective of learning. Long (2005) stated that teaching process of Business language needs to focus on students' needs for effective learning. This study takes the needs of individual students and to adjust the arrangement of teaching method like team-based, problem-based and case-based in classroom learning.

Questionnaire design

The data collection from the survey was conducted on 49 postgraduate students from final-year French major in March 2020 at Mandalay University of Foreign Languages. The questionnaire consists of five parts. The *first* part is about the objective to learn Business French; the *second* part is about practical learning of business French subject like other subjects; the *third* part is about classroom materials which are the most necessary for learning Business French; the *fourth* part is about students who want to learn from Business French subject and *finally* the study focus on overall satisfaction of learning business French subject followed by discussion and recommendation.

Table-1 Overall questionnaire on students' perception on Business French learning

No.	Questionnaire	Agree (n,%)	Disagree (n,%)	No opinion (n,%)
	Purpose of learning			
1	Business French is aimed for students who to add a more specific focus to their language learning.	40 81.6%	9 18.4%	-
	Practical learning Business French subject			
2	You think more practical exercise are necessary than theory during Business French course.	45 91.8%	4 8.2%	-
	Classroom teaching materials			
3	Engaging with French television, film, radio and literature is the most effective way for learning.	47 95.9%	2 4.1%	-
	Want to learn from Business French subject			
4	You want to learn Practical business skills like situational dialogue.	47 95.9%	2 4.1%	-
	Learning outcome			
5	You think learning Business French is effective.	43 87.8%	6 12.2%	-

Results Analysis

A total of 49 students responded to the questionnaires. As a result of the quantitative methods study and analysis of the questionnaires, the students' perceptions related to the outcome of business French learning were observed. According to needs analysis theory, Mundy (1978) pointed out that study should be included student's communication needs. Thus, the students' learning motivation found in this study and research statistics are illustrated as following:

A. Students' Perceptions on the purpose of learning Business French

Table-2 Q1: What is your purpose of learning Business French

Purpose of learning	Numbers	Percentage (%)
You want to add a more specific focus for language learning.	35	71.4%
You want to improve personal exchange and partnership.	8	16.3%
You want to get ability for applying jobs.	6	12.2 %
Total	49	

The result of question 1 shows that 71.4 % of total students had the main purpose of learning business French as a more specific focus for language learning. From Table-2, it can be seen that 8 students chose the purpose to improve in personal exchange and partnership, which take up 16.3 % of total. 6 students 12.2 % of them want to get ability for applying job as the reason of studying Business French subject.

B. Students' Perceptions on the practical learning of Business French

Table-3 Q2: What do you think the practical learning of Business French subject is

Practical learning	Numbers	Percentage (%)
More practical exercise than theoretical	32	65.3%
Combination of theoretical and practical	10	20.4%
You want more theory	7	14.3%
Total	49	

Table-3 shows that the most students admitted that they want more practical exercise rather than theoretical ones in learning Business French, which accounted for 65.3 % of total students. It was seen that the reason why they are more actively motivated with practical exercise in the classroom. On the other hand, 10 students chose combination of theoretical and practical exercises and 7 students chose they want to study more theory in class teaching, 20.4% and 14.3 % respectively.

C. Students' Perceptions on the teaching materials

Table-4 Q3: Which teaching material is more effective for Business French subject

Teaching materials	Numbers	Percentage (%)
Engaging with video films and audiovisual	10	20.4%
Engaging with News, Journals, Internet online related documents	35	71.4 %
Textbook, dictionary	4	8.1 %
Total	49	

From table-4, we can see that 71.4 % of the students are relatively satisfied with engaging with News, Journals, and internet online and related documents is the most effective way of learning. Among them, 10 students are satisfied with engaging with video films and audio visual, which accounted for 20.4%. In addition, 4 students which accounted 8.1 % were satisfied with using textbook and dictionary.

D. Students' Perceptions on what they want to learn from Business French subject

Table-5 Q4: Which item do you want to learn from Business French

Learning items	Numbers	Percentage (%)
Business knowledge and skills	6	12.2 %
Business intercultural communicative competence	34	69.4 %
Practical Business skill like situational dialogue	9	18.4 %
Total	49	

Table-5 illustrates that 34 students want to learn Business intercultural communicative competence, which takes up 69.4 % of the total. 9 students who chose their desire in practical business skill like situational dialogue and percentage is 18.4 %. Among them 6 students want to learn business knowledge and skills which is 12.2 % of them.

E. Students' Perceptions on the outcome of learning Business French subject

Table-6 Q5: After completion of the subject, what do you think learning Business French is effective.

Learning outcome	Numbers	Percentage (%)
Very much satisfied	40	81.6 %
Moderately satisfied	5	10.2 %
Dissatisfied	4	8.2 %
Total	49	

Seeing the result in table-6, we could say that most students are satisfied with their Business French subject learning. On the other hand, 5 students chose moderately satisfied and 4 students chose dissatisfied with Business French subject which were 10.2 % and 8.2 % respectively.

Discussion

Through the above analysis of the data from the questionnaires, following findings can be identified.

Students chose Business French with the aim to add a more specific focus to their language learning. However, the students do not consider improving their ability for applying jobs. In the aspect of practical learning of Business French, students from MUFL demonstrated their interest in practical exercise than theoretical in the class. In terms of teaching materials, the most students are relatively satisfied with engaging with News, Journals, and internet online and related documents and it can be seen that it is the most effective way of learning. In addition, the most students want to learn intercultural communicative competence and it was seen that they are really interested in communication. Finally, with the overall satisfaction of Business French subject, the questionnaires showed most of the students are relatively satisfied in this subject.

Based on the above findings, following suggestions could be made:

Firstly, for the improvement of purpose of learning of the students, the current teaching mode can be added, that is, to encourage not only to add more specific language learning but also to apply of their future career development. Secondly, considering student's needs for practical exercise, more group discussion and case-study should be created so that their quality should be improved in communication and presentation skills. Thirdly, as for teaching materials, current teaching materials should be maintained and also try to add more quality and latest contents as possible, so that students can learn the most update teaching materials such as the most updated News, Journals, and Internet online and related documents. In addition, the Business French subject should focus on practicality is always concern, because students can apply their knowledge in future work. Fourthly, in terms of their needs to learn intercultural communicative competence, the subject should be included practical business skills such as situational dialogue, business negotiation, business letters, business etiquette and other practice and training to improve communication skills. It is necessary to satisfy students' needs and at the same time to promote their speaking abilities. At last, in terms of overall satisfaction, most of the students are relatively satisfied with the contents of subject, however, business French teachers' performance should be sustainable and improved in knowledge, teaching style, teaching attitude, language proficiency and interpersonal relationship with students. Furthermore, teaching methods and processes should be also upgraded in line with students' needs.

Conclusion

The study administered online questionnaires to 49 students at the MUFL and found that the students' overall satisfaction with a Business French subject delivered in a practical exercise mode was higher than that delivering theory in the class. More specifically, the students reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction with teaching materials, motivation, and perceived level of knowledge acquisition in the business communication with 'the range of interactive, stimulating and engaging activities'.

The abroad aim of this research is to provide findings and recommendations from an academic point of view for the consideration of future developments of learning Business French. It has been pointed out that students have positive attitudes towards learning Business French, using an active learning. The data from the study showed that the learning Business French is effective according to students' learning purpose and objectives, teaching method, materials and students' satisfaction based on the questionnaires from the Business French Final year student of MUFL. After detail analysis of the data, it is hoped that in the future, the Business French should be emphasized in the teaching mode using practical group discussion, updated teaching materials, effective communicative lessons and teaching method and processes.

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