



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 3. Issue.3.,2016 (July-Sept.)

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON TEACHING WRITING SKILL FOR THE MBA STUDENTS OF
ANNA UNIVERSITY AFFILIATED COLLEGES IN TAMILNADU- A STUDY

SIVAKIRI. P¹, Dr. V. THIYAGARAJAN²

¹Research scholar, Department of English, Bharathiar University,
Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India.

²Professor, Department of English, Bannariamman Institute of Technology
Sathyamangalam, Erode Dt, Tamilnadu, India



ABSTRACT

“Communication is the process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour” (Cleland, 1999; p.391). This paper focuses on the findings of a study conducted on the teachers' perceptions on teaching writing skills for the MBA students of Anna University affiliated colleges in Tamilnadu. The course Written Communication in MBA programme, focuses on developing the writing skill of MBA students, in order to equip them and evaluate in different genres of business writings. The study hypothesised that the teachers feel that the teaching writing skill in Written Communication course is not much useful to the students' workplace.

A sample of 20 teachers of written communication course is selected and a set of questionnaire is given to seek their responses on their perceptions on teaching writing skill exercises in Written Communication course. Their responses have been collected, statistically analysed and the outcome is projected in detail.

Keywords: MBA- Master of Business Administrative, TOFEL- Teaching of English as a Foreign Language, ELT- English Language Teaching, BEC- Business English Certificate

©KY PUBLICATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

A recent article which appeared in Deccan Chronicle (dated 29th April 2016, Coimbatore edition) states that only seven percent students of management course have the employability skills. One of the reasons for the lack of employability skill among the remaining percentage of students is lack of written communication in Business English which is compulsorily required for the business sector. Writing is the essential component of the organisational activities and one of the influential factors of the strength of any organisation. An MBA graduate has to be strong in written communication skills especially in writing business correspondence, emails, letters, memos, reports, etc.

Hence this paper attempts to analyse the findings of a survey to ascertain the perceptions of the English language teachers of written communication on the problems faced in teaching workplace written communication skill to the MBA students.

2. Nature of Study

Written communication is an indispensable skill for a management student to get employed and work effectively in an organisation. In spite of teaching various writing skills in the course, the students' ability to do the exercise is passive. The students who have passed out from management institutions are struggling hard to perform well in written communication skills. The major reason for their struggle is their lack of communication skills especially in written communication and their linguistic background, apart from mother tongue influence. Ineffective teaching methodologies and the inadequate hours of teaching the course are other reasons for their struggles. There are many topics involved in the written communication but the students have more problems with describing products, writing a report, writing a press release, writing a contract, writing a notice, the manual or instruction booklets, and asking quotations, clarifications, placing an order, writing a letter of appreciation, writing a broacher, pamphlet, user manual, flyer, compositions (essays, paragraphs, stories, etc.), and note taking exercises. Hence, a study is required to know the effectiveness of teaching writing skills to the MBA students.

3. Importance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in the fact that it aims to find out the teachers perceptions on students' ability in

- Business English
- Writing skill
- Written Communication course
- Performance in writing skill as better or have to improve
- Frequent use of Course Materials

4. Formulation of Hypothesis

Researches carried out in the past and their findings have revealed that the main reason for un-employability of MBA graduates is that they lack in writing skill and are not able to write business correspondence, emails, memos, reports, etc. "Writing: A Ticket to Work or a Ticket Out", is the title of a recent study of National Commission on Writing. This survey reported that "writing is a 'threshold skill' for salaried employment and promotion" (p.5). However, it is also found that about one-third of employees in these large corporations do not have the necessary writing skills for success (Writing: A Ticket to Work or a Ticket Out, 2004).

5. Research Methodology

The data for this study have been collected from the teachers of written communication course in Salem region, Tamilnadu. A questionnaire has been prepared to seek the response from the teachers related to the topic. The data obtained from the questions (Types: Dichotomous, Likert's 5 point scale, etc.) have been transferred to master table. The statistical tool, Percentage analysis has been applied to the study. Twenty teachers of five engineering colleges that offer MBA course in Salem region in Tamilnadu, India are selected for the study.

6. Limitations of the Study

For the evaluation of writing skills of the MBA students, the paper focuses on the perceptions and responses of the teachers of written communication course. The responses have been analysed statistically. The writing skills of other postgraduate students have not been included for the present study.

