



# **The Language of Success: A Needs Analysis of the Ideal English for Business Learning Program Based on Professional Insights**

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Received: 2025-06-05 Accepted: 2025-06-26

DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v13i1.6920

## **Abstract**

This study investigates the critical role of English proficiency in career advancement and business growth, focusing on the characteristics of an ideal Business English course. The research employs a qualitative approach, using interviews and focus group discussions with seven employees from various industries including IT, Finance, and Education. Findings reveal the majority of the participants prefer small classroom settings (3-5 people) where instruction is delivered entirely in English. Participants believe that such settings provide personalized attention and foster interactive learning experiences, aligning with andragogy theory's emphasis on self-direction and practical application in adult learning. However, several challenges were identified, including low self-esteem, mockery from peers, and a lack of learning partners. Low self-esteem and fear of ridicule discourage active participation and practice, while the absence of learning partners outside the classroom limits opportunities to reinforce skills. This study highlights the necessity of tailored Business English courses that focus not only on language proficiency but also on the unique challenges faced by adult learners, emphasizing the need for an andragogical framework to develop English learning programs suitable for working professionals' needs and challenges.

**Keywords:** *Adult-learning, Andragogy, Business, English, Interview, Needs Analysis, Professional*

## Introduction

English has been widely used around the world and it allows smooth interactions in international trade and global partnerships; making it essential for businesses to engage effectively across borders (Crystal, 2004). Over 60% of multinational companies officially use English as their working language (Neeley, 2012). This emphasizes English's role in driving cross-border business operations and communication. Moreover, English proficiency offers businesses a competitive advantage such as: allowing them to access new markets, engage with international clients, and participate in global events, thus promoting expansion and innovation (Lieber, 2024).

In Indonesia, English is considered a foreign language, yet it is widely used in the business sector (Gunantar, 2016). Therefore, it is crucial for professionals to improve their English proficiency. Studies have shown that English proficiency significantly impacted career prospects, with individuals proficient in the language more likely to advance in their career (Kamlun et al., 2010; Ting et al., 2014; Roshid & Chowdhury, 2013). Further research highlights a direct link between career achievement and English proficiency, suggesting that those who master English are better positioned to succeed in their careers and attain higher levels of professional success (John et al., 2021; Rose et al., 2020). As such, learning English is not merely a linguistic skill for professionals in Indonesia, but a strategic tool for career development and success.

Despite its importance, English proficiency in Indonesia remains a significant challenge, as indicated by the country's relatively low ranking on the EF English Proficiency Index (EF, 2025). This ranking reflects the difficulties many Indonesians, particularly adults, face in mastering the language. One primary reason for this low proficiency is often a lack of interest in learning English. Yusup and Munawaroh (2023) emphasize that motivation and interest in English learning are influenced by various factors, including personal, environmental, and curricular elements. A lack of support from teachers and peers, coupled with limited access to resources, can hinder adults' engagement with English.

Additionally, Mali (2017) suggests that the absence of an immediate need for English in daily or professional life further decreases adults' motivation. To overcome these challenges, researchers recommend adopting innovative teaching methods, such as project-based learning and the integration of technology, to make English learning more relevant and engaging for adult learners (Yusup & Munawaroh, 2023).

To effectively address these challenges and design relevant learning programs for working professionals, it's crucial to understand the unique characteristics of adult learners. This study is therefore guided by andragogy theory, defined by Knowles (1970) as the art and science of helping adults learn. The term "andragogy" emphasizes that adult learners have distinct characteristics, needs, and learning preferences that differ from those of younger students.

Knowles' model challenged conventional teaching assumptions by focusing on how adult learners are motivated and how their prior experiences shape their learning process. Ingram (2000) further elaborates on andragogy by highlighting its focus on the psychological needs, preferences, and readiness of adults for practical life applications. This approach considers the adult learner's background, experiences, and the immediate applicability of the learning material to real-life situations. Andragogy emphasizes self-directed learning, where adults are responsible for their own educational journeys, integrating new knowledge with their existing frameworks (Knowles, 1970; Brookfield, 1986).

