



Optimizing Business English Learning Among Freshmen in a Private University in China with BERIUVE

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Abstract

Background and Aims: Business English learners encounter challenges in acquiring specialized business knowledge and English proficiency. Mastering English, especially in a business context, can be daunting for second-language learners. Thus, this study aims to examine the challenges students face in reading and motivation while learning business English and to develop a Business English Reading Instruction Using Vision Enhancement (BERIUVE).

Materials and Methods: The present study conducted a needs analysis employing a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. Five freshman classes (N=145) from a private college in China participated in the survey.

Results: The findings demonstrated that students acknowledged the importance of business English reading but sought increased motivation to learn. They lacked both micro- and macro-cognitive reading abilities for comprehension and required assistance in cultivating a vivid and realistic vision. In response to the student's preferences, the researcher developed the BERIUVE, inspired by Hadfield and Dornyei (2013)'s visionary motivational program. This study's innovative approach, which integrates reading demands and learning motivation, has substantial pedagogical implications for future business English instruction. The findings can inform the modification of course objectives and the development of motivational instruction for business reading based on learner analysis.

Conclusions: Specifically, the study highlights the importance of recognizing individual learner needs to devise targeted interventions that can improve reading abilities and enhance overall reading efficiency. The pedagogical implications of analyzing learners and designing motivational instruction for business reading are ultimately discussed.

Keywords: Needs Analysis; L2MSS; Reading Strategies; Vision Enhancement

Introduction

Business English learners encounter challenges in acquiring specialized business knowledge and English proficiency (Goldenberg, 2020; Tuyet, 2021). Mastering English, especially in a business context, can be daunting for second-language learners (Martyn, 2018). Hence, fostering learning motivation becomes crucial to supporting their persistence in their studies.

Previous research has shown that motivated students exhibit improved reading comprehension skills (Protacio, 2012; Tokan & Imakulata, 2019; Tsai et al., 2017). In business English education, teachers should consider students' career aspirations and incorporate interventions to enhance motivation and engagement. Vision enhancement activities, as proposed by Hadfield and Dornyei (2013), help learners envision their desired outcomes, strengthening their commitment to language learning goals (Boyatzis & Dhar, 2022; Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006; Mackay, 2015; Sak, 2020).



Effective instruction necessitates considering students' needs, goals, interests, and language learning motivation (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Kakoulli Constantinou & Papadima-Sophocleous, 2021; Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Incorporating these factors into course design and lesson planning is vital for better learning outcomes (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013).

The current study aims to establish learning objectives for business English reading lessons and develop an instructional framework that integrates business reading skills with vision enhancement activities, known as Business English Reading Instruction Using Vision Enhancement (BERIUVE) (Li, 2023). The study focuses on freshmen majoring in Business English at a private university in China, where English proficiency is relatively low. These students face the challenge of developing language and subject matter expertise simultaneously. To address this, the study proposes BERIUVE instruction, which integrates Hadfield and Dörnyei's (2013) visionary motivational program with reading skills to enhance students' vision and language learning achievement. The instruction will consider individual learner needs, as revealed by a needs analysis questionnaire completed by the students, to ensure effective learning.

Research Question:

What are the needs of business English freshmen in private universities for their English reading and vision enhancement?

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to contribute to language education literature and offer practical implications for business English reading teaching. It highlights the importance of addressing individual learner needs in language education program design. The study participants are freshmen majoring in Business English at a private university in Northeast China, who have chosen this profession upon enrollment, possess a pass-level English proficiency, and lack a clear understanding of their future career prospects.

Literature Review

Needs Analysis

Needs analysis (NA) is essential in designing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. Educators must identify students' essential requirements and competency gaps to target areas for improvement (Alsamadani, 2017). This analysis is crucial for designing language courses with specific learning objectives for distinct learner groups (Azukas & Gaudelli, 2020; Crites & Rye, 2020; Sarbunan, 2023; Todea & Demarcsek, 2017). ESP programs consider needs analysis as the initial step in determining learners required English language skills (Widodo, 2017).

Researchers categorize needs analysis into three components: necessities, lacks, and wants of students (Nation & Macalister, 2020). Necessities refer to the essential knowledge learners must acquire; lacks indicate areas that haven't been mastered yet and wants to represent learners' preferences for acquisition.

