Development and Contextualization of ESP course Material for Bangladeshi Merchandisers: An Exploratory Study

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Development and Contextualization of ESP course Material for Bangladeshi Novice Merchandisers: An Exploratory Study

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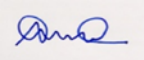
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.



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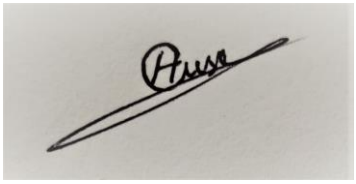
DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.



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Abstract

This study aims to investigate what are the types of ESP materials that can be developed in order to improve the English language usage skill of the Bangladeshi merchandisers. It also tried to investigate the possible needs and scope of contextualization of the material in order to serve the purpose of the merchandisers in the best possible manner. RMG sector is the most revenue earning sector and it is going from strength to strength by contributing to our economy. English being a lingua franca, the most commonly used language (except the 1st language) in this business sector. However, the lack of good communication skills hampers the growth of this sector and also the career of the merchandisers as individuals. Such scenarios made it important to explore the possibilities of making the merchandisers master the language by the help of best possible material. In order to conduct the research, the researcher applied a mix method approach to collected data. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews whereas the quantitative data were collected using a survey questionnaire. For both types of data collection, merchandisers of different rank and level played the role of the participants. Through this research it was reflected that the merchandisers are in need of ESP courses for their professional growth. The outcome of the study showed many possible task types that can be included in the material to provide superior learning experience for the local merchandisers. It also showed possible scope of contextualizing the developed material according to Bangladeshi learning context.

INTRODUCTION

English is a global language that has widespread usage all over the world. English is a language that is building bridges between different cultures, communities and the economy. The popularity of English as a lingua franca has eased global communication a great deal. Having proficiency in English is also considered as a quality that helps individuals to flourish in their respective fields. This is where the role of ESP comes into play. ESP stands for English for Specific Purpose that refers to domain oriented usage of English Language. Different occupations demand a different nature of language usage. The English used by the teachers share some differences with the English used by the bankers. Similarly, the government officials have their ways of using English as a language. As a language, English is common for people of all occupations. However, specific professions have specific needs. Therefore, use of English has distinctive roles and characteristics for different professions. Tasks like report writing are very common in a financial institution whereas presentations, academic essay writing are more frequent for the teachers. ESP courses train professionals from different backgrounds emphasizing their occupational needs.

Success of an ESP course depends largely on the material that we use for that particular course. Teaching techniques applied by the instructors, academic background and intelligence of the course participants play a crucial role in the overall outcome of the course (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). However, the course material works as the principal driving force for an ESP course. Wrong selection of material can spoil the game despite having all the other facilities available. It is important to conduct a need analysis prior to the beginning of the course. At times, it is difficult to find a tailor made material for a specific group of learners. So, the material use for an ESP course often requires adaptation and contextualization. Adaptation refers to the modification of a material considering the needs and necessity of the target learners. Through adaptation, the course instructor tries to optimize the learning experience of the learners. Degree

of adaptation and nature of adaptation will certainly vary on the basis of the participants of the course. One material that might be useful for a certain group might not prove to be handy for the other ones. On the other hand, contextualization is also a form of adaptation where we try to modify the material considering the setting and context in which we will be using the material. For example, a reading text that might be useful in Spanish context might not bring the same outcome in Bangladeshi context. Nature of the assigned task and task variation is also a part of the contextualization process. A contextualized material makes the learners feel comfortable while learning and also ensures proper scaffolding through well synchronized activities.

As different professions demand different types of English usage, the role of an ESP course gathers further significance. If we consider the Bangladesh context then we will see that there are many professions that require good English skill to flourish. The Garment industry is one of the major driving forces of the economy of Bangladesh. This sector saw its birth in the post independence period and since the 80's it started becoming the major contributor of our economic growth. One of the reasons behind the growth of this industry is the availability of cheap labor and raw material materials. Such added advantage ensures the production of the products at a relatively cheaper price and this is what makes Bangladesh a popular destination for the international buyers. Many renowned brands use Bangladesh as their destination to produce their goods. This is a win-win situation for both the buyers and producers and this section has created massive employment opportunities for the people of Bangladesh. However, this sector can grow further in our country.

Merchandisers are the people who build the bridge between the buyers and the factory owners. They play a crucial role in attracting the buyers from different countries. With the rise of competitors like India, China, Vietnam, the role of the merchandisers are gaining more significance day by day. It is also becoming increasingly important to make sure that the buyers are well communicated with the necessary details. Merchandisers are responsible for making the buyers visit the factory, showing them the products and the production process, giving them information regarding the cost, delivering presentations for the buyers, preparing reports and sending emails etc. Moreover, their role is not limited to that and this is what makes the introduction of an ESP course really important. A well English course for the merchandisers can have a far reaching effect on the business and the economy as a whole.

My personal experience was the reason behind choosing this area. I have many relatives who are working as merchandisers in different garments. They work really hard but I have also seen them struggling and through observation, I did realize the gap that they are facing. Traditionally, merchandisers are from diverse academic backgrounds and their academic qualification also varies a great deal. With experience, they develop better expertise but when it comes to foreign buyers, their knowledge of English becomes a big barrier to their success. As this profession requires domain specific knowledge, a good English course can help them build up sound communication skills in English. This is what made the researcher interested in this study as she wanted to explore the existing ESP materials for the merchandisers and the scope for modification of those materials.

Goals and Objective:

Garments industry of Bangladesh is a sector where English is used in high frequency and English language use plays a crucial role in the business and business communication at the same time. Merchandiser's role is not limited to the marketing and sales of the product. Rather they play significant role from the scratch and even in the administrative part, they perform their role. Merchandisers often receive training for their professional development but the development of their English language proficiency gets overlooked. These days, not only the buyers but also the top management also gets hired from the non Bangladeshi experts. As a result the local merchandisers often struggle to convey their planning despite having the necessary expertise and experience of their respective field. Language becomes a major barrier as they are from different academic background. Moreover, the Bangladeshi education system is designed in such a way that it doesn't really emphasize the development of English speaking and listening skill. This is where the role of ESP material and training comes into play.

Through this research work, the researcher wanted to explore the scopes where the merchandisers can receive ESP training. He also wanted to explore the existing ESP material can be contextualize and adopted to cater the need to the target group. Through this work, the researchers also wanted to collect the opinions of the merchandisers so that such materials can be developed and taught that will help the cause in the long run.

Research Questions:

1. What are the problems do the merchandisers face while using English language at their workplace (garments industry) focusing on all 4 language macro skills? Which skills are more frequently used?

2. What specific items can be included in the ESP materials for the Bangladeshi merchandisers? How the materials can be contextualize to cater the need of the merchandisers?

3. Should commercial organizations like garments need to organize ESP Courses for their employees in Bangladesh? What are the things that need to consider while executing such courses?