7. Data analyses and interpretations

The questionnaire prepared for collecting data from the teachers has been given to 20 teachers and data have been collected. On an average, most of the teachers have been teaching the course for at least 0-2 years, with some having taught the course for more than 3 years. The questionnaire has asked whether the students write well in business English, whether the students know the importance of writing skill, whether

the students complete their writing and assignments within the stipulated time, whether written communication skills course exercises really help their students to do better in the campus interviews, in which part of the writing skill are your students better or have to improve, and Frequent use of Course Materials. The following Tables present the findings from all the questionnaires that have been compiled.

8. Teachers perceptions

8.1 Do your students write well in business English?

SI No	Perceptions	No of Teachers	Percent
1	Yes	6	30
2	No	14	70
Total		20	100

The above Table presents details about teachers' response to the question whether their students write well. 70% teachers have responded passive implying that their students are not writing well in English. 30% of the teachers have accepted that their students write well in business English.

8.2 Whether your students know the importance of writing skill?

SI No	Perceptions	No of Teachers	Percent
1	Yes	12	60
2	No	8	40
Total		20	100

For the question whether the students know the importance of writing skill. 60% of the teachers have agreed that their students know the importance of writing, whereas the other 40% teachers have indicated that their students are not aware of the importance of writing skill.

8.3 Do your students complete their writing and assignments within the stipulated time?

SI No	Perceptions	No of Teachers	Percent
1	Yes	3	15
2	No	17	85
Total		20	100

To the above stated question, 85% teachers have responded in negative and have stated that the students do not complete their writing tasks and assignments within the stipulated time. 15% teachers have accepted that their students complete the task within the time.

8.4 Do the written communication skills course exercises really help your students to do better in the campus interviews?

SI No	Perceptions	No of Teachers	Percent
1	Yes	4	20
2	No	16	80
Total		20	100

As a last question in this section, the teachers have been asked, "do the exercises in the communication skills course really help your students to do better in the campus interviews?" A majority of the teachers have stated that the written communication skills course does not help their students much to write better in campus interviews. 20% teachers have acknowledged that the course helps their students.

8.5 In which part of the writing skill are your students better or have to improve?

In the Table shown below opinions about the perception of the teachers is rated on a scale of 'better' to 'have to improve'. With regard to grammar, a mixed response has been given by the teachers. 55% of the teachers have said that the students 'have to improve'; whereas 45% teachers have said that the students' competence level is better in the vocabulary part. 90% of the teachers have stated that the students have to improve much in this part and 10 % teachers have said their students are better in business vocabulary.

85% teachers have responded that their students 'have to improve' in writing simple sentences and sentence construction parts, and 15% teachers have said that their students' skill in writing simple sentence and sentence construction part is 'better'.

S.No	Questions	Response	No. of Teachers	Percent(%)
1	Grammar	Better	9	45
		Have to improve	11	55
2	Vocabulary	Better	2	10
		Have to improve	18	90
3	Writing simple sentences	Better	3	15
		Have to improve	17	85
4	Sentence construction	Better	3	15
		Have to improve	17	85
5	Writing general description / social correspondence	Better	10	50
		Have to improve	10	50
6	Writing for general purpose	Better	9	45
		Have to improve	11	55
7	Writing for academic Purpose	Better	6	30
		Have to improve	14	70
8	Writing paragraphs and essays	Better	0	0
		Have to improve	20	100
9	Writing business report / correspondences	Better	1	5
		Have to improve	19	95
10	Writing general / informal correspondences	Better	10	50
		Have to improve	10	50

There is a mixed response of 50/50 in writing general description and social correspondences. 55% teachers have asserted that their students 'have to improve' in writing for general purposes whereas 45% teachers have accepted that their students are 'better'. As far as writing for academic purposes is concerned, 70% have suggested that their students 'have to improve' and the remaining 30% have said that their students are 'better' in this part.

All the teachers (100%) have responded that their students 'have to improve' more in writing paragraphs and essays. 95% teachers feel their students 'have to improve' in writing business reports and correspondences, only 5% have said 'better'.

With regard to response on writing general and informal business correspondence, the data shows mixed response of teachers.