Needs analysis plays a crucial role in developing language curricula, guiding lesson planning, syllabus design, materials evaluation, and instructional designs and assessments (Widodo, 2017). In this study, needs analysis results were utilized to construct the instruction of teaching business English reading using vision enhancement activities (BERIUVE).



Business English Reading and L2 Learning Motivation

Reading is crucial in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum, particularly in business English. While students may perceive reading as a manageable skill, challenges still arise (Jordan, 2007). Strong readers tend to utilize reading strategies more effectively than moderate or weak readers, both overall and in specific categories (Chen and Intaraprasert, 2014). Implementing such strategies positively impacts reading comprehension, with students favoring techniques like skimming, scanning, predicting, and questioning (Banditvilai, 2020).

To improve learning outcomes, organizing workshops or training sessions to enhance students' understanding and application of these strategies is recommended (Sheikh et al., 2019). Metacognitive reading strategies are vital for developing reading proficiency (Dhieb-Henia, 2003). Acquiring domain-specific reading competence is crucial for meeting academic requirements, especially in business English (Ngoepe, 2012; Scholitz, 2012).

Considering motivation is also essential, as intrinsic motivation indirectly impacts reading comprehension through increased reading and metacognitive understanding (Miyamoto, et al., 2019). Both cognitive and affective skills are significant in academic reading education (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000).

The study aims to conduct a needs analysis for business English reading among freshmen at a private university in China. Based on the analysis, the Business English Reading Instruction Using Vision Enhancement (BERIUVE) program will be developed, integrating reading skills, vocabulary development, and motivational strategies (Hadfield & Dornyei, 2013). This program will address micro- and macro-cognitive reading abilities and motivation in the context of business English reading.

Vision Enhancement

In recent years, the concept of vision enhancement has garnered attention as a potent tool to enhance motivation and improve learning outcomes, based on Dornyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) (Dornyei, 2005; Dornyei, 2009). The L2MSS draws from two psychological theories: the possible selves' theory by Markus and Nurius (1986) and the self-discrepancy theory by Higgins (1987). Vision enhancement involves helping learners create a clear and compelling vision of their future selves, envisioning successful language use in real-life contexts, such as business environments.

Previous research has shown that vision enhancement improves students' self-confidence, attitudes towards language learning, and language use (Magid, 2011; Hadfield & Dornyei, 2013; Sato, 2020; Nguyen, 2017). However, no prior study has specifically examined vision enhancement in the context of a private university in China, with a needs analysis in the business English reading course.

This present research aims to integrate business English reading into learners' self-concept, focusing on their envisioned future selves utilizing English professionally. The study seeks to identify students' specific requirements and desires concerning English reading and vision enhancement to develop tailored instruction that enhances reading skills and motivation to learn.

Research Methodology

This research conducted a needs analysis of business English reading and vision enhancement among freshmen majoring in business English at a private university in China. Data were collected using a 5-point Likert scale online questionnaire to gather quantitative information. The collected data were analyzed using a paired sample t-test. Additionally, qualitative data were gathered through semi-



structured interviews to gain further insights into students' opinions regarding BELIEVE. Content analysis was utilized to thoroughly examine and interpret the qualitative data and an intercoder was invited to verify the reliability of the qualitative findings.

Participants

The research included a population of 174 freshmen majoring in Business English at a private university in China. Unlike universities in the US and UK, this Chinese university placed a stronger emphasis on standardized test scores from the Chinese National College Entrance Exam for admissions.

From the population, 135 participants were conveniently sampled during their second term, which coincided with the start of a Business English reading course. This course acted as a bridge between their previous General English studies and their specialization in Business. Upon admission, most students had English proficiency levels slightly above the passing average, necessitating a focus on maintaining their learning momentum and improving their learning achievement.

Research Instrument

To measure the needs of the participants in English reading and vision enhancement, an online questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was utilized. The decision to use this scale was made to allow participants to express their level of agreement or preference on each item.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts: (1) general information, and (2) items related to the necessities, lacks, and wants of the participants. There were 26 items in total: 6 items to assess the necessities of English reading and vision enhancement, 13 items to investigate lacks, and 7 items to explore wants. This comprehensive coverage ensured a thorough examination of relevant aspects of interest.