Literature Review

English for Specific Purpose (ESP)

ESP stands for English for Specific purpose and ESP focuses on teaching English considering the needs of the learner groups. In this changing world, the popularity of English as a language for global communication is increasing day by day. The necessity for learning this language is also making an upward move. ESP is a concept that refers to the material and course that is customized considering the learner's needs and also the teaching pedagogy. ESP and ELT are significantly different where ELT focuses on language teaching and ESP focuses on the language teaching related to a specific professional domain. Paltridge (2014) defined ESP by saying that ESP is the teaching of English but it emphasizes the language of a particular domain. ESP helps the learner to use the language both academically and professionally (Basturkmen, 2010). One of the core concerns of ESP is to orient the employees with job related English. ESP attempts to provide hands- on experience of communicative approach and by doing that it helps the learners to cope up with their professional environment in a more acceptable way (Huhta, et al., 2013). No doubt that ESP is a useful English course but the effectiveness of such a course depends on multiple factors. An ESP material can be a very good material but the concern is, how successful

it is in satisfying the needs of its target learner group. The relevance of an ESP course or its material can be better achieved through proper need analysis (Mohammadi & Mousavi, 2013)

Material Adaptation for an ESP Course

Evaluation and adaptation of material is an important aspect of language teaching. English as a language is taught in different parts of the world where the setting is quite different. Along with the setting, different countries and communities have different culture and distinctive behavioral patterns. A material that is suitable for a particular culture might be inappropriate for another. Sensitive issues like people's belief, religion can also come into play here. Nature of the content within the material needs to consider facts like the learning style of the learners, teaching strategy of teachers who have diverse backgrounds. As different learner groups can have different needs, it is not an assurance that a good material will be equally useful for all (McDonough & Shaw, 2012). A material can be adopted from two different points of view. One is a teacher centered approach whereas the other one is a student centered approach. Teacher centered approach focuses on the teacher's perspective of adopting material whereas students centered approach is based on the views and opinions of the students (Tomlinson, 2003).A material can be adopted by adding, deleting, simplifying, modifying, reordering (McDonough & Shaw, 2012). While doing the adaptation, it is crucial to consider the learning style of a specific group of learners (Franzoni, et al., 2008).

Contextualization of ESP material

Every material is not suitable for every context. Therefore, it becomes obligatory to contextualize the material that we are using. Contextualization is not limited to putting a material into a harmony with the cultural context of the learner group or setting. For example, teaching Bangladeshi content in a Bangladeshi classroom is not the only form of contextualization. It also refers to balancing the content with the needs of the learners. For instance, teaching about presentation skills is contextual for a group of learners studying at a university as university students deliver presentations on a regular basis. Through contextualization, it is possible to bring more authenticity to the material that we are using for teaching and learning.

Contextualization is mostly done from the teacher's point of view and it is important for a teacher to have ideas and knowledge about diverse content (Korkmaz & Korkmaz, 2013). So, contextualize doesn't mean local content only, intercultural content can also be contextualized (Marwa, et al., 2021). There is a developmental pattern in the way we learn a 2nd language (Ellis, 2008). This pattern is significantly different from the way we learn our 1st language. It is important to keep this in mind while contextualizing material.

Use of English Language Skill at the Workplace

The global economy is changing and with that gradual change the nature of business and business communication is also changing. The communicative pattern that we used to follow a few decades ago has transformed a great deal with the emergence of technology and various inventions. New businesses have arrived and many got demolished at the same time. With such changes, the role of educational institutions have gained more significance as they need to play a major role by bringing changes to the curriculum following the need of the hour. It is also important to keep in mind that somewhere English is the 1st language; somewhere it is 2nd and somewhere it is taught as a foreign language (Kirkpatrick, 2007). The nature and style of ELT is also changing. In present days, ELT is much more intercultural, multimodal and virtual (Bhatia & Bremner, 2012).The ready Made Garments (RMG) sector of Bangladesh is not an exception either when it comes to multimodal and virtual use of English language. English is used in this sector for different purposes. The RMG sector is also experiencing various changes that are making the usage and learning of the English language even more important. The nature of this business in Bangladesh at the current date is quite different from the way it was 20 years back.ESP courses can play its part in this regard by making the merchandisers fit for the new ways of communication (Roshid, 2020).

English Language Usage in the RMG sector

Instinctively humans aspire for professional growth. English language empowers business individuals and organizations that creates opportunities for material gains such as promotion, increment, performance etc. (Roshid, 2018). As merchandisers use English for various purposes they need to be aware of the right ways of using their communicative competence. For instance, writing email is a very common task for them but the practice and variation of written discourse

in emails tells us how and why people use English in the RMG sector (Roshid, Webb & Chowdhury, 2018). The merchandisers perform tasks like delivering presentations, writing a report that carries a lot of business jargon (Roshid 2014). Such jargon can be mastered through an ESP course that is designed for the merchandisers. Moreover, local linguistic ecology makes the language usage a complex phenomenon to observe (Hamid and Hasan, 2020). However, we need to consider such ecological aspects to develop a material that will prove to be useful for the people/merchandisers of the RMG sector.

Research Methodology

This research has been conducted through the collection of both **qualitative and quantitative** data. So, it can be claimed that a mixed method approach was adopted to conduct this research. Quantitative data were collected through survey questionnaire. The researcher developed the questionnaire with 14 multiple choice questions and he used Google form to collect the data. 21 merchandisers from 3 different export oriented garments were the participant of the study. The participants had diverse academic and professional background. Among the participants, there were merchandisers of different levels starting from trainee junior merchandiser to the merchandisers who were working as the leader of the merchandising team. The researcher designed the questions in such a way that he tried to get the opinion of the participants regarding the demands for an ESP course and the materials that they want to be included in the teaching curriculum. All for macro skills of English were focused the in survey questionnaire.

In order to collect the qualitative data, 3 merchandisers were interviewed through a semi structured format of questions. 3 participants for this part of data collection included one junior merchandiser, one senior merchandiser and one lead merchandiser. All three participants were from three different garments. The participants were from FCI group, BS Asia limited, Inditex limited. One of the interviews was conducted face to face whereas the other two were conducted through Google meet. The participants were asked 7 open ended questions that included questions their strengths and weaknesses in their English language usage at their workplace, the challenges that they face while communicating in English, list of communicative tasks that can be included in the ENS teaching materials and also question related to

speaking, listening, reading, writing. The researcher also asked for their suggestion in order to develop an effective ESP material for the merchandisers.

Qualitative data analysis

In order to collect qualitative data, three merchandisers were interviewed from three different export oriented garments. All three merchandisers had 3 different designations according to their academic qualification and work experience. One of them was entry level merchandisers, whereas the other two belong to the top category. One of them was leading the team of merchandisers as the chief merchandiser of that company. All the participants were asked seven open ended question and the questions were same for everyone. The interviews were conducted through Google Meet and the sessions were recorded for the analysis purpose. In order to ensure to confidentiality of the participants, the will be named as P1, P2 and P3 throughout the data analysis.

In these semi structured interview, the researchers explained the question and at times and also used the 1st language to put the participants at ease while responding to the queries. Their individual points of view were reflected in their response and the researcher integrated their response in the data analysis part.

What are your thoughts on the significance of English language abilities in this field? In what situations do you need to apply your English language skill?

In response to this question all the participants agreed that English as a language plays a very crucial role at their workplace and they came up with many valid points that defended their claim in a logical manner. While answering this question, P1 mentioned that the merchandisers are mainly involved in the marketing of the products but that marketing had many dimensions. In different level of marketing, English proficiency plays its part. The merchandisers bring orders to the company and they stay in the loop till the execution and delivery of the product. The orders are usually taken from North America, Europe, Australia where English is the main medium of communication. The merchandisers communicate with the authority through emails and at times through verbal communication as well. In this profession, talking to the prospective buyers and convincing them to order the products is one of the main responsibilities and this is mainly done through oral communication. Here the proficiency in speaking plays a pivotal role.

While responding to this question, P2 talked about the situation in which the merchandisers use English more frequently and he emphasized on a couple of very important features. P2 felt that at their level no one really bothers about the grammatical aspect or accuracy of the language usage.

The emphasis in given on the conveying the right message in the most appropriate manner. While writing email or a report, many merchandisers struggle to convey their intended message. So, they tries to mean something and end up writing something else. This is an out of their English language skill. Despite having the professional skills and experience, language usage takes toll on their performance.

The 3rd participant talked about another significant aspect that English plays a vital role in career growth as well. They start their career as a junior merchandiser but in order to reach the leading positions, they need to deliver a certain level of English. The role of a merchandiser is expanded to different stages of production. They need to maintain communication with the top management along with the designer and the buyers at the same time. Every stage requires English and above average performance in each stage leads a merchandiser to a further career growth. While talking about the situation in which a merchandiser is entitled to use English, P1 mentioned about delivering effective presentation on different level of their work.