Adult learners also bring prior knowledge and experiences, which form the foundation for new learning, encouraging educators to build on these experiences through experiential learning that incorporates real-world scenarios (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Moreover, adult learners are more motivated when the material is immediately applicable to their personal or professional lives, making a problem-centered approach essential (Knowles, 1970; Tough, 1979). While external rewards can play a role, adults are often more intrinsically motivated by personal satisfaction or self-improvement, leading to deeper engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Knowles, 1970). By recognizing these factors, andragogy provides a comprehensive framework for effective adult education, aiming to create meaningful and relevant learning experiences that empower adults to achieve their personal and professional goals.

Knowing that over 60% of multinational companies officially use English as their working language (Neeley, 2012), it is paramount for adults to learn English for business. English for Business, often referred to as Business English, is a specialized area of English language learning focused on vocabulary, communication skills, and practices pertinent to the business world. According to Ellis and Johnson (1994), Business English is distinguished by its context-specific vocabulary and its emphasis on practical application in professional settings.

This specialized form of English includes various elements such as professional writing, presentations, negotiations, and effective communication strategies in corporate environments. Price-Machado (2003) highlights that Business English encompasses skills needed for drafting business reports, emails, and other professional documents, as well as verbal communication skills required for meetings, negotiations, and presentations.

Business English courses aim to enhance learners' abilities to interact in a globalized business environment, focusing on language skills needed in international trade, finance, marketing, and other sectors. Frendo (2005) notes that training often involves situational practice mirroring real-life scenarios, preparing learners to handle professional interactions confidently and competently. These courses also address nuances of formal and informal language use, professional etiquette, and persuasive communication techniques essential for success in a global business environment.

Furthermore, Business English includes cultural nuances and etiquette important in international business, as effective communication extends beyond language proficiency. Pilegaard (1997) emphasizes the necessity of cultural awareness to navigate global business complexities, noting that language proficiency must be complemented by understanding different communication styles, business practices, and social norms. Incorporating cultural training into Business English courses prepares learners to build rapport, show respect, and engage effectively with international colleagues and clients, enhancing their adaptability and contributing to smoother international business interactions.

Despite the necessity of learning English and the maturity of adults, teaching English to adult learners is not without its challenges. Studies have identified several challenges that educators must navigate to provide effective instruction. One significant challenge is addressing the specific learning needs of adult learners, which often include a focus on practical and oral communication skills. Khachatryan and Ghalachyan (2019) highlight the importance of creating an adequate teaching environment that can cater to a diverse group of learners with varying backgrounds and learning objectives. Another challenge is the lack of confidence and anxiety that adult beginners often experience. Isik (2023) points out that these learners may struggle with building vocabulary and understanding language structures due to limited time for study and differences in educational backgrounds, cultures, and ethical systems.

These factors can hinder their progress and make the learning process more daunting. Furthermore, motivating adult learners and finding effective teaching methods are critical issues in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Dubovičienė and Gulbinskiene (2014) emphasize that adult learners often face difficulties with complex communication skills and specific language aspects, making it essential for educators to employ teaching strategies that are both useful and engaging. Overall, these challenges require a thoughtful and flexible approach to adult language education to ensure that all learners can achieve their language learning goals.

Several studies have been conducted to determine how Business English courses should be designed using needs analysis, aiming to identify the specific language and skills required by learners to succeed in the business world, ensuring that the course content is relevant and practical. A study by Guiyu and Yang (2016) involving 226 undergraduate business students utilized a questionnaire to gather insights on Business English education. The findings suggested that Business English courses should prioritize cultivating practical business skills. To achieve this, teaching materials should always be oriented towards practicality, targeting specific business contexts and emphasizing communicative competence. Moreover, the study highlighted the importance of Business English teachers consciously adopting different teaching methods tailored to the diverse content they cover during the teaching process. This approach ensures that the instruction is relevant and

effectively prepares students for real-world business situations.