To ensure content validity, a rigorous process was followed. The original version was written in English and then translated into Chinese. An English expert back-translated the Chinese version to ensure clarity and intelligibility. The Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was used to assess congruence between questionnaire items and their objectives. Items with a mean score below 0.5 were excluded, while those with a mean score of at least 0.5 were retained. The questionnaire demonstrated high validity with an IOC value of 0.98.

A pilot study was conducted to test the questionnaire's reliability. Cronbach's alpha was calculated using computer software, resulting in a high internal consistency score of .908. This indicated the questionnaire's reliability.

Data Collection

The participants (N=135) were selected with convenience sampling to take part in the study by scanning a QR code that directed them to an online questionnaire. The results were then put into computer software to work out descriptive statistics.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed with descriptive statistics. Means and standard deviation were calculated with computer software to analyze the results. The mean score intervals of the questionnaire were interpreted based on the following criteria (Pimentel, 2010; Tadesse & Derza, 2020):



Table 1 Mean Range Interpretation of the 5-point Likert Scale Measurements

Likert Scale Description	Likert Scale	Likert Scale Interval
Strongly disagree	1	1.00-1.80
disagree	2	1.81-2.60
Neutral	3	2.61-3.40
agree	4	3.41-4.20
Strongly agree	5	4.21-5.00

Results

The subsequent section delineates the findings derived from the quantitative segment of the questionnaire. The results were categorized into three distinct sections. Firstly, part one encapsulates the general information about the participants under investigation. Subsequently, part two presents the quantitative data encompassing the students' perceived requirements and preferences concerning reading strategies. Finally, part three delineates the quantitative data related to the students' identified necessities, lacks, and wants concerning vision enhancement.

General Information

Research findings showed the percentage of freshmen participants majoring in business English on their business English reading strategies and vision enhancement activities. Approximately 92.6% of the participants (N=135) were female and 7.4% were male. They studied English for about 8 years from their primary school on average.

Needs Analysis of Business English Reading

The needs analysis of reading abilities in the questionnaire was divided into three parts: necessities, lacks, and wants.

Needs of Business English Reading. Participants reached a consensus on the importance of English reading skills, its contribution to language competence, and the value of a business English reading course for students in this field as shown below.

Table 2 Necessities of Business English Reading

Items	M	SD	Interpretation
2. English reading skills are important for the improvement of reading ability.	4.24	0.435	Strongly agree
3. English reading is important in language competence.	4.24	0.511	Strongly agree
1. Business English reading course is important for business English major students.	4.21	0.559	Strongly agree

As depicted in Table 2, participants strongly agreed ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.435$) on the significance of English reading skills for enhancing their overall reading ability. This finding emphasizes their recognition of the crucial role English reading proficiency plays in their broader reading competence. Additionally, participants collectively acknowledged ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.511$) the importance of English reading in advancing their language competence, further solidifying their understanding of the intrinsic link between effective English reading and overall language proficiency. The participants also emphasized the value of a business English reading course for students majoring in business English



($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.559$). This finding underscores the perceived importance of specialized instruction that focuses on enhancing reading skills within the context of business English, indicating a recognition of the unique language demands and requirements associated with their field of study.

The section on “Lacks of Business English Reading” pertains to the deficiencies identified in the needs analysis of business English reading. Participants’ responses shed light on their perceived areas of weakness in various aspects of reading comprehension and language features specific to business English. The findings regarding their levels of agreement concerning their knowledge and proficiency in these areas are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Lacks of Business English Reading

Items	M	SD	Interpretation
8. I know how to scan the passage for details.	4.00	0.598	Agree
7. I know how to skim a passage for the main idea.	3.97	0.566	Agree
4. I know the vocabulary features of business English.	3.97	0.68	Agree
11. I know how to infer the author's attitudes.	3.97	0.566	Agree
6. I know how I can get clues from word derivations.	3.93	0.593	Agree
12. I know how to use cohesive devices.	3.93	0.651	Agree
10. I know how to make inferences.	3.93	0.593	Agree
5. I know the rules of word formation of business English words.	3.90	0.724	Agree
9. I know how to tell facts and opinions.	3.83	0.658	Agree
13. I know the rhetorical devices.	3.76	0.786	Agree

The results indicated that participants generally agreed on their knowledge and proficiency in several aspects of business English reading. They showed competence in scanning passages for details ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.598$) and skimming passages for the main idea ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.566$), indicating a reasonable level of ability in these fundamental reading strategies.