What are the problems do you face while using English as a medium for communication? Does it hamper your communication with the foreign buyers? How?

In response to this question, P2 said that confidence become a major issue for the merchandisers while using English as a medium of communication. This profession demands the merchandisers to look confident in front of the buyers but all the participants agreed on the note that many of the merchandisers get nervous while talking in English. P3 added that, due to the diversity of their academic background, it gets increasingly important to groom the merchandisers who are new to this field. As expressed earlier, struggling to convey the intended message is a major a major barrier for them. While talking about the problem, P1 said that not having exposure to professional and formal ways of writing hampers their performance big time. Due to nervousness, they try to hide their weakness in listening as well buy to asking to repeat that the speaker has already said. As a consequence, many messages often get misinterpreted that result in losing deals or not making desired profit from a certain project. Such problems in communication hamper the internal communication within the organization as well. Many garments hire foreign nationals to the directorial position and in such circumstances, communication skills of the merchandisers add more value to the entire process. P2 felt that the merchandisers have got themselves to blame as well for not developing their communication

skill up to their professional requirement. Very often it is seen that the merchandisers are not self guided learners and they lack interest in developing themselves. Thus, they fossilize themselves without being aware of the fact.

Which English language macro skills are more frequently used at your workplace? What are the task do you usually perform?

From the data that were collected through the interview, it was evident that all 4 macro skills of English play its part in the professional life of a merchandiser. However, P1, P2 and P 3 made an attempt to organize those according to the frequency of the usage of those macro skills. P2 felt that all 4 skills complement each other in the communicative purpose. He drew a couple of examples to clarify this claim. According to P2, when a merchandiser is replying to an email, he is reading the email that he has received. In order to perform the writing task properly, he also need to make sure that he is interpreting the received email as well. On this note, P3 added that, he has experienced such situations where the same email is interpreted in 3 different by three different merchandisers. With experience, they can minimize such inconsistencies. However, proper knowledge of the language facilitates the entire communication process big time. P1 was more specific in his approach while answering this question. P1 felt that they use speaking more frequently at their workplace. Speaking activities includes but not limited to attending in person meetings, video conferences etc. Merchandisers accompany the buyers while visiting they factory where they are entitle to talk about the capacity, environment, facilities of the factory. Oral efficiency gets very in such circumstances.

If the company introduces English courses for its employees, what are the things they need to focus on?

This question was more like a need analysis for the merchandisers. Through this question, the researcher tried to investigate the necessities and requirements of the merchandisers to develop their English language skill. One of the purposes of this research was to develop an ESP (English for Specific purpose) course and course material for the target learner group. In an attempt to suggest a material that might cater the need of the merchandisers, the researcher came up with some important information from the interviewees. If was evident during the interview that the participants are not well accustomed to the concept the concept of ESP and it tells us the true story of the situation. After explaining the concept, P1 mentioned that the tips and tricks of

writing formal and informal email can the included in the material. Many merchandisers fail to differentiate between the formal and informal nature of language. As a result, often the email seems inappropriate to the occasions. P2 felt that techniques of report writing must be included in the ESP materials for the merchandisers. Merchandisers write reports for various reasons. For example, writing a report to directors stating the response of the probable clients on a certain project/product. They also write report for budgeting, maintaining the inter department communication within the organization. Having a chapter on report writing and different type of reports will surely work as a catalyst for better communication skill. P3 also came up with significant feedback to improve the writing skills. To get rid of the problem of misinterpretation and failure to express the intended message, he suggested to include writing task using different scenarios that a merchandiser is expected to come across while performing his responsibility. He also said that tasks like picture description, video analysis might also help the cause significantly. If the merchandisers watch videos and analyze those, their skill of interpretation and instant reaction to various situations might improve. P1 added that, as responding to email is an integral part of their work, we can add emails in our course book that bight prove to be challenging for a trainee merchandiser to respond. Through this practice, we will be able to see how he takes initiatives to solve different issues. This will be a good reading task as well which will be highly authentic at the same time. All the participants emphasized the necessity of including diverse speaking activities. P2 came up with an opinion that dialogue, monologue can the included in the material. Moreover, there can be chapter on public speaking as well in order to make the merchandisers confident and make them work on their leadership skill.

What are your suggestions regarding the course that can be offered for the merchandisers?

All the participants agreed that organizing an ESP course might prove to be beneficial for them, especially during the early days of their career. However, course content and the course conduct method also have to be on target to serve the goal of the matter. While coming up with the suggestions, P1 felt that training should be organized for the merchandisers and it will have to be intensive in nature. He also felt that offline courses will be more useful for the employees as it will provide them with hands on experience. In addition a blended approach can also be adopted keeping the other factors in mind. P2 added that the course and the training should not be

arranged during the weekend in order to maintain the motivation of the employees. Moreover, the training can be made a part of their regular work load so that the merchandisers start considering such training as integral part of their responsibilities. P3 liked the initiative of developing customize course material for the merchandisers and he said that such materials can be used in multiple organizations considering the fact that the material is meeting the general need of the merchandisers when it come to use English. He prioritized the necessity of widespread need analysis to produce such material. The interviewees also said that instead of organizing short courses, the garments should aim to arrange lengthy courses promoting the seld development approach. Such approach will have long term impact on the professional life and development of the merchandisers.

Writing is an important aspect of business communication. What type of writing task do you usually perform? What are the problems do you face in doing so?

In response to this question, all the interviewees came up with similar responses and they all said that there is not much differences the writing task that the merchandisers performs in different companies. Their responsibility is more or less the same but the problem lies in their success in executing those communications. They all felt that email is the most important writing task for a merchandiser and most of their written communication is conducted through email. Getting to know the type of response that need to be sent in response of a certain email is the key here. Such writing tasks involve the understanding of the culture of the clients. The participants also felt that the writing tasks are mostly performing by the officials who are working at the management or account department. Merchandisers also prepare reports but they are shorter in nature and mostly for maintaining the inter communication.

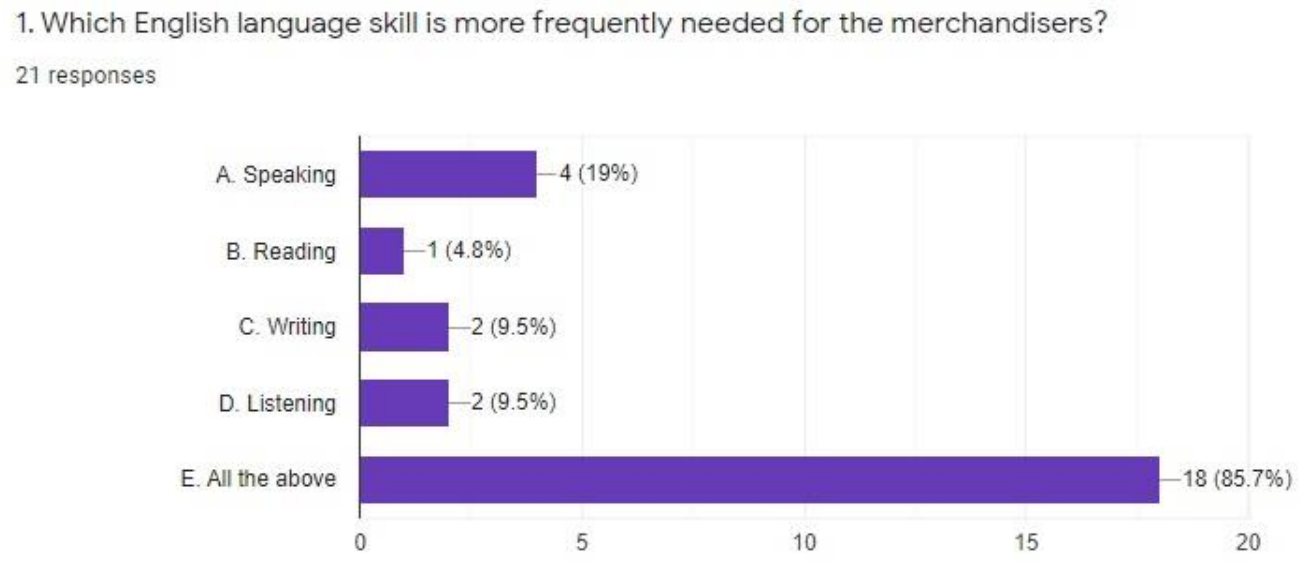
How do you accomplish communicative functions according to situations and participants in oral communication?