The above discussion has highlighted the mixed perception of teachers with regard to the students' ability to write good English.

8.6 Frequent Use of Course Materials

The following Table indicates that teachers usually select teaching materials for a written communication class. Mostly teachers have complete freedom to select teaching materials for themselves and it is quite rare that institutions would restrict them to use certain materials. Therefore, professional skills of the teachers will be consequential to the selection and usefulness of the course materials selected for students of written communication course.

8.6.1 Textbooks

The below Table indicates that 45% teachers 'occasionally' use the textbooks; whereas 30% teachers have responded that they 'often' use the textbooks. 25% teachers have stated that they 'rarely' use the

textbooks, and there is no teacher who 'always' uses the textbook. Definitely, this attitude may affect the teaching-learning process of written communication skills course.

SI No	Textbook	No. of Teachers	Percentage
1	Never	0	0
2	Rarely	5	25
3	Occasionally	9	45
4	Often	6	30
5	Always	0	0
Total		20	100

8.6.2 Audio/ Video Cassettes, Recorder and CDs

SI No	Audio/ Video Cassettes, Recorder and CDs	No. of Teachers	Percentage
1	Never	5	25
2	Rarely	7	35
3	Occasionally	7	35
4	Often	0	0
5	Always	1	5
Total		20	100

The Table shows that 35% each of teachers have responded that the audio/ video cassettes, recorders and CDs are 'rarely' and 'occasionally' used whereas 25% teachers have said that they have 'never' used these electronic materials to teach Business English especially written communication course to MBA students. Only 5% teachers have responded that they 'always' use CDs and other electronic materials for teaching this course.

8.6.3 Language Laboratory

SI No	Language Laboratory	No. of Teachers	Percentage
1	Never	0	0
2	Rarely	3	15
3	Occasionally	5	25
4	Often	11	55
5	Always	1	5
Total		20	100

Making use of the language laboratory effectively students could learn the second language with ease. Majority of the teachers (55%) have responded that they 'often' use language laboratory followed by 25% teachers who have used it 'occasionally'. 15% teachers have 'rarely' used the lab and only 5% teachers 'always' use the language laboratory. This shows the range of variations in the use of electronic materials for teaching English.

8.6.4 Online Materials

SI No	Online Materials	No. of Teachers	Percentage
1	Never	5	25
2	Rarely	11	55
3	Occasionally	2	10
4	Often	2	10
5	Always	0	0
Total		20	100

On the usage of online materials, 55% teachers accept that they 'rarely' use online materials, and 25% teachers 'never' use online materials at all and used only printed materials such as notes and textbooks. 10% each teachers have said they 'occasionally' and 'often' use online materials as they have some technical problem such as restrictions in online usage, poor connectivity, etc.

Conclusion and recommendations

The foregoing analysis and interpretation of the data on the teachers' perception on teaching writing skill to the students of Business English show that there is mixed opinion among the teachers. Some of the teachers perceive some aspects of writing skill important even as some others perceive the same as unimportant. This type of varying responses shows that there is no uniform thinking among the teachers in this regard. This is essentially because of the mixed level of performance of the students of Business English. Despite the fact that there cannot be a uniform level of performance, one expects that at least a majority of the students perform well in writing skill. It is well known that writing, like any other language skill, could not be learnt and mastered all on a sudden. One has to practice it patiently for days. Therefore the teachers should be impressed upon making the students write more. For this purpose the students should be given lots of assignments and home works in writing skill and they must be asked to submit them in their own handwriting and not in computer printed form. For obvious reasons, the students should be asked to submit only the handwritten assignments. This would go a long way in improving the writing skill of the students.

References

1. Alred, G.H., Brusaw, C.T., & Oliu, W.E., (2006). '*The Business Writer's Handbook* (8th ed.)', New York: St. Martin's.
 2. Alsop, R., (2004). 'How to Get Hired', *The Wall Street Journal*, p.R-8.
 3. Cleland, D.I, (1999). *Project Management: Strategic Design and Implementation*, 3rd ed., New York: McGraw-Hill.
 4. Gillham, B. (2000). *Case study research methods*. London: Continuum.
 5. *Writing: 'A Ticket to Work or a Ticket Out'*, The National Commission on Writing/ College Board, 2004.
-