

2

**AN EVALUATION OF THE READING COMPONENT
OF**

BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSES: A CASE STUDY

PONG TUCK CHEE

**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Languages and
Linguistics,**

University of Malaya

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Masters in English As Second Language

2000

Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya



A510790166

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the following people for their valuable input and assistance in the completion of my dissertation. They are:

Miss Cecilia Joseph, my research supervisor, who patiently read and edited my drafts, offered pertinent suggestions, constant encouragement, unstinting support and guidance throughout the writing of this dissertation.

Miss Lily Fu, my faithful friend, who advised and encouraged me to think positively when I encountered problems in writing this dissertation.

Miss Lim Soo Lan, who allotted time to read my drafts and offered suggestions to improve my writing.

Miss Maggie Yue, who enhanced my computer skills and improved the presentation of my dissertation.

Miss Karthiyani, who gave me moral support and cautioned me of issues that should not be overlooked in the process of completing my dissertation.

All the lecturers and students who participated in the research by completing questionnaires.

THANK YOU

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Pages

1.0	Introduction	1
1.1	Background To The Study	1
1.2	The Reading Component Of The English Courses	3
1.2.1	The Contents Of The Reading Component	4
1.2.2	Materials In The Reading Component	5
1.3	Statement Of The Problem	8
1.4	Purpose Of The Study	11
1.5	Research Questions	12
1.6	Significance Of The Study	13

CHAPTER TWO - REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0	Introduction	16
2.1	The Features Of ESP Courses	16
2.2	The ESP Materials	18
(a)	Matching Authentic Topic To Real Content	20
(b)	Providing Variety In Micro Skills And In Activities Types	20
(c)	Grading The Exercises	21
(d)	Presenting The Materials Well	21

2.3	ESP And Business English	21
2.4	The Importance Of Reading	23
2.5	The Components Of Reading	27
(a)	Decoding / Word Recognition	27
(b)	Comprehension	28
2.6	The Links Between Schemata And Reading	28
(a)	Prior Knowledge	29
(b)	Knowledge Of Text Structure	31
2.7	The Links Between Features Of Texts And Reading	33
(a)	Readability	33
(b)	Suitability Of Content	33
(c)	Exploitability	34
(d)	Vocabulary	35
2.8	Programme Evaluation	36
2.9	Evaluation Models	39
2.9.1	Tyler's Objective Oriented Approach	40
2.9.2	Metfessel And Michael Evaluation Paradigm	41
2.9.3	Provus' Discrepancy Evaluation Model	42
2.9.4	Stufflebeam's Decision Oriented Approach	44
2.9.5	Scriven's Formative And Summative Evaluation	45
2.10	Alternative Views Of Evaluation	46
2.11	Evaluation Of Language Programme	49
2.12	The Future Of Evaluation	53

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

3.0	Introduction	56
3.1	Selection Of Subjects	56
3.2	Instruments	57
3.3	Questionnaires For Students	58
3.4	Questionnaires For Lecturers	59
3.5	Interviews With The Lecturers And Students	59
3.6	Administration Of Instruments	60
3.7	Analysis Of Data	61
3.8	Limitations Of The Study	61

CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS

4.0	Introduction	63
4.1	Data Obtained From Students' Questionnaires And Interviews	63
4.1.1	Students' Choice Of Literature Published In English	63
4.1.2	Reasons For Reading	64
4.1.3	Comprehension Of Materials In Reading Component	65

4.1.4	Hindrances To Comprehension Of Reading Materials	66
4.1.5	General View On The Reading Materials	67
	(a) Usefulness Of The Reading Materials	67
	(b) Level Of Interest	68
	(c) Level Of Difficulty	69
4.1.6	Views On Four Aspects Of The Reading Materials	70
	(a) Vocabulary	70
	(b) The Language Used In The Reading Materials	71
	(c) Passages In The Reading Materials	72
	(d) Tasks In The Reading Materials	72
4.1.7	Benefits Of Using The Reading Materials	73
4.1.8	The Benefits Of Reading The Newspaper Articles	74
4.1.9	The Merits Of The Reading Tasks	75
4.1.10	Students' View On Reading Skills That Improved Comprehension Of Business Text	76
4.1.11	Frequency Of Using Reading Skills	77
4.1.12	Application Of Each Reading Skill In Reading Business Texts	77
	(a) Locating Main Points	77
	(b) Scanning For Information	78
	(c) Getting A General View Of Text	78
	(d) Skimming For Information	79
	(e) Referring To Information Mentioned Earlier or Late	80
	(f) Locating Topic Sentence	80
	(g) Recognizing Connectors	81
	(h) Predicting What Will Follow	81
	(i) Finding Meanings Of Unknown Words	82