Oral communication has a significant role to play in this particular industry and the merchandisers have crucial role to play in accomplishing communicative functions at different levels. If we take a look at the comprehensive response of the participants while answering this question, we'll see that they all said that talking to the buyers and clients is the most important part of their job responsibility. Here, the accent or grammatical accuracy doesn't play any major

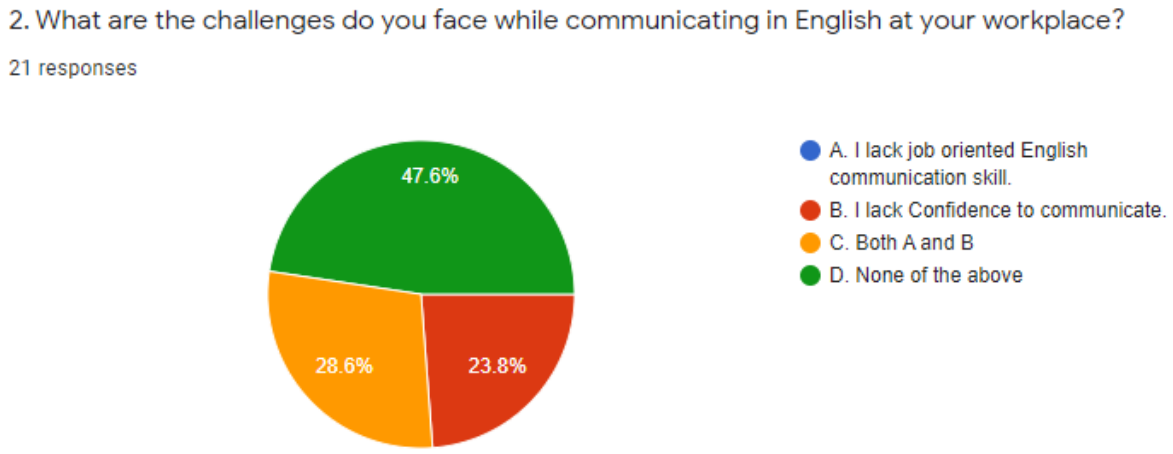
part but communicating the right message is the principle goal. So, fluency, vocabulary range, understanding of literal meaning and implied meaning are more important factors in their oral communication. A merchandiser's communication with the designers often gets overlooked but this is a very sophisticated communicative activity that they perform. The merchandisers often work as the bridge between the buyers and the top management. The role of a merchandiser gets important in making the designer understanding the specific requirement of a product. They are also responsible for delivering presentation which is also a high stake speaking activity.

Quantitative Data Analysis:

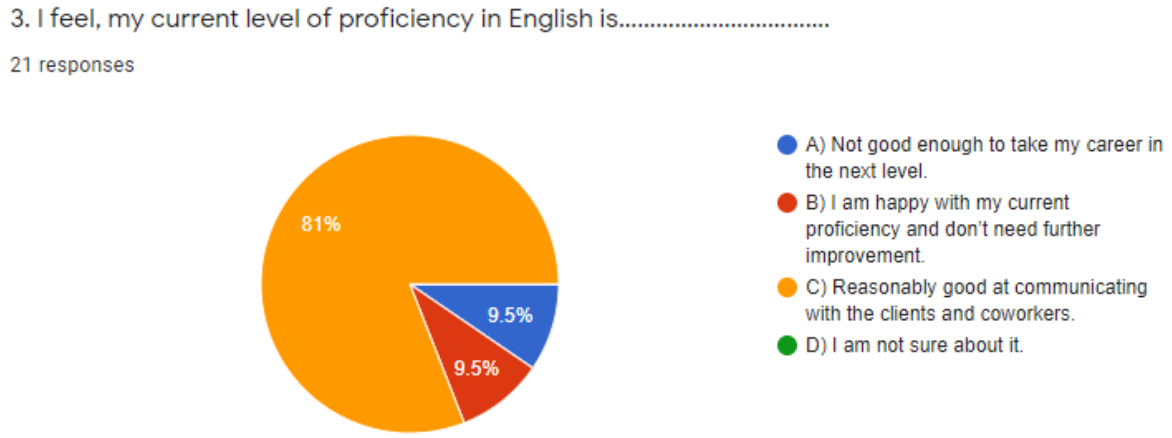
Quantitative data were collected from 21 participants who are currently working in 3 different export oriented apparel company. The age of the participants is ranging from 24 years to 38 years old. Similarly, they had variation in their academic qualification as well. The researcher had participants who did their bachelor in textile engineering, textile technology, business administration, English, History and many other disciplines. There were a few participants who complete their post graduation as well in diverse disciplines. Among the participants there were merchandisers who started their career less than a year ago and there were also people who have been working in this industry for the last 18 years. There were significant differences in the post of the merchandisers as well. Considering their qualification and experience, there were merchandisers who were working as country head, senior merchandiser, assistant merchandiser, manager merchandiser, junior merchandiser and so on. They took part in a survey where they had to answer 13 multiple choice questions. Their response has been included in the paper in the form of pie chart and bar chart.



A generic response was expected from the participants in response to the first question of the questionnaire as they were asked about which English language macro skill is more frequently used at their workplace. The participants had the privilege to select multiple options to 86% of them agreed that all 4 macro skills are almost equally used in their profession. However, few of the participants also ticked of the other options where we can see that 19% felt speaking being the dominant language skill at their workplace. On the contrary, 9.5% voted in favor of writing and listening respective. Only 1 participant voted for reading that marks 4.8%.

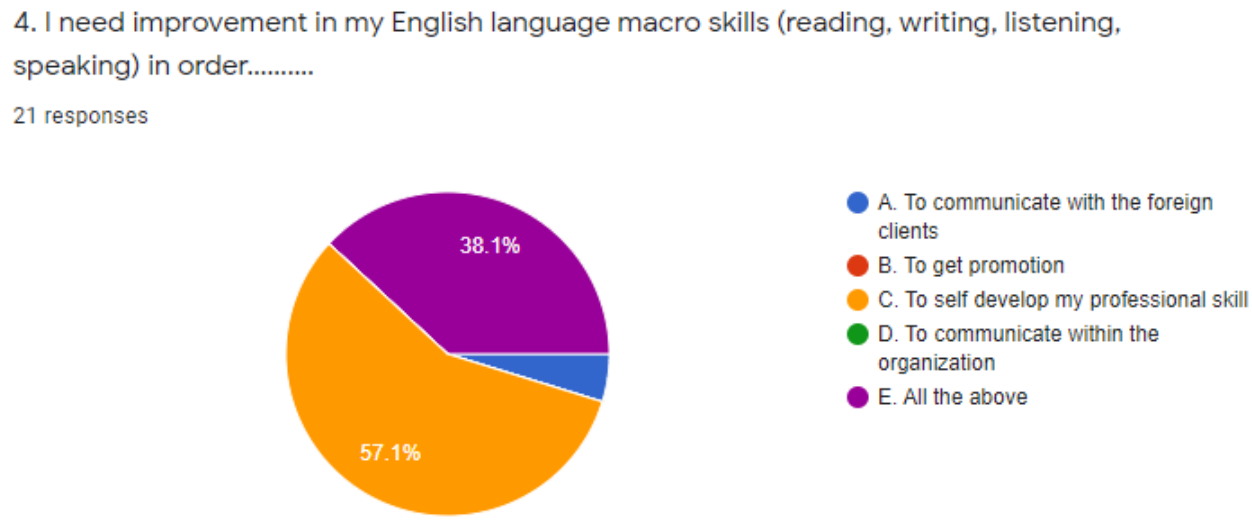


The 2nd question in the questionnaire was about the challenges that the merchandisers face while communicating in English. Surprisingly none of the participants selected option A that says that the employee doesn't have good enough communication skill in English to communicate. It was understandable that the participants were not comfortable enough to admit their weaknesses. Almost half of the participants which is 47.6% said that they neither lack confidence nor communication skill. However, in other questions, they responded by expressing the measures that need to be taken on order to get rid of their communication related issues. Considering that, it can be claimed that the response of this question was an unexpected one. On the other hand, 28.6% participants admitted that they need to work on their confidence and communicative issue. It was observed that 23.8% candidates felt they don't have enough confidence to communicate.