However, participants also identified areas where they perceived a lack of knowledge or proficiency. They acknowledged the need for improvement in the following areas: familiarity with vocabulary features of business English ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.680$), inferring the author's attitudes ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.566$), utilizing clues from word derivations ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.593$), understanding cohesive devices ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.651$), making inferences ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.593$), understanding the rules of word formation in business English ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.724$), distinguishing between facts and opinions ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.658$), and recognizing rhetorical devices ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.786$). These findings highlight areas where participants feel the need for further development and targeted instruction.

Understanding the specific areas of lack in participants’ proficiency is crucial for designing effective interventions to enhance their business English reading skills. Addressing these identified areas can improve their overall comprehension abilities and enable them to navigate the complex language features and nuances encountered in business-related texts.

Wants of Business English Reading. The participants’ responses provided insights into their expressed desires and aspirations regarding their reading skills and habits within the context of business



English as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Wants of Business English Reading

Items	M	SD	Interpretation
16. I want to improve my reading speed by learning more words.	4.31	0.471	Strongly agree
14. I want to improve my reading skills in business English reading.	4.24	0.511	Strongly agree
15. I want to improve my reading habits.	4.14	0.516	Agree

The results indicated strong agreement among participants regarding their wants. They expressed a strong desire to improve their reading speed by learning more words ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.471$), recognizing the connection between vocabulary expansion and increased reading efficiency.

Additionally, participants strongly agreed on their desire to enhance their reading skills specifically in the domain of business English ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.511$), highlighting their recognition of the unique language demands and nuances associated with business-related reading.

Beyond skill improvement, participants expressed a desire to cultivate a reading habit ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.516$), showing their understanding of the importance of regular reading practice for language development and overall reading proficiency.

Understanding participants' wants in terms of reading speed improvement, enhancing business English reading skills, and cultivating a reading habit was crucial for designing tailored interventions and creating a conducive learning environment. Addressing these expressed desires can enhance participants' motivation, engagement, and overall development in business English reading.

Needs Analysis of Vision Enhancement

The needs analysis of vision enhancement in the questionnaire was also divided into three parts: necessities, lacks, and wants.

Necessities of Vision Enhancement. Participants' perspectives on the importance of vision enhancement, the role of purpose and direction in overcoming challenges, and struggles with maintaining motivation while reading English materials were discussed.

Table 5 Necessities of Vision Enhancement

Items	M	SD	Interpretation
17. Learning English is important to me because it will give me access to new opportunities.	4.28	0.46	Strongly agree
18. Having a sense of purpose and direction would help me overcome difficulties in learning English.	4.28	0.53	Strongly agree
21. I often struggle with staying motivated to read English materials.	4.14	0.52	Agree

The results show strong agreement among participants regarding the necessity of vision enhancement in learning English. They highly valued English language proficiency for accessing new



opportunities ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.46$), indicating their recognition of its importance in accessing a wider range of professional and personal prospects.

Participants also recognized the motivational benefits of having a clear vision and goals in overcoming difficulties ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.53$), highlighting their understanding of the positive impact of having a clear vision and goals in their language learning journey.

Moreover, they acknowledged struggles in maintaining motivation while reading English materials ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.52$), indicating the need for strategies and interventions to enhance and sustain motivation levels, specifically in the context of reading in business English.

Understanding these necessities is vital for designing effective instructional interventions to enhance participants' motivation and success in business English reading. Addressing these identified needs can contribute to their overall language proficiency and engagement in their language learning process.

Lacks of Vision Enhancement. This section presents the findings about the lack of vision enhancement within the context of business English reading, as depicted in Table 6.