4.1.13	A List Of Skills That Were Used Frequently Or Most Frequently By Students	83
4.1.14	Rating The Reading Skills	84
	(a) Range Of Reading Skills	85
	(b) Applicability Of Skills	85
	(c) Emphasis Placed On Teaching The Skills	86
4.1.15	Time Allotment For Teaching Reading Skills	87
4.1.16	Critical Thinking	88
4.1.17	Effects Of Teaching Reading Skills	89
4.1.18	Students' Conclusion About The Reading Component	90
4.2	Data Obtained From Lecturers' Questionnaires And Interviews	91
4.2.1	Lecturers' View Of The Business Students	91
4.2.2	Lecturers' View On Students' Comprehension Of Reading Materials In The Reading Component	92
4.2.3	Lecturers' View On Aspects Of English That Hinder Comprehension Of Students	93
4.2.4	Lecturers' View On The Reading Materials	94
	(a) Usefulness Of The Reading Materials	94
	(b) Level Of Interest	95
	(c) Level Of Difficulty	96
4.2.5	Specific Aspects Of The Reading Materials	97
	(a) Vocabulary	97
	(b) The Language Used In The Reading Materials	97
	(c) Passages In The Reading Materials	98
	(d) Tasks In The Reading Materials	98

4.2.6	Lecturers' View On Text Types	99
	(a) Text Types	99
	(b) Organization Of Materials	99
4.2.7	Lecturers' View On Students' Application Of Each Reading Skill Taught	100
	(a) Locating Main Points	100
	(b) Scanning For Information	100
	(c) Obtaining General View Of Text	101
	(d) Skimming For Information	101
	(e) Referring To words That Link Ideas	102
	(f) Locating Topic Sentence	102
	(g) Recognizing Connectors	103
	(h) Predicting What Will Follow	104
	(i) Finding Meanings Of Unknown Words	105
4.2.8	Lecturers' View On Skills Used Frequently Or Infrequently By Students	106
4.2.9	Rating The Reading Skills Taught	107
	(a) Range Of Reading Skills	107
	(b) Applicability Of Skills	108
	(c) Emphasis Placed On Teaching The Skills	108
4.2.10	Time Allotment For The Reading Component	109
4.2.11	Effects Of Teaching Reading Skills	110
4.2.12	The Value Of The Reading Component	110
4.2.13	Ways To Improve Reading Ability Of Students	112
4.3	Summary Of Findings	113
	(a) Views About The CIMA Students	113
	(b) Views About The Materials Used In The Reading Component	114
	(c) Views On The Reading Skills Taught	116

4.4	Recommendation To Improve The Reading Component	119
4.4.1	Students' Suggestions	119
4.4.2	Lecturers' Suggestions For Improvements	120

CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND SOLUTION

5.0	Introduction	121
5.1	What Are The Views Of Students On The Suitability Of The Reading Component?	121
5.1.1	Students' View On The Reading Materials Used	121
5.1.2	Students' View On The Reading Skills Taught	129
5.1.3	Students' View On The Reading Component	137
5.2	What Are The Views Of The Lecturers Regarding The Suitability And Organization Of The Reading Component?	139
5.2.1	Lecturers' View On The Reading Materials	139
5.2.2	Lecturers' View On The Reading Skills Taught	142
5.3	Has The Reading Component Fulfilled Its Objectives Of Helping Students Improve Their Comprehension Of Business Texts In Order To Have Good Grades In Examination ?	146
5.3.1	The Objectives	146
5.4	Implications Of The Findings	148
5.5	Recommendations For Improving The Reading Component	151
5.6	Conclusion	152

Bibliography	154
Appendix A	177
Appendix B	184
Appendix C	189
Appendix D	190

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
4.1.1	Students' Choice Of English Reading Materials	63
4.1.2	Hierarchy Of Reasons For Referring To Materials In English	64
4.1.3	Comprehension Ability Of Students	65
4.1.4	Students' View On Aspects Of English That Hinder Comprehension	66
4.1.5 (a)	Students' View On The Usefulness Of On The Reading Materials	67
4.1.5 (b)	Students'View On The Level Of Interest Of The Reading Materials	68
4.1.5 (c)	Students' View On The Difficulty Level Of The Reading Materials	69
4.1.6 (a)	Students' View On Vocabulary In The Reading Materials	70
4.1.6 (b)	Students' View On The Language Used In The Reading Materials	71
4.1.6 (c)	Students' View On The Passages In The Reading Materials	72
4.1.6 (d)	Students' View On The Tasks In The Reading Materials	72
4.1.7	The Benefits Of Using The Reading Materials	73
4.1.8	The Benefits Of Reading The Newspaper Articles	74
4.1.9	The Merits Of Doing The Reading Tasks	75
4.1.10	Reading Skills That Improve Comprehension Of Business Text	76
4.1.11	Frequency Of Using The Reading Skills Taught	77