This question in the questionnaire emphasized on the current level of knowledge of the participants when it comes to language usage. Only 9.5% of the participants feel that their current proficiency level of English is not good enough to take their career in the next level. We had the similar percentage for option B where the participant expressed that they are happy with their current level of English. Below 10% response for option B is a strong indication that ESP course is in demand for the merchandisers. The researcher had a staggering 81% response for

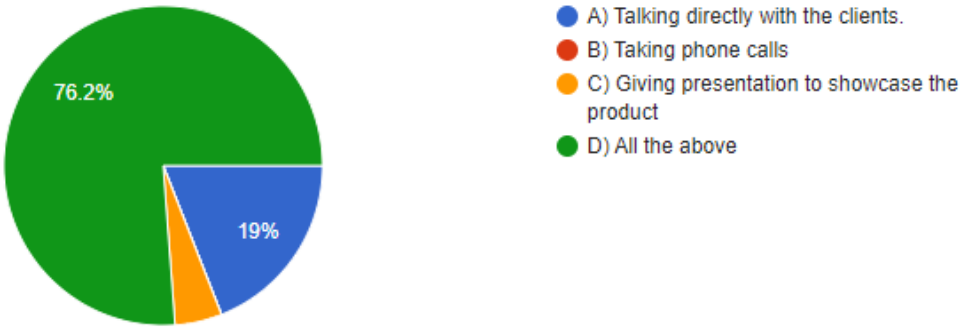
option C that goes to tell us that the merchandisers who took the survey are reasonably happy with their English language proficiency. None of the participants choose option D as their response.



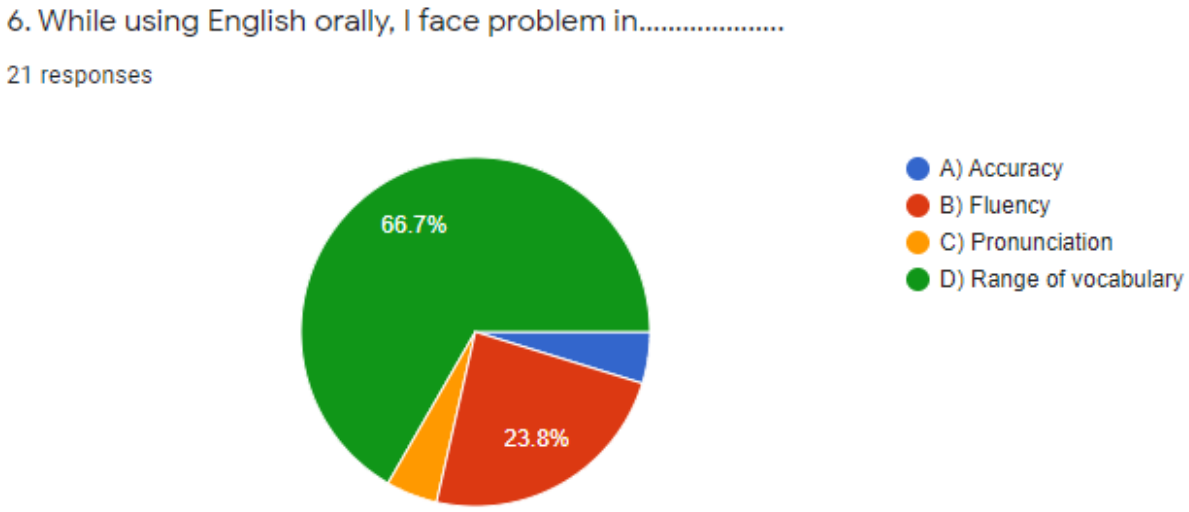
Question number 4 in the questionnaire was designed keeping in mind the specific language need of the merchandisers and purpose for which they use English on a more regular basis. Surprising only 5% participants said that they need to improve their English in order to communicate with their foreign clients. One reason for such response can be fact that all the merchandisers are nor responsible for conducting the foreign clients. Usually proficient users are nominated for such interactions. None of the participants mentioned that they need better English for getting promotion or to communicate within the organization. This was a complete contrast to the response that the researcher for from the collected qualitative data. Here, 57% of the participants believe that, with better English language usage; they will be able to work on their self development to take their career in the next level. #8% of the people selected option E that says, they need to improve their English for all the reasons mentioned above.

