

## THE ROLE OF CONTEXTS IN TEACHING BUSINESS ENGLISH TO ENGLISH MAJORS IN HUFİ

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### **ABSTRACT**

The development of science and technology has helped to develop international trading at an incredible pace. As a result, English is the language of communication which helps to conduct trade across borders. Having good Business English can help people find a good employment or develop a successful professional career. On learning this pressing social need, English major courses have been offered in HUFİ to students who want to develop a career in business. Unsurprisingly, Business English has become an indispensable part of this course with an aim to equip students necessary language knowledge and skills to work in various business contexts. Despite being a branch of language teaching, this area has its own characteristics and challenges. One of the biggest problems, unarguably, is the use of the language in the contexts where students have never experienced in their lives. Due to the limitation of time and condition, the author of this paper only dissects the roles of context in the success of Business English class. The results of this study will lay foundation for her to search for ways to bring real setting into her class, which not only make her lessons more true to life but also help to enhance the learning results of Business English majors in HUFİ in general.

*Keywords:* Keyword one, keyword two, keyword three, keyword four, keyword five - TNR, 11, single spacing,...

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

In the age of globalization and modernization, the demand of English proficiency is greater than ever, especially Business English. The role of Business English is prominent because it is the language of international trade. People need to have good competence of it to conduct various business activities. Being fluent in it has become a passport for a good job in Vietnam. Consequently, a fluency in Business English has never been in higher demand. Various courses have been designed to meet this need of the learners.

In Ho Chi Minh University of Food Industry (hereby abbreviated as Hufi), Business English has been the key part in the curriculum for students who major in this field of language. Although the course has been carefully designed, various effort has also been made the learning result is still very modest. It is understandable because the English knowledge of many students is still very low. Their problem is further stressed when they do not have opportunities to experience the use of language in real business situations. Consequently, they have great difficulties with the understanding and using of business terminology as well as ideas for discussion and presentation. To increase their learning effectiveness, contextualized lessons should be brought into Business

English class. To have a deeper insight of the benefits of context deployment in Business English class, their roles will be discussed in this study.

## **2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Business English courses have been provided to English major students in HUFU in order to equip them with necessary knowledge and skills to use English communicatively in different business settings, the carefully designed syllabus is designed to cover two semesters with 90 45-minute-periods. Market Leader, one of the most highly - evaluated book, is also deployed as the main course book. Although the learners have spent one year doing on their English communication skill courses and a course on grammar, their English knowledge is still quite modest. Consequently, students have struggled to remember long lists of unfamiliar words for each topic and to apply them in different practice activities. To make the matter worst, the contexts they find in the course book are all foreign. Their lack of business experience makes it even harder for them to imagine how English is used at real workplace. In many speaking tasks, they can neither figure out the situation nor know what to say and how to say appropriately. For these above mentioned problems, the author of this paper strongly believes that contexts should be an emphasis in Business English classes to improve students' learning results.

## **3 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.1 What is Business English?**

According to Evan, P (p5, 2005), "business English is communication with other people within a specific context". He further elaborates that people use Business English to do a variety of things: investigating, marketing, selling, persuading, negotiating, persuading... These are done in a specific business context and for business aims. His definition clearly points out the role of contexts an indispensable part of Business English using. Therefore, to make the teaching and learning close to the real use, contexts can not be omitted.

### **3.2 The role of context in language teaching**

It goes without saying that a language cannot exist in vacuum. It has to express an idea or perform an objective function when utterances are made or texts are written. We use a language to communicate about what we already know or what we have experienced. Thus, contexts become inseparable from the use of a language.

There are two types of contexts in language teaching. Language contexts are the one which are introduced so students can learn linguistic aspects of a language such as sentence structures, tenses. Meanwhile, social contexts are provided so that learners can visualize how language is used to communicate in real life. Therefore, to make students linguistically competent, they need to experience how a language is used in both of these two settings. While the language contexts help students learn how to produce grammatically correct sentences, social setting give them opportunities to put the language they have learnt in real use. For example: many students treat "Why don't you..." questions as a way to ask the reason while it is usually used as a way of giving advice or "If I were you, I would..." as an example of first conditional sentence as a normal way of expressing one's opinion, not a way of giving advice.

## **4 THE ROLE OF CONTEXTS IN HUFİ BUSINESS ENGLISH CLASS**

### **4.1 Contexts help to promote students' language acquisition**

Being a branch of language teaching, however, there are certain features that make Business English distinctive. According to Evan. P (2005), people use Business English to perform a variety of tasks; socializing, negotiating, producing, investigating, advertising, marketing, selling, competing..., which are done in a specific business context. To emphasize its vital role, he confirms that Business English learners need to be able to use this language successfully in a wide variety of contexts. Therefore, English learning and teaching in HUFİ classrooms should be done real business setting to provide students opportunities for rehearsal of real-life situations. When they have to use the language for communication but not aware of the fact they are acquiring it, the acquisition of it will occur naturally. This practice not only reflex the principle but also the target of communicative teaching approach.

### **4.2 Contexts help students experience the real use of language**

As a matter of fact, most of Business English majors in HUFİ took up the course as soon as they left high school. Therefore, they do not have any ideas about business. Besides, most of them have no practical experience of using English for communication due to the traditional teaching methods in Vietnam. Consequently, they have great difficulties remembering the meaning as well as how to use new business terminology appropriately. Context is, obviously, a good solution for their problem as it serves as a powerful way of increasing their contact time with English. What is more, a variety of contexts to guess the meaning and be familiar to new words in topics covered in their learning program. It also provides them some insight about language use in different business settings. All this helps their learning at school less stressful. It also helps them knows how to use language appropriately and efficiently in different business setting.

### **4.3 Contexts promote students' learning motivation**

Another merit of contextualized lessons in fostering Business English learning is the promotion of motivation which largely decides the success of language learners. This can be explained by the fact that experience of language use in business settings helps students directly apply their newly-gained knowledge of English for their own tasks in class. Therefore, they become more comfortable with the new lessons. The new words and terminology are less challenge to them. Furthermore, being equipped with some knowledge in advance, they are, certainly, more self – confident in practice delivering a presentation in English. Clearly, the more knowledge they can acquire, the more motivated they are. Practical experience of language use promotes their self-confidence and their learning results will be enhanced as well.

### **4.4 Contexts provide students ideas for speaking and writing activities**

As mentioned above, almost all of HUFİ Business English majors lack both language and professional skills. This affects them both emotionally and technically. Performing a writing or speaking task sometimes becomes a great challenge for them. They often have no idea to express or can not produce correct sentences because they have to imagine the situations and think in Vietnamese before translating into English. This, adversely, hinders their learning process to a great extent. Contexts, once again, do not only provide them comprehensive understanding of the situation but also help them to initiate ideas, apply structures to express themselves correctly and

appropriately as in real situations. In other words, thanks to contexts, students can use the language they have learnt in a practical way.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

As the power of contexts in promoting students' language proficiency is no longer doubted, a contextualization of Business English lessons to enhance HUI Business English majors' learning process is strongly recommended. This practice not only helps to promote HUI English major students' language acquisition, bringing opportunities to experience the language in real situations, increasing their learning motivation but also facilitating their communication performance. Business settings can be created through a variety of activities such as role-play, simulation, deployment of tasks. Assisted - teaching materials like video, newspaper should also be brought into class to make the teaching and learning more meaningful and more practical.

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