Table	Page
4.1.12 (a) Students' View On Application Of "Locating Main Points" In Reading Business Text	77
4.1.12 (b) Students' View On Application Of "Scanning For Information" In Reading Business Text	78
4.1.12 (c) Students' View On Application Of "Getting A General View Of Text" In Reading Business Text	78
4.1.12 (d) Students' View On Application Of "Skimming For Information" In Reading Business Text	79
4.1.12 (e) Students' View On Application Of "Referring To Words That Link Ideas" In Reading Business Text	80
4.1.12 (f) Students' View On Application Of "Locating Topic Sentence" In Reading Business Text	80
4.1.12 (g) Students' View On Application Of "Recognizing Connectors" In Reading Business Text	81
4.1.12 (h) Students' View On Application Of "Predicting What Will Follow" In Reading Business Text	81
4.1.12 (i) Students' View On Application Of "Finding Meanings Of Unknown Words" In Reading Business Text	82
4.1.13 A List Of Skills Used Frequently Or Most Frequently By Students	83
4.1.14 (a) Students' Views On The Range Of Skills Taught	85
4.1.14 (b) Students' Views On The Applicability Of Skills Taught	85
4.1.14 (c) Students' Views On The Emphasis Placed On Teaching Reading Skills	86
4.1.15 Students' View On Allotment Of Time	87
4.1.16 The Benefits Of Doing Critical Thinking Tasks	88
4.1.17 Students' View On Effects Of Teaching Reading Skills	89

Table	Page
4.1.18	Students' Conclusion About The Reading Component 90
4.2.1	Lecturers' View Of The Business Students 91
4.2.2	Lecturers' View On Students' Comprehension Of Reading Materials In The Reading Component 92
4.2.3	Lecturers' View On Aspects That Hinder Comprehension Of Students 93
4.2.4(a)	Lecturers' View On The Usefulness Of The Reading Materials 94
4.2.4 (b)	Lecturers' View On The Level Of Interest Of The Reading Materials 95
4.2.4 (c)	Lecturers' View On The Difficulty level Of The Reading Materials 96
4.2.5 (a)	Lecturers' View On Vocabulary In The Reading Materials 97
4.2.5 (b)	Lecturers' View On The Language Used In The Materials 97
4.2.5 (c)	Lecturers' View On The Passages In The Reading Materials 98
4.2.5 (d)	Lecturers' View On The Tasks In The Reading Materials 98
4.2.6 (a)	Lecturers' View On Text Types 99
4.2.6 (b)	Lecturers' View On Organization Of Materials 99
4.2.7 (a)	Lecturers' View On Application Of "Locating Main Points" By Students 100
4.2.7 (b)	Lecturers' View On Application Of "Scanning For Information" By Students 100
4.2.7 (c)	Lecturers' View On Application Of "Getting A General View Of Text" By Students 101

Table	Page
4.2.7 (d) Lecturers' View On Application Of "Skimming For Information" By Students	101
4.2.7 (e) Lecturers' View On Application Of "Referring To Words That Link Ideas" By Students	102
4.2.7 (f) Lecturers' View On Application Of "Locating Topic Sentence" By Students	102
4.2.7 (g) Lecturers' View On Application Of "Recognizing Connectors" By Students	103
4.2.7 (h) Lecturers' View On Application Of "Predicting What Will Follow" By Students	104
4.2.7 (i) Lecturers' View On Application Of "Finding Meanings Of Unknown Words" By Students	105
4.2.8 Lecturers' View On Skills Used Frequently And Most Frequently By Students	106
4.2.9 (a) Lecturers' View On The Range Of Skills Taught	107
4.2.9 (b) Lecturers' Views On Applicability Of Skills Taught	108
4.2.9 (c) Lecturers' View On The Emphasis Placed On Teaching Reading Skills	108
4.2.10 Lecturers' View On Allotment Of Time For The Reading Component	109
4.2.11 Lecturers' View Regarding Effects Of Teaching Reading Skills	110
4.2.12 The Value Of The Reading Component	110
4.2.13 Ways For Improving Reading Ability Of Students	112

ABSTRACT

The Business English Courses are compulsory for Business Students at Tunku Abdul Rahman (TAR) College. These courses are aimed at improving the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills of the students.

