



**TEACHING WRITING SKILLS FOR THE MBA STUDENTS OF
ANNA UNIVERSITY AFFILIATED COLLEGES IN TAMILNADU- A STUDY**

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Abstract

Communication is a complex process of expressing and exchanging of one's ideas, thoughts, opinion, emotions and views. The knowledge over communication especially in written communication is an essential quality of an effective worker in an organisation. This study focuses on the teaching writing skills for the MBA students of Anna University affiliated colleges in Tamilnadu. Anna University prescribed Written Communication course for the MBA students in their first semester. The study hypothesised that the students feel the writing tasks in Written Communication Skills course are not much helpful to do the effective writing exercises.

A sample of 50 students of first semester is selected and a set of questionnaire was given to seek their responses on the writing skills exercises in Written Communication course. Their responses were collected, statistically analysed and the outcome is projected in detail.

Keywords: MBA- Master of Business Administration, Chi-square analysis, TOFEL- Teaching of English as a Foreign Language, ELT- English Language Teaching, BEC- Business English Certificate



1. Introduction

Communication is sharing and understanding of one's feelings and ideas through Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Writing is the fundamental part of the organisational activities and one of the determining factors of the strength of the organisation. Writing competency is very important to an MBA student who is looking for a job in an organisation. An MBA graduate has to work with significant ability and should be strong in written communication skills. MBA students should have adequate competency to do well in writing tasks in an organisation. The rapid advancement of global trade and business, the business world is becoming more and more integrated and affiliated in the form of e-commerce, and e-business. Most companies and business organisations require MBA graduates with effective business communication skill especially in writing skills. Business students need to develop their writing skill that requires writing business correspondence, emails, letters, memos, reports, etc.

Hence learning business writing is an important process in Written Communication skills course of an MBA student. Recruiters and placement coordinators feel the students' ability in writing skills is not appreciable. They fail in placement exams because of inefficiency in written communication. They added that business students especially in MBA program are very much inadequate in mastering the art of writing in business environment. "Within the topic of communication, the lack of effective writing skill continues to be a major source of complaint by MBA recruiters" (Alsop, 2004; Butler, 2007). Hence this paper attempts to analyse the effectiveness of Written Communication in MBA program.

2. Nature of Study

Written communication is a required skill for a management student to get job and work effective in an organisation. In spite of teaching various writing skills in the course, the students' ability to do the exercise is passive. The students passed out from management institutions are struggling to perform well in written communication skills. The major reason for the struggle is that their lack of communication skills especially in written communication and their linguistic background, also mother tongue influence, ineffective teaching methodologies and the



inadequate hours of teaching the course are other reason for the 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 importance of the study is to find out the students responses on

- The importance of the language skills
- The helpfulness of Written communication skills course and
- The ability of writing exercises

4. Formulation of Hypothesis

In today's dynamic business world, it is acknowledged that well developed soft skills, including communication skills play a vital role in obtaining employment and succeeding long term career success of an individual. The importance of the communication skills in an organisational success seems clear. In "Writing: A Ticket to Work or a Ticket Out", a 2004 report of National Commission on Writing, the commission surveyed and concluded 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). As a result, many companies have been forced to provide writing trainings. The severity of the problem is illustrated by the cost to employers of this training. Many recruiters and placement coordinators feel there is much inability in written communication especially in presentation, gaps in analyses, poor logic, lack of clarity, verbosity, errors in grammar, improper tone, and inappropriate style.



5. Research Methodology

The topic for the research study is Teaching Writing Skills for MBA students of Anna University affiliated colleges and the nature of the topic is theoretical and empirical. The data are collected from respondents of Salem region, Tamilnadu. The empirical research has met the requirement of research. For this empirical study primary data with all aspects of writing skills were collected from the students studying MBA in Salem District. The primary data was related to the response of students. Questionnaire has been prepared to seek the response from the students related to the topic. The data obtained from the questions (Types: Dichotomous, Likert's 5 point scale, etc.) was transferred to master table. The statistical tools, (i) Percentage analysis and (ii) Chi-square analysis were applied to the study. Fifty students are selected from five engineering colleges in Salem region in Tamilnadu, India.