A study conducted by Simaremare et al. (2023) focused on second-semester students from the Business Administration Department. The research found that Business Administration students often struggle with learning English due to issues such as a lack of vocabulary, mispronunciation, and incorrect sentence structure. These challenges lead to anxiety and hinder effective communication in English. To address these issues, the study suggests that students should focus on comprehending reports, particularly those involving curves or tables.

Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of mastering all four English language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The study also revealed that 96% of the students preferred an English for Business class, recognizing its value in their professional field. To enhance learning, the study recommends that lessons be conducted weekly, in small groups, and include activities such as oral presentations, group discussions, and writing exercises.

Previously mentioned studies have highlighted the importance of learning Business English. However, these studies focused on business students as the key informants or participants. While this study aims to understand the ideal English learning program based on insights from working professionals, the secondary objective is to identify the challenges they face in learning English. By focusing on the perspectives of professionals and employees, the study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of their specific learning needs and barriers.

The novelty of this study lies in its direct engagement with working professionals, a departure from previous research that largely focused on business students (e.g., Guiyu & Yang, 2016; Simaremare et al., 2023). This distinction is vital because professionals offer authentic, experience-driven insights into the real-world communication demands and challenges of their respective industries. Unlike students, who operate in theoretical learning environments, professionals possess an immediate and practical understanding of the English skills required for career advancement and business growth.

Their perspectives are deeply rooted in the principles of andragogy, reflecting problem-centered learning needs and a direct desire for applicable knowledge that addresses their current workplace realities and opportunities. This approach allows for the collection of highly relevant data to tailor English learning programs effectively. Based on the tenets of andragogy theory, this study anticipated the following outcomes regarding an ideal Business English course for working professionals:

- 1) A strong preference for learning environments that are self-directed and allow for significant learner autonomy, where participants can influence course content and pace.
- 2) A demand for content that is immediately relevant and applicable to their specific job roles and real-world business problems, emphasizing practical communication skills over abstract grammar rules.

- 3) Challenges related to confidence and motivation would be central, as adult learners are highly sensitive to perceived competence and require supportive, non-judgmental environments.

Specifically, this research aims to investigate: (1) the characteristics of an ideal Business English course for working professionals, and (2) the challenges working professionals face in learning English for business purposes. The insights gained will provide valuable guidance on how English learning programs can be tailored to better support working professionals in improving their language skills for career advancement, informed by a strong andragogical understanding of their unique learning context."

## Method

### *Participant Recruitment, Selection, and Sample Size*

For this qualitative study, a non-probability sampling approach, specifically purposive sampling, was employed to gather in-depth insights into Business English learning among working professionals. This method allowed for the intentional selection of participants with direct, relevant experience, prioritizing rich, detailed data over statistical generalizability.

Participants were recruited through leveraging personal and professional networks, with individuals being personally invited based on predefined criteria. These included: (1) current employment as a professional across various industries, (2) practical experience using English for business communication, and (3) prior involvement in English language learning endeavors. The study ultimately included seven participants, aged between 25 and 30, with diverse professional backgrounds. Among them, six were male and one was female. The details regarding the participant can be found in the table below.

Identifier	Occupation	Experience
P1	Social Media Manager	More than 5 years
P2	Social Media Manager	More than 5 years
P3	Sales (IT Company)	2 to 3 years
P4	Researcher (Online News Outlet)	More than 5 years
P5	Content Creator	Around 1 year
P6	Fund Manager	More than 5 years
P7	Branch Manager (Kids Coding Course)	Around 3 years

Table 1. Participants of the study

Prior to their participation, all selected individuals were fully informed about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and measures taken to ensure confidentiality.

The sample size of seven participants was deemed appropriate and sufficient to achieve the research objectives. This decision aligns with qualitative research principles that prioritize depth and richness of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The use of purposive sampling ensured the selection of information-rich cases, as working professionals actively engaged in environments where Business English is relevant provided nuanced perspectives. Furthermore, during the iterative process of data collection and initial analysis, evidence of thematic saturation began to emerge.

