

## **Enhancing Hufi Business English major students’ learning through reading**

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### **Abstract**

The role of English in the globalization and internationalization has never been more important. In developing countries like Vietnam, it has become a passport for people who expect to have a good job. Much effort has been put into the learning and teaching of it, however, the results are still very modest. In this conceptual research, the author have explored the benefits of reading in improving Hufi Business English majors’ learning outcomes. The findings help her suggest that a promotion of reading is needed for the target learner. Some implications have also drawn to fully exploit its merits.

**Keywords:** Business English; reading; language acquisition; learning results; students’ needs

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### **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 (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 many opportunities to experience the use of language due to limited time in class. Consequently, they have great difficulties with the learning and using of business terminology as well as ideas for discussion and presentation. To increase their learning effectiveness, a good preparation of their lessons at home is vitally needed. Reading is considered an extremely useful mean to help them achieve this purpose.

### **2. Literature review**

Reading has been a common activity in daily life. However, its role in language acquisition has just been recognized recently by some researchers.

Bright and McGregor (1970) are among the first who are convinced that the reading of literature is 'the most pleasant route to command of the language', because it is in literature that 'the student is most likely to find words used memorably with force and point.'(1970: 53). They believe little reading will lead to little language learning and the student who wants to learn English will have to read himself into a knowledge of it unless he can move into an English environment.

In her research, Julia (2008) reflected her heavy reliance on reading to assist her learning of several foreign languages. From her own experience and the children's that she observes, she affirms that reading plays an important role in language learning.

Pelcová Bc. J (2014) (as cited in Rini, J.E (2007)) also put that reading should be done in combination with another language skill as it provides an input which requires some kind of response or comprehension reaction. He further suggested that completing and ordering a business article or an e-mail combines both reading comprehension as a passive input together with active complementation or even further expansion of the provided business text. Further extension prospering from a following students' oral text interpretation or post exercise discussion naturally combines reading and speaking training.

Brusch.W (2016) also carried a research into the effectiveness of reading in foreign language acquisition. In her study, she affirmed that her project was very much inspired and influenced by a similar one carried out by Elley and Mangubhai, (1983) and some aspects of the backgrounds of the pupil informants. The participants who took part in her research were from fifteen schools in Hamburg. At first, they were provided with class libraries. Both 'reading' groups and 'non-reading' groups had to do a test. They were tested again in two years. The background information about the pupils revealed the fact that reading is popular amongst them than might be supposed, however, the provision and organization of reading materials in school do not meet their needs and interests.

Although the effectiveness of reading in language learning has been investigated by several language educators and linguists in other countries it has not been paid much attention to in Business English teaching in Vietnam. The contexts in the above research are foreign, however, the investigation results have shed light for the author of this paper to study the benefits of reading in enhancing Business English learning in Hufi.

### **3. Method**

Due to limited time and the scope of the paper, this research is carried out on the ground of taking previous study results as the resources. Therefore, the following methodology has been applied: a review of relevant literature and publications concerning the role of reading in language learning, review of books, journals, research papers and relevant documents. This procedure will provide a foundation to carry out a comprehensive analysis with an aim

to prove the merits of reading in enhancing Hufi Business English students learning process and suggest ways to make most of it.

#### **4. The role of reading texts in Hufi Business English class**

##### ***4.1. Reading input provides the real use of language in context***

As a matter of fact, most of Business English majors in Hufi 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. Reading 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, reading provides them 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.

##### ***4.2. Reading motivates students to learn better***

Another merit of reading 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 after reading students can 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.

##### ***4.3. Reading provides students ideas for speaking and writing activities***

As mentioned above, almost all of Hufi 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. Reading, once again, does not only provide them comprehensive understanding of the topics but also gain them ideas, structures to express themselves correctly and appropriately.

#### **5. Implications and suggestions**

As the power of reading in promoting students' language proficiency is no longer doubted, their use as an input activity to enhance Hufi Business English majors' learning process is strongly recommended. However, to make most of it, a careful selection of reading texts and certain guides for students must be born in mind.

##### ***5.1. Reading texts should be comprehensible***

When reading is deployed as a mean to provide input for student, the selected texts must be within their level of comprehension. If they are too difficult, students can not acquire much language to apply into practice. In worst case, challenging one may demotivate them and make them lose their heart. As the target learners are inexperienced, teachers should provide them some sources of reading texts which are suitable to their level.

### ***5.2. Reading texts should be closely related to the target lesson.***

Business is a broad field. In their course at Hufi, students only learn General Business English for communication. Their purpose is to learn how to use English in major business situations. They do not go deeply into any specific branch. Another governed fact is that the class time is very limited, thus apart from well – preparing necessary reading material for each lesson, teachers should also guide students to search for suitable documents by themselves. To student’s learning results, all the reading texts must be relevant to the target topics covered in class. To achieve this purpose, guided questions for each lesson should be provided to them at least one week in advance so that they have a clear idea about what reading material they need to look for to best prepare for the coming lesson.

### ***5.3. Reading texts should be practical and relevant to real settings***

All Business English learners desire to be able to apply what they learn to practice in their class but also in real contexts. The reading input selected is, therefore, highly desirable and helpful as it adds extra real life connection to the learning in class. Besides, working with authentic materials offers a wider range of different reading comprehension tasks useful for real business situations which are needed to practice properly. Students’ learning result will, undoubtedly, be enhanced when the input material is closely connected with the purpose of practical use of Business English.

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