Reliability Coefficients:

No. of Cases = 50 No. of Items = 16
Alpha = 0.846 (i.e. 84.6%)

6. Limitations of the Study

For the evaluation of written communication skills, the paper focuses on the perceptions and responses of the students. 50 students from First year MBA program were selected as the respondents and a set of questionnaire with language skills, communication skills and writing skills was prepared and given to them. The responses were analysed statistically.

7. Analysis and Interpretations

The Chi square test is used in any study on social science and management for testing the independence of two attributes. In this section the results of chi-square analysis is presented by dividing the factors considered in the study as two groups such as various dimensions in the comparative study on Teaching Writing Skills for MBA Students in Anna University Affiliated Colleges, Tamilnadu. Each of the variables among the students is compared with the personal



factors, chi square test is applied and the results are presented with suitable hypothesis and relevant interpretations. The study factors considered are:

- Level of perception on language skills
- Level of perception on written communication skills

8. To study the personal factors on the level of perception on language skills

a. Hypothesis: The personal factors have no significant influence on the opinion of the respondents on the language skills

The Tables 1.1 and 1.2 describe the overall scores and the results of chi-square analysis in terms of personal factors, chi-square values, p values and their significance on the perception on language skills.

Table 1.1: Overall Scores – Personal factors on language skills

Personal factors		Perception on language skills			
		Low	Medium	High	Total
Sex	Male	2	0	28	30
	Female	1	0	19	20
Total		3	0	47	50
Age	below 20	1	0	12	13
	21-25	2	0	34	36
	25-30	0	0	1	1
	30&above	0	0	0	0
Total		3	0	47	50
Mother tongue	Tamil	2	0	38	40
	English	1	0	9	10
	Malayalam	0	0	0	0



	Hindi	0	0	0	0
	Kannada	0	0	0	0
	Telugu	0	0	0	0
	Others	0	0	0	0
Total		3	0	47	50
Medium of instruction in HSC	Tamil	2	0	36	38
	English	0	0	2	2
	Malayalam	0	0	0	0
	Hindi	0	0	0	0
	Kannada	0	0	0	0
	Telugu	1	0	9	10
	Others	0	0	0	0
Total		3	0	47	50
Medium of instruction in Degree	Tamil	1	0	3	4
	English	0	0	0	0
	Malayalam	0	0	0	0
	Hindi	0	0	0	0
	Kannada	0	0	0	0
	Telugu	2	0	44	46
	Others	0	0	0	0
Total		3	0	47	50
Current Semester	1	3	0	47	50
	2	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	0
	4	0	0	0	0
	5	0	0	0	0
	6	0	0	0	0



Total		3	0	47	50
Level from which the respondents learnt English language	Primary school	2	0	16	18
	Middle/ high school	1	0	24	25
	College	0	0	7	7
	University	0	0	0	0
	Respondents personal study	0	0	0	0
	Abroad	0	0	0	0
	English Training centre	0	0	0	0
Total		3	0	47	50
Additional English courses/ training programmes	Yes	0	0	9	9
	No	3	0	38	41
Total		3	0	47	50
Allotted hours for English communication skills course	2	1	0	1	2
	3	0	0	0	0
	4	0	0	0	0
	5 & above	2	0	46	48
Total		3	0	47	50
Satisfaction on the allotted hours	Yes	3	0	24	27
	No	0	0	23	23
Total		3	0	47	50



Nature of Location	City	1	0	1	2
	Urban	1	0	1	2
	Semi-urban	0	0	0	0
	Rural/ village	1	0	45	46
Total		3	0	47	50
Parents education	PhD	0	0	0	0
	PG	0	0	0	0
	UG	0	0	1	1
	HSC	1	0	3	4
	SSLC	1	0	21	22
	Primary	1	0	7	8
	Illiterate	0	0	15	15
Total		3	0	47	50