Although data collection was not formally halted based solely on real-time saturation, it was observed that recurring themes and patterns related to preferred learning characteristics and challenges became apparent across participant responses. While individual nuances persisted, no significantly new overarching themes or conceptual categories were identified in later interviews, indicating that the core insights relevant to the research questions had been adequately captured. This convergence suggests that further data collection would likely have yielded redundant information rather than novel insights pertinent to the study's scope (Guest et al., 2006; Malterud et al., 2016).

The rich and varied responses from these diverse professionals contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the needs and preferences for an effective Business English course, particularly one aligning with andragogical principles for adult learners.

### ***Design of the Study***

Qualitative research is an approach that emphasizes understanding people's experiences and perceptions within their real-world context. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research focuses on exploring how individuals construct meaning through their experiences and interactions. It often involves methods like interviews, focus groups, and participant observations, which are designed to gather rich, descriptive data. The goal is not to predict outcomes or test hypotheses, but to provide a deep understanding of complex phenomena, particularly how people interpret and make sense of their world (Creswell, 2014).

### ***Technique of Data Collection***

For our Learning Needs Analysis (LNA), we used qualitative data collection methods, specifically interviews and focus group discussions. Interviews, as described by Kvale (2007), provided in-depth insights into participants' experiences through open-ended questions. Focus group discussions, as explained by Krueger and Casey (2015), allowed for group interactions to explore ideas and opinions on specific topics.

An interview guide was developed to ensure consistency across all interviews while allowing for flexibility to explore emergent themes. The initial set of questions was carefully designed to be open-ended, encouraging participants to provide detailed and nuanced responses rather than simple "yes/no" answers. This approach aimed to uncover rich qualitative data regarding their learning preferences, perceived challenges, and ideal course characteristics. The final interview guide received verbal approval from the researcher's academic supervisor, confirming its suitability for addressing the study's objectives. No questions were asked beyond those specified in the approved guide, maintaining the focus and integrity of the data collection process.

Interviews were conducted online via video conferencing between October to November 2024. Prior to each interview, participants were informed about the study's purpose, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any time. Detailed notes were taken during each interview to capture participant responses. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes.

### ***Technique of Data Analysis***

The data analysis was inductive, aiming to identify patterns and themes. This approach, as outlined by Hyland (2006), helped us understand the specific learning requirements of business English learners and determine the best methods and materials to address those needs effectively.

The qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions was analyzed using thematic analysis, a systematic process for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach was chosen for its flexibility and its ability to provide a rich, detailed, yet complex account of the data, directly addressing the study's research questions.

The analysis process followed an iterative and inductive approach, moving between distinct phases:

#### **1. Data Capture and Initial Familiarization**

During both semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, the researcher was present in the same room as the participants and transcribed responses directly as they were spoken. This real-time documentation ensured immediate capture of participant insights. This process also served as an initial step of data immersion, allowing the researcher to immediately familiarize themselves with the content and begin to identify initial observations and key ideas as they were being articulated.

#### **2. Initial Coding**

Following the initial data capture, the researcher engaged in a thorough reading of all compiled notes to gain a holistic understanding of the data. This immersion was



followed by generating initial codes. This involved systematically going through the transcripts, line-by-line, and identifying segments of text that captured interesting features, recurring ideas, or relevant information. Codes were assigned to these segments, acting as labels to describe the content. This was primarily an inductive coding process, meaning codes were derived directly from the data itself rather than being predetermined by existing theories, though our overarching theoretical lens of andragogy informed the sensitivity to certain concepts.

### 3. Theme Identification and Development

After generating a comprehensive list of initial codes, the next phase involved searching for themes. Codes were grouped and organized into potential themes based on their conceptual similarity and underlying patterns. This involved:

- 1) Collating codes: Grouping similar codes together.
- 2) Identifying broader themes: Looking for overarching ideas or patterns that captured the essence of several codes.
- 3) Developing sub-themes: Further refining themes by identifying more specific categories within them. This stage was highly iterative, involving constant comparison of codes, themes, and the original data to ensure themes accurately reflected the participants' perspectives. Potential themes were reviewed and refined, ensuring they were distinct yet coherent within the dataset.