5. While working as a merchandiser at a garment, what kind of speaking task do you perform more often?

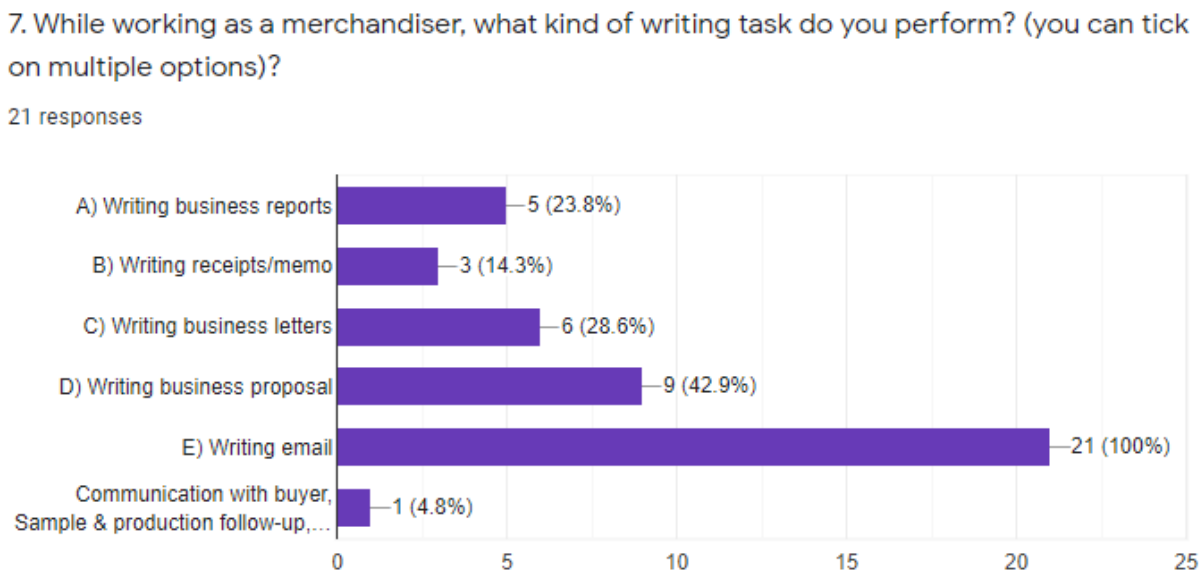
21 responses



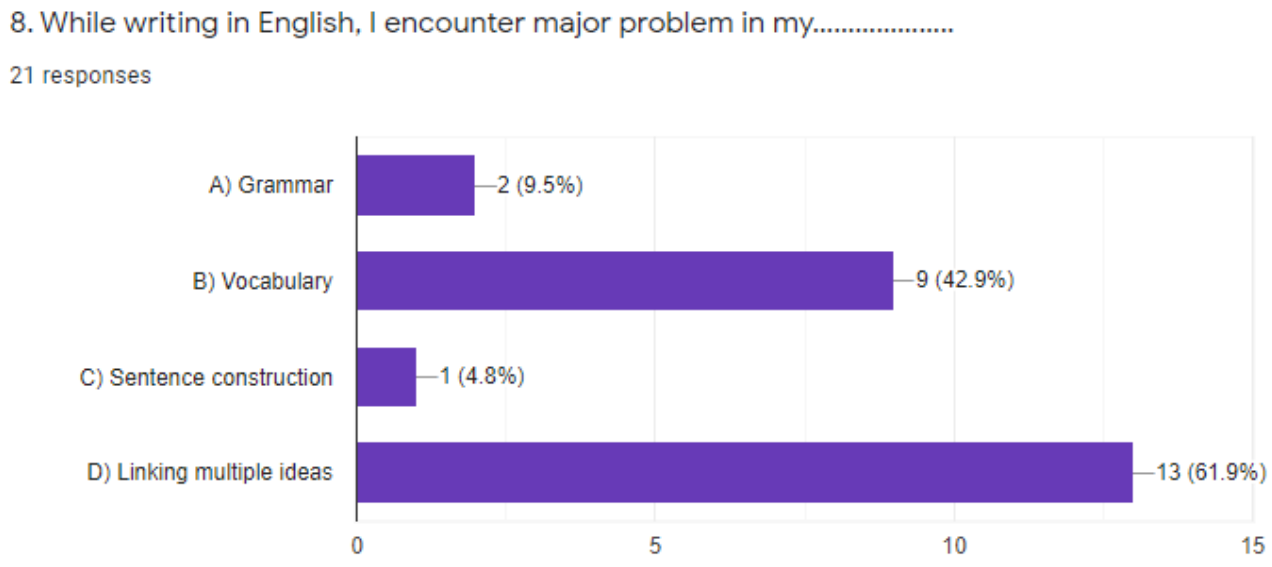
This question in the questionnaire was focused on speaking skill in particular. Through this question the writer tried to investigate the type of speaking activities that the merchandisers perform at their workplace. 19 percent of the participants said that they use English speaking skill so that they can interact directly with the clients. Whereas none of the participants said that they use English in order to receive phone calls. Only 5% of the participants felt that they deliver presentation in their office and they use English for that reason. However, a very low percentage of the response for option A, B, C made a lot of sense as 76% of the participants choose option d that says that a merchandiser uses English speaking skill for all the reasons mentioned above.



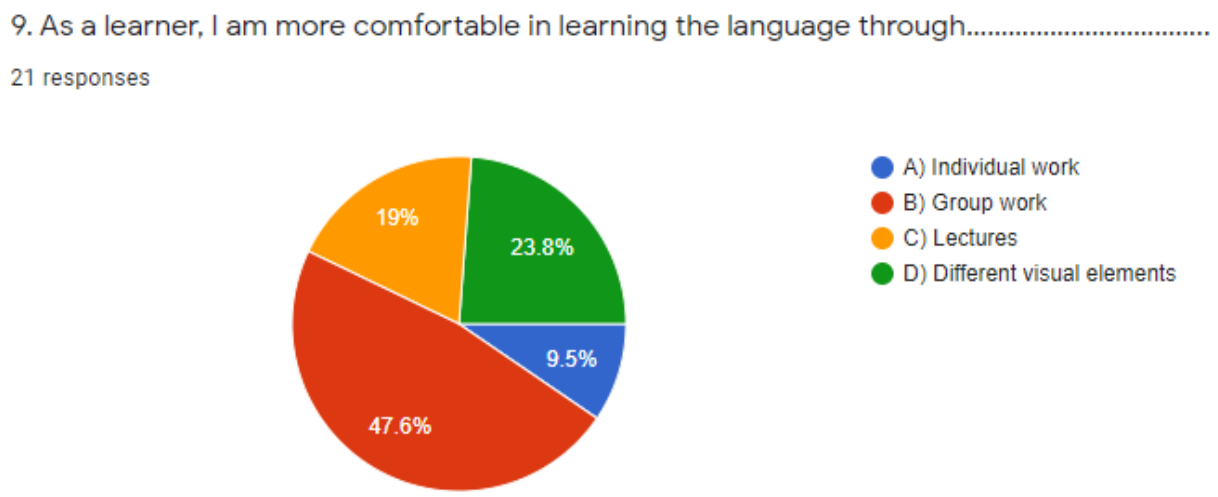
This question in the questionnaire was a continuation observation related to verbal use of English language. Here, the participants were asled about the specific problems that they face while talking in English. Only 55 of the participants said that they are concerned about their pronunciation while talking. Following the same trend, we can see that only 4.5% felt that their language usage is not accurate. 23.8 percent participants thought that they are not fluent speaker of English and It hinders their delivery big time. For this particular question, option D was preferred by most of the participants and 66.7% of them felt that their vocabulary stock is not rich enough to use English orally in their expected level.



This particular question was a writing focused one and the researcher got diverse response from the participants. They were asked about what type of writing tasks do they perform= more often from the position of being a merchandiser. Participants were entitled to select multiple options and from their response it can be seen that 100% of the participants write email while working. The 2nd highest percentage was received by writing business proposal that got 43% response. 23.8% admitted that they write business report as a part of their responsibility. From the response of the survey, it was seen that 14.3% merchandisers also prepare memos or receipts while working. 28.6% of the participants undertake the task of writing business letters while performing their responsibility. A very marginal ratio of participants is also responsible for writing in order to communicate with buyer. This was a crucial question of the questionnaire as the response of this giving us a clear idea about the type of writing tasks that can be included and emphasized while developing ESP materials for the merchandisers.



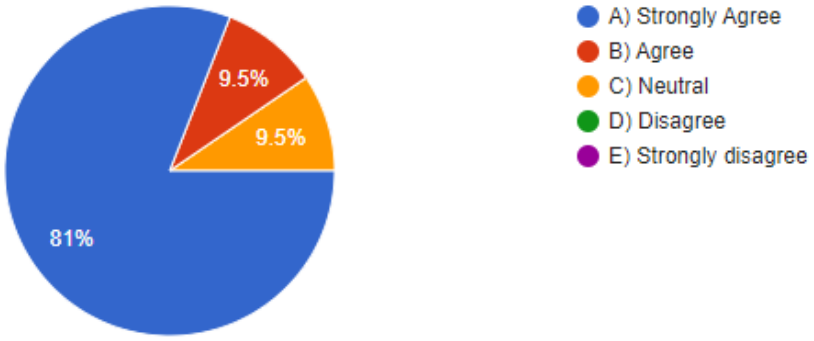
Through the answer of this question, the researcher tried to investigate on the writing difficulty faced by the merchandisers. In their response 62% of the participants said that they struggle to link ideas while writing. This goes to show that sentence level coherence and paragraph level coherence is something that is demanding importance while working of the writing of the merchandisers. Almost 43% participants said that their vocabulary range take toll on them while writing. Only 9.5% participants expressed their concern regarding their use of grammar in writing. This percentage went down further in the case of sentence construction. Less than %5 participant expressed that they face issues while constructing sentences.