Source: primary data

The Table 1.1 shows that among the 50 students participated in the study, 30% (28 students) are male participant and 20% (22 students) are female. Considering the age factor the majoritarian 72% (36 students) are from 21 to 25 age group, and 26% (13 students) are from below 20 age group, 2% (1 student) is from 30 and above age group. From mother tongue influence factor, 80% (40 students) are from Tamil medium background, and 20% (10 students) are from English medium background. In medium of instruction in higher secondary Course, 76% (38 students) are from Tamil medium schools, 4% (2 students) are from English medium schools, and 20% (10 students) are from Telugu medium schools. Considering the students education in the medium of instruction in Degree level, 92% (46 students) have earned their degrees through English medium and only 8% (4 students) are from Tamil medium in their degree level. Invariably all the students are doing first semester when the data was collected. 50% (25 students) are studying in English medium from their higher secondary classes, and 36% (18 students) are



studying from primary classes and 14% (7 students) are from college level. 82% (41 students) have not undergone any additional English courses or training programmes like IELTS, BEC, TOEFL and 18% (9 students) had the trainings and additional courses in English. Invariably, all students responded the allotted hours for written communication skills course and it is 5 and above. And 54% (27 students) are satisfied and 46% (23 students) are not satisfied with the allotted hours for this course. Considering their area of living, 92% (46 students) are from rural and village background, each 4% (2 students) are from urban and city background. 44% (22 students') parents have studied up to SSLC, 10% (5 students') parents have studies up to primary level, 8% (4 students') parents studied Higher secondary level, 2% (1 student's) parent studied up to degree level and remaining 30% (15 students') parents are illiterates.

Table 1.2: Chi Square values - Personal factors on language skills

Personal factors		Chi-square Value	p values	Significant/ Not Significant
1	Sex	0.059	0.81	NS
2	Age	0.142	0.93	NS
3	Mother tongue	0.355	0.55	NS
4	Medium of instruction in HSC	0.448	0.80	NS
5	Medium of instruction in Degree	2.783	0.10	NS
6	Current Semester	-	-	-
7	Level from which the respondents learnt English language	1.458	0.48	NS
8	Additional English courses/ training programmes	0.701	0.40	NS



9	Allotted hours for written communication skills	7.151	0.01	S
10	Satisfaction on the allotted hours	2.719	0.10	NS
11	Nature of Location	14.924	0.00	S
12	Parents education	4.263	0.37	NS

S – Significant at 5% level (p value<= 0.05); NS – Not Significant at 5% level (p value>0.05)

It is found from the Table 1.2 that the hypothesis is rejected (Significant) in two cases and other cases are accepted (Not significant). It is concluded that the personal variables such as ‘Allotted hours for English communication skills’ and ‘Nature of Location’ have significant influence on the level of perception on language skills.

b. Hypothesis: The personal factors have no significant influence on the opinion of the respondents on the communication skills

The Tables 1.3 and 1.4 describe overall scores and the results of chi-square analysis in terms of personal factors, chi-square values, p values and their significance on the perception on communication skills.

Table 1.3: Overall Scores – Personal factors on communication skills

Personal factors		Perception on communication skills			
		Low	Medium	High	Total
Sex	Male	12	18	0	30
	Female	6	13	1	20
Total		18	41	1	50
Age	below 20	4	8	1	13