This study is an evaluation of the reading component of the Business English Courses for Chartered Institute of Management Accounting (CIMA) students. The reading component emphasized the teaching of nine reading skills that were considered useful to reading.

The study attempts to obtain information about the utilization of these reading skills and the benefits derived from utilizing them. In addition, it also seeks to get feedback from both the students and lecturers regarding the quality of the materials used and the administration of the reading component. The ultimate aim of the study is to ascertain whether the reading component fulfils its objectives of helping the students to be effective and efficient readers. Generally, the study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the views of the students regarding the suitability of the reading component?
2. What are the views of the lecturers regarding the suitability and organization of the reading component?
3. Has the reading component fulfilled its objectives of helping students improve their comprehension of business texts in order to have good grades in examinations?

Questionnaires and interviews were used as the instruments to obtain feedback from both students and lecturers. Data obtained shows that in general, the reading needs of the students have been met. The majority of the students and lecturers were of the opinion that the reading skills taught proved useful and beneficial to the students when they read business texts. The majority of the students were able to use frequently most of the reading skills taught. However, some weak students felt that some skills were difficult and they were not confident of using them.

Both the students and lecturers agreed that the reading component was relevant and necessary in Business English Courses. The findings also reveal the weakness of the reading component and it is felt that some modifications and revisions have to be done on the materials used and the range of skills taught in order to enhance the teaching and learning of the reading skills.

ABSTRAK

Kursus-kursus Bahasa Inggeris adalah wajib untuk pelajar-pelajar yang mengikuti Kursus Perniagaan di Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman. Kursus-kursus ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemahiran pelajar dalam bidang membaca, menulis, bertutur dan mendengar.

Kajian ini adalah satu penilaian tentang komponen membaca dalam Kursus-kursus Bahasa Inggeris Perniagaan untuk pelajar CIMA di Kolej TAR. Komponen membaca menekankan pengajaran sembilan kemahiran membaca yang berguna dalam pembacaan.

Kajian ini cuba mendapat maklumat daripada pelajar tentang penggunaan kemahiran membaca tersebut dalam pembacaan teks perniagaan dan faedah penggunaan kemahiran tersebut. Tambahan lagi, ia juga cuba memperoleh maklum-balas daripada kedua-dua pelajar dan pensyarah mengenai kualiti bahan-bahan yang digunakan dan pengendalian komponen membaca. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah memastikan sama ada komponen membaca mencapai objektif dalam membantu pelajar menjadi seorang pembaca yang mahir dan cekap. Pada umumnya, kajian ini ingin mencari jawapan bagi soalan-soalan berikut:

1. Apakah pandangan pelajar tentang kesesuaian komponen membaca?
2. Apakah pandangan pensyarah tentang kesesuaian dan pengendalian komponen membaca?
3. Adakah komponen membaca mencapai objektif dalam membantu pelajar meningkatkan pemahaman mereka dalam pembacaan teks perniagaan supaya mendapat keputusan yang baik dalam peperiksaan?

Senarai soalan-soalan dan temu-ramah telah digunakan untuk mendapat maklumat daripada pelajar dan pensyarah. Pada umumnya data yang diperolehi menunjukkan bahawa keperluan membaca pelajar CIMA telah dikabul. Majoriti pelajar dan pensyarah berpendapat bahawa kemahiran membaca yang diajar terbukti berguna dan memanfaatkan pelajar semasa mereka membaca teks perniagaan. Majoriti pelajar sering kali menggunakan kebanyakan kemahiran membaca yang diajar. Walau bagaimanapun sesetengah pelajar lemah tidak yakin menggunakan kemahiran membaca tertentu.

Kedua-dua pelajar dan pensyarah bersetuju bahawa komponen membaca adalah bersesuaian dan perlu dalam Kursus-kursus Bahasa Inggeris Perniagaan. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan kelemahan dalam komponen membaca dan ternyata bahawa pengubahsuaian dan penyemakan semula harus dilakukan pada kursus-kursus yang sedang ada pada masa kini untuk meningkatkan pengajaran dan pembelajaran dalam kemahiran membaca.