Table 6 Lacks of Vision Enhancement

Items	M	SD	Interpretation
20. I would like to know more about how I could keep my vision alive.	4.24	0.51	Strongly agree
19. I would like to learn more about how to set practical and achievable goals for myself in English learning.	4.21	0.49	Strongly agree
26. I would like to learn more about how to translate my vision into an action plan in English learning	4.21	0.49	Strongly agree

The findings from the table indicate strong agreement among participants regarding their lack related to vision enhancement in English learning. Participants expressed a strong desire to know more about how to keep their vision alive ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.51$). They also expressed a strong interest in learning how to set practical and achievable goals for themselves in English learning ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.49$), as well as how to translate their vision into an action plan ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.49$). These findings highlight participants' motivation and eagerness to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain their vision, set effective goals, and implement their vision into actionable steps in the context of English learning.

Wants of Vision Enhancement. This section presents the results concerning the wants to promote vision enhancement in business English reading, as illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7 Wants of Vision Enhancement

Items	M	SD	Interpretation
23. I feel more motivated to learn English when I have a clear understanding of how it can benefit me in the future.	4.31	0.47	Strongly agree
22. I would be interested in participating in a visionary motivational program to improve my English learning motivation.	4.28	0.46	Strongly agree



Items	M	SD	Interpretation
24. I would like to know more about the benefits of having a clear vision of my ideal L2 self.	4.24	0.51	Strongly agree
25. I feel more motivated to learn English when I am challenged to use the language in practical situations.	4.17	0.54	Agree

The findings from the table indicate participants' wants related to vision enhancement in business English reading. Participants strongly agreed that they feel more motivated to learn English when they have a clear understanding of how it can benefit them in the future ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.47$). They also expressed a high level of interest in participating in a vision enhancement to improve their English learning motivation ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.46$). Moreover, participants expressed a desire to know more about the benefits of having a clear vision of their ideal L2 self ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.51$). Additionally, participants mentioned that they feel more motivated to learn English when they are challenged to use the language in practical situations ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.54$). These findings indicate participants' wants and preferences regarding vision enhancement, emphasizing the importance of understanding the potential benefits, participating in motivational programs, and engaging in practical language use to enhance motivation in business English reading.

Discussion and Contributions

The research findings reveal participants' strong agreement on the significance of English reading skills for enhancing overall reading ability and language competence, particularly within the context of business English. Participants expressed a desire to improve reading speed through vocabulary expansion, recognizing its role in increasing reading efficiency. Moreover, they emphasized the importance of a business English reading course, indicating recognition of its value in meeting their specialized language needs.

Regarding lack of business English reading, participants identified areas for improvement, such as vocabulary familiarity, inferencing abilities, cohesive devices understanding, and distinguishing between facts and opinions. Addressing these identified areas through targeted interventions can enhance participants' comprehension abilities and enable them to navigate the complexities of business-related texts.

Participants also revealed a strong recognition of the motivational benefits of vision enhancement in language learning. They expressed a desire to learn strategies to maintain their vision, set achievable goals, and translate their vision into actionable steps. Understanding and addressing these needs are crucial for fostering participants' motivation and success in business English reading.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of tailoring instructional interventions to address participants' needs and preferences in business English reading and vision enhancement. By doing so, educators can enhance participants' language proficiency, engagement, and motivation, contributing to more effective language education in the business context.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, the researcher examined the needs, lacks, and wants of Chinese business English freshmen at a private institution concerning their business English reading skills and vision



improvement for a business English reading course. The survey results indicated that participants recognized the importance of reading abilities and business English reading in their second language acquisition. They showed a preference for developing macro-cognitive reading abilities like skimming, scanning, making inferences, distinguishing facts from opinions, and inferring the author's attitude, as opposed to micro-cognitive reading skills like vocabulary characteristics, business English word formation, and word derivations. Participants expressed a desire to enhance their reading speed and frequency. Regarding the emotive aspect of reading, they emphasized the need for learning motivation and acknowledged the occasional lack of it in business English reading. Additionally, they expressed a wish to materialize their vision and apply it to their academic learning, aiming to sustain their goal and encourage their pursuit of business English study.

The study suggests that customized instructional approaches targeting specific weaknesses, such as reading skills and vocabulary, along with strategies for motivation and vision enhancement, can effectively support participants in achieving success in business English reading. Implementing the Business English Reading Instruction Using Vision Enhancement (BERIUVE) approach can further enhance learners' language proficiency and comprehension in this context.

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