	21-25	14	22	0	36
	25-30	0	1	0	1
	30&above	0	0	0	0
Total		18	31	1	50
Mother tongue	Tamil	14	25	1	40
	English	4	6	0	10
	Malayalam	0	0	0	0
	Hindi	0	0	0	0
	Kannada	0	0	0	0
	Telugu	0	0	0	0
	Others	0	0	0	0
Total		18	31	1	50
Medium of instruction in HSC	Tamil	12	25	1	38
	English	1	1	0	2
	Malayalam	0	0	0	0
	Hindi	0	0	0	0
	Kannada	0	0	0	0
	Telugu	5	5	0	10
	Others	0	0	0	0
Total		18	31	1	50
Medium of instruction in Degree	Tamil	1	3	0	4
	English	0	0	0	0
	Malayalam	0	0	0	0
	Hindi	0	0	0	0
	Kannada	0	0	0	0
	Telugu	17	28	1	46
	Others	0	0	0	0



Total		18	31	1	50
Current Semester	1	18	31	1	50
	2	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	0
	4	0	0	0	0
	5	0	0	0	0
	6	0	0	0	0
Total		18	31	1	50
Level from which the respondents learnt English language	Primary school	8	10	0	18
	Middle/ high school	10	14	1	25
	College	0	7	0	7
	University	0	0	0	0
	Respondents personal study	0	0	0	0
	Abroad	0	0	0	0
	English Training centre	0	0	0	0
Total		18	31	1	50
Additional English courses/ training programmes	Yes	2	7	0	9
	No	16	24	1	41
Total		18	31	1	50
Allotted hours for English communication skills course	2	2	0	0	2
	3	16	31	1	48
	4	0	0	0	0
	5 & above	0	0	0	0



Total		18	31	1	50
Satisfaction on the allotted hours	Yes	9	18	0	27
	No	9	13	1	23
Total		18	31	1	50
Nature of Location	City	2	0	0	2
	Urban	1	1	0	2
	Semi- urban	0	0	0	0
	Rural/ village	15	30	1	46
Total		18	31	1	50
Parents education	PhD	0	0	0	0
	PG	0	0	0	0
	UG	0	1	0	1
	HSC	1	3	0	4
	SSLC	9	13	0	22
	Primary	6	2	0	8
	Illiterate	2	12	1	15
Total		18	31	1	50

Source: primary data

Table 1.4: Chi Square values - Personal factors on communication skills

Personal factors		Chi-square Value	p values	Significant/ Not Significant
1	Sex	1.882	0.40	NS
2	Age	3.626	0.46	NS
3	Mother tongue	0.314	0.86	NS
4	Medium of instruction in HSC	1.542	0.82	NS



5	Medium of instruction in Degree	0.352	0.84	NS
6	Current Semester	-	-	-
7	Level from which the respondents learnt English language	5.884	0.21	NS
8	Additional English courses/training programmes	1.239	0.54	NS
9	Allotted hours for English communication skills	3.704	0.16	NS
10	Satisfaction on the allotted hours	1.496	0.47	NS
11	Nature of Location	3.982	0.41	NS
12	Parents education	11.418	0.18	NS

S – Significant at 5% level (p value ≤ 0.05); NS – Not Significant at 5% level (p value > 0.05)

It is found from the Table 1.4 that the hypothesis is accepted (Not Significant) in all cases and there is no rejected cases (Significant). It is concluded that the all personal variables against the communication skills are accepted in all level of perception on communication skills.

9. Findings and Conclusion

The following are the findings of the study

- Students struggle to write much because of inadequate business vocabularies. This can be improved through learning commonly used business idioms and abbreviations. It can be learnt through business magazines, newspapers and televisions.



- Through reading and watching/ listening business information and current updates also helpful to know the recent changes in business terminology. More importance should be given to this situation in the course content.
- The students feel that much importance should be given to the written communication skills course in the first semester.
- Students responded that the allotted hours are not enough to do well in writing skills
- Students are not fully satisfied with the present course content of the course and its teaching and evaluating methodologies.
- Students need help from the staff to improve their writing skills.
- As students are from rural areas, they have studied up to degree level in Tamil medium. It is concluded that the course should be taught more than one semester to get full practise in writing skills.

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