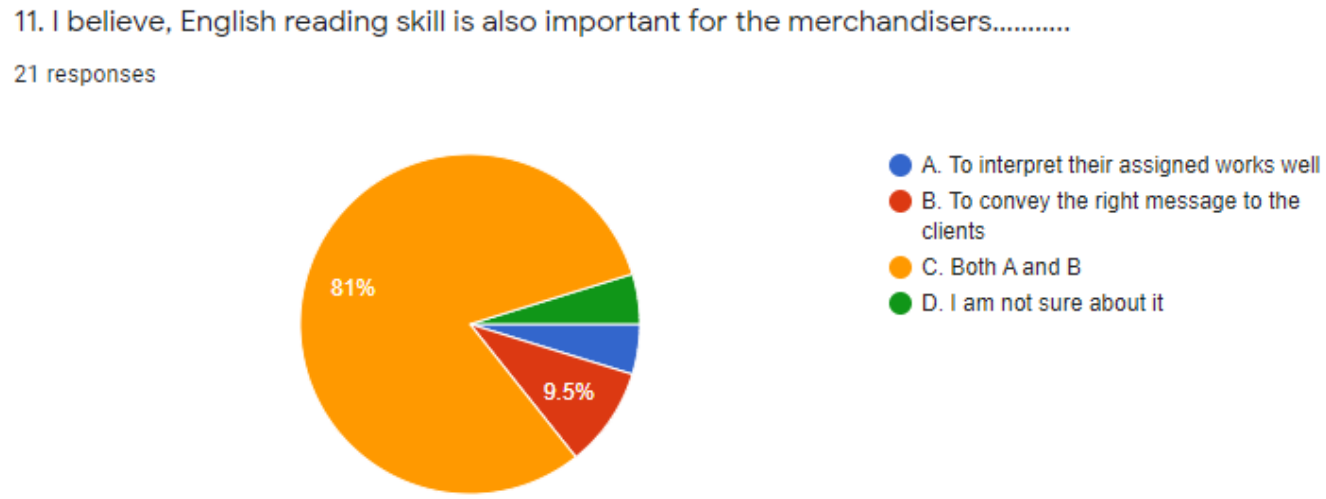
This question in the questionnaire wanted to get a clue about the preferred learning style and comfort zone of the merchandisers while learning. Around 48% participants said that they prefer learning through group work or activities. From the point of view of a material developer, this response was an indication that more tasks in the material should be designed in such a way that it will promote group learning. A significant portion of the participants also acknowledged the importance and effectiveness of using the visual material in the learning process and that percentage is about 24%. 19% participants preferred lecture delivery for a better learning experience. Whereas, 9.5% merchandisers are more comfortable in learning things as an individual learner.

10. Garments sector should organize ESP classes for the professional development of its employees.

21 responses



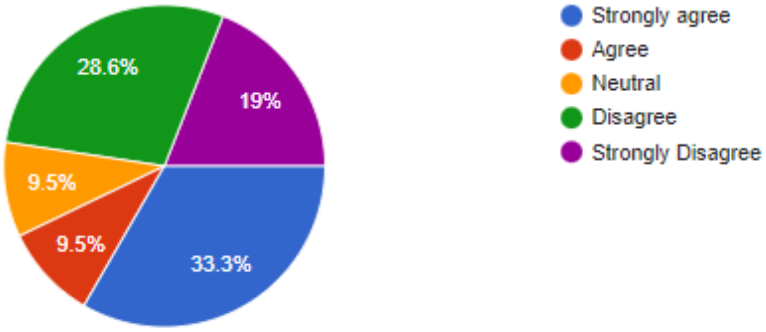
This question was a general question regarding the perception of the merchandisers when it comes to ESP (English for Specific purpose) courses. It is important to understand whether the merchandisers want such courses or not. Organizing courses without considering their opinion might result in lack of motivation from the side of the learners. 81% of the participants responded in favor of ESP course as they strongly agreed on this note. 9.5% participants stayed neutral in their opinion and it was good to see that none of the participants expressed his disagreement on organizing ESP courses.



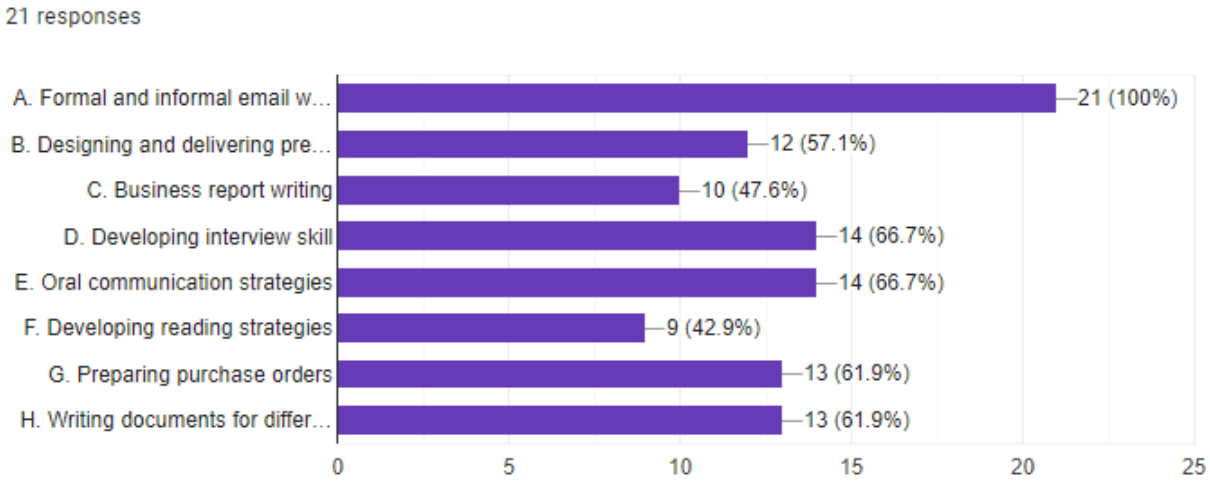
This question was related to the practice of reading activities of the merchandisers. They were asked about the importance of reading in their profession and 81% of them said that reading is important for them as they need to interpret the works that has been assigned to them and to convey the right message to clients and target people. 9.5% felt that sending the right message to the right person is the core purpose of reading whereas around 5% voted only on understanding their task. Surprisingly around 4% people said that they are not sure about the importance of reading activity at their work.

12. Communication in English language is only necessary while communicating with foreign clients.

21 responses



The response of the participants for this question is an indication of the diversity of their job responsibilities. The merchandisers were asked about whether they need to use English only to communicate with the foreign buyers or not. 33.3% and 9.5% gave their opinion in favor of strongly agree and agree respectively. Approximately 29% participants disagreed with the claim and 19% strongly disagreed with that. Such higher percentage of disagreement indicated that the merchandisers use English for various purposes. 9.5% participants stayed neutral in their opinion.



This question was more comprehensive in nature where the participants were asked to tick the activities that they feel should be included in the ESP material designed for the merchandisers. Here, the researcher tried to get a picture of the need of the merchandisers. Expectedly, all the participants voted in favor of having a unit on the tips and tricks of writing formal and informal email. A very high percentage of the participants demanded material on developing interview skill and the rate is about 67%. Similar sort of response was also recorded for the development of oral communication strategies. Techniques of turn taking, dialogue, monologue can prove to be effective for the merchandisers. A strong response was recorded in favor of preparing purchase order and writing document for different purposes. Almost 62% people demanded the inclusion of these two activities. Moreover, 57% people also gave opinion that they desire for chapters on designing and delivering effective presentation. Presentation skill is an integral part of the job of a merchandiser. Therefore, a good percentage of response wasn't a surprise for this option. The researcher also received good response for business report writing and development of reading strategies that received 47.6% and 42.9% respectively. There participants were requested to mention any other activities that they prefer. However, response on this wasn't that sigfificant as they seem reluctant to type for their choice.

Findings

1. After collecting and analyzing data, it was evident that the role of a merchandiser is not limited to taking and delivering orders. They are responsible for performing tasks like showcasing and marketing the product, maintaining communication with the higher authorities and designers etc. Therefore, they are entitled to use English in a diverse manner and this is what makes the necessity of designing and implementing English courses for them even more significant.

2. From the study, it was found out that merchandisers are interested in knowing the tips and tricks of writing formal and informal email. Writing and receiving email is an integral part of their responsibility. The merchandisers feel that, at their level, the structure and comprehensibility of email is more important to them than the grammatical accuracy. Having a unit on email writing in the material will prove to be handy for their merchandisers.

3. Many of the participants admitted that they have the necessary knowledge to communicate in English but they get nervous and lack confidence while talking in English. Having a chapter on speaking that emphasizes the skill of public speaking might help them to encounter such issues.

4. The merchandisers expressed that preparing and delivering presentations is an important skill for them to master. Merchandisers often deliver presentations on the capacity of the company, product variation, necessary affiliation, previous successful ventures etc. Including presentation skills and such topics will not only help them to master the presentation skill but also will contextualize the material to a great extent.

5. From the response of the participants, it came out that they prefer ESP materials for them that might promote learner autonomy. From the interview of the participants, the researcher found out that many of the merchandisers are not focused towards self development. Material that promotes learner autonomy will drive the merchandisers towards self guided learning.

6. The outcome of this exploratory study showed that all four macro skills of English are important and used by the merchandisers. However, it was evident from the collected data that the merchandisers struggled more in using their speaking and lwriting skills. Therefore, while developing language learning materials for the merchandisers, these two particular skills can be emphasized.

7. While using English orally, the merchandisers mostly struggle on the fluency and range of vocabulary. To minimize such problems, we can integrate speaking activities in the ESP materials that will focus on these sub-skills of speaking.

8. From the data collected through questionnaire, it was reflected that the merchandisers feel that they need to work on their skill of writing business reports, using effective reading strategies, developing presentation skills etc. These items can be included in the material to meet the needs of the merchandisers. Existing materials can also be adapted by keeping these necessities in mind.

9. There are multiple ways and strategies of learning. However, from this research it was found out that most of the merchandisers prefer learning in a group through effective group work. They also felt the necessity of using visual material to make the learning process interesting and interactive. Such opinions must be taken into consideration while developing ESP material for the merchandisers.

10. Although all the participants of this research agreed on the note that they need English courses to improve their communication skill, they also felt that such courses should be made a part of their job responsibilities to keep the employees involved in the learning process. The merchandisers felt they must avoid weekend classes and a blended approach can be adopted to conduct the course. Many participants said that they would prefer a face to face class in comparison to online classes.

11. The participants suggested that variations can be brought while integrating writing tasks in the material for the merchandisers, Tasks like, writing a report considering a scenario, picture description; video analysis task will bring authenticity in the material and will also help them to learn using their analytical skill.

Limitations

1. Small sample size was a major drawback of the study. In Particular, the researcher interviewed only 3 participants for the qualitative data collection that hampered the reliability of the study. Number of participants for quantitative data collection was also not very significant considering the topic on which the researcher worked on.

2. The participants of this study were from 3 organizations only that might fail to portray the true picture of the needs and the necessity of the merchandisers. On top of that, all the participants of this study had strong academic background; this might also show us a deceiving picture of the actual scenario.

3. While conducting the interviews for qualitative data collection, the researcher felt that the participants are a bit reluctant to talk about their weaknesses whereas the purpose of this study was to find out their weaknesses so that materials can be developed and adopted keeping those things in mind.

4. The researcher felt that time constraint was a major weakness of this study. Instead of conducting this as an observer, this study could be more effective if the researcher could work on this after doing an internship in this particular industry.

5. After conducting the study, the researcher felt that the research could be conducted in a more focused manner by focusing on one particular macro skill or focusing on a particular group of merchandisers.

Conclusion

The RMG sector of Bangladesh is the biggest source of revenue for the country's economy. Bangladeshi readymade garments have gained popularity globally because of its quality and affordability. Bangladesh is a popular destination for the global market and this is what makes the job of a merchandiser a very sophisticated one. English being a globally used and recognized language is used by the merchandisers. However, our communication skill is still not up to the mark in many ways. Such a situation has drawn the necessity of development of ESP course material that can be successfully used in a course where merchandisers are trying to improve

their communication skill. Good material is the core of a successful language learning process. This study showed an attempt to provide a spotlight on the needs and necessity of the people who are working in this sector. But one must remember the fact that a good material can only be considered a good one when we can harmonize a proper learning setting and strategy along with that. This is pivotal to contextualize the material to get the best out of the designed content. Like Bangladesh, there are many other countries that are doing well in the RMG sector but the material that they are using to develop their English might not be equally impactful for us. Proper adaptation of a material and well trained trainer can take us through to our destination. This small scale research is just raising this issue in order to get the attention of the responsible authority but further in depth study is required in this field in order to come up with a sustainable solution.

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Appendix

Survey Questionnaire on

Development and Contextualization of ESP course Material for Bangladeshi Novice Merchandisers: An Exploratory Study

Demographic Information:

Age:

Designation:

Years of Experience:

Academic qualification:

1. Which language skill is more frequently needed for the merchandisers?
   A. Speaking

B. Reading
C. Writing
D. Listening
E. All the above

3. What are the challenges do I face while communicating in English at my workplace?

A. I lack job oriented English communication skill.

B. I lack Confidence to communicate.
C. Both A and B

D. None of the above

4. **I feel, my current level of proficiency in English is…….**

A) Not good enough to take my career in the next level

B) I am happy with my current proficiency and don't need further improvement

C) Reasonably good at communicating with the clients and coworkers

D) I am not sure about it.

5. I need improvement in my English language macro skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) in order…….
   A. To communicate with the foreign clients
   B. To get promotion
   C. To self develop my professional skill
   D. To communicate within the organization
   E. All the above

5. While working as a merchandiser at a garment, what kind of speaking task do you perform more often?

A) Talking directly with the clients.

B) Taking phone calls

C) Giving presentation to showcase the product

D) All the above

5. While using English orally, I face problem in……..

A) Accuracy

B) Fluency

C) Pronunciation

D) Range of vocabulary

6. While working as a merchandiser, what kind of writing task do you perform? (you can tick on multiple options)?

A) Writing business reports

B) Writing receipts/memo

C) Writing business letters

D) Writing business proposal

E) Writing email

F) Others (Specify :…….)

7. While writing in English, I encounter major problem in my……..

A) Grammar

B) Vocabulary

C) Sentence construction

D) Linking multiple ideas

8. As a learner, I am more comfortabble in learning the language through……..

A) Individual work

B) Group work

C) Lectures

D) Different visual elements

9. Garments sector should organize ESP classes for the professional development of its employees.

A) Strongly Agree

B) Agree

C) Neutral

D) Disagree

E) Strongly disagree

10. I believe, English reading skill is also important for the merchandisers……..
    A. To interpret their assigned works well

B. To convey the right message to the clients
C. Both A and B
D. I am not sure about it

11. Communication in English language is only necessary while communicating with foreign clients.

Agree Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

12. Tick the type of activities that can be included in the material designed for an ESP course for the merchandisers (You can select multiple options)
    A. Formal and informal email writing
    B. Designing and delivering presentation
    C. Business report writing
    D. Developing interview skill
    E. Oral communication strategies
    F. Developing reading strategies
    G. Preparing purchase orders
    H. Writing documents for different purposes

Open Ended Questions

1. What are your thoughts on the significance of English language abilities in this field? In what situations do you need to apply your English language skill?
2. What are the problems do you face while using English as a medium for communication? Does it hamper your communication with the foreign buyers? How?
3. Which English language macro skills are more frequently used at your workplace? What are the task do you usually perform?
4. How do you accomplish communicative functions according to situations and participants in oral communication?
5. Writing is an important aspect of business communication. what type of writing task do you usually perform? What are the problems do you face in doing so?
6. If the company introduces English courses for its employees, what are the things they need to focus on?
7. Which types of course materials do you suggest that you will feel more comfortable?