### 4. Reviewing and Refining Themes

Once initial themes were identified, a critical review process was undertaken to ensure their validity and consistency. This involved two levels of review (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

- 1) Level 1: Internal Homogeneity and External Heterogeneity: Checking that the data within a theme formed a coherent pattern, while ensuring clear distinctions between themes.
- 2) Level 2: Representativeness: Reviewing the themes in relation to the entire dataset to ensure they accurately reflected the overall meaning of the data and answered the research questions. Themes were modified, merged, split, or discarded as necessary during this iterative process until a coherent and meaningful set of themes emerged that adequately captured the complexity of the data.

### 5. Defining and Naming Themes

In the final stage, each theme was clearly defined and named to precisely convey its essence and the story it told about the data. A concise definition for each theme was developed, along with a detailed analytical narrative supported by illustrative direct quotes from the participants. These quotes served as empirical evidence,

substantiating the identified themes and adding richness to the findings.

### ***Translation Process for Participant Quotes***

All interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. For the purpose of this publication in English, all direct participant quotes presented in the Findings section have been translated from Bahasa Indonesia into English by the researcher. Every effort was made to ensure that the translations accurately convey the original meaning, nuance, and intent of the participants' statements, while maintaining their original voice.

### ***Trustworthiness***

To enhance the trustworthiness and rigor of the qualitative findings, several methods were employed:

- 1) **Thick Description:** The findings section provides rich and detailed descriptions of the themes, supported by extensive direct quotes from participants. This 'thick description' allows readers to evaluate the interpretations and determine their applicability to their own contexts (Geertz, 1973)."
- 2) **Purposive Sampling and Contextual Details:** The use of purposive sampling allowed for the selection of information-rich cases. Detailed descriptions of the participant characteristics and the research context are provided to enable readers to assess the transferability of the findings to other similar settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### ***Ethical Considerations***

Ethical principles were rigorously upheld throughout all stages of this study to safeguard participants' rights and well-being. As the research involved human participants, particular attention was paid to ensuring informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and upholding the voluntary nature of participation.

Prior to their involvement, all prospective participants received comprehensive verbal information about the study's purpose, the nature of their participation, and the types of questions that would be asked. Participants were explicitly informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. Consent to participate was obtained verbally from each individual before the commencement of their interview or focus group session.

The confidentiality of participant data was a paramount concern. Participants were assured their identities would be kept strictly private, and information shared would be used solely for this research. To ensure anonymity in disseminating findings, all identifying information, such as names or specific company details, was omitted from transcripts and analysis. Participants are referred to their descriptive identifiers. The raw data (all interview notes) is stored securely on a password-protected computer, accessible only by the researcher, further protecting participant privacy. While a formal institutional review board (IRB) approval process wasn't required for this student project, all ethical procedures were conducted under the direct guidance

and verbal approval of the academic supervisor, ensuring adherence to established ethical guidelines for qualitative research.

## Results

This section presents the key findings derived from the thematic analysis of interviews and focus group discussions with seven working professionals. The analysis uncovered several prominent themes related to the characteristics of an ideal Business English course and the challenges faced by adult learners. Table 2 provides an overview of the main themes identified and their prevalence across the participant interviews. These themes offer valuable insights into effective English language program design for working professionals.

Theme	Number of Participants Mentioning the theme	Percentage
Acknowledging the importance of English at work	7/7	100%
Preference for specific topics (vocabulary/phrases) for specific needs	1/7	14.29%
Preference for semi-private (3 to 5 students) classroom configuration	6/7	85.71%
Preference for bigger classroom	1/7	14.29%
Preference for longer but less frequent session	3/7	42.86%
Preference for shorter but more frequent session	4/7	57.14%
Usage of full English in the classroom	6/7	85.71%
Argued that mockery and lack of confidence are some serious challenge to	6/7	85.71%

learn English		
Believe that 'speaking partner' is an important part of language learning	7/7	100%

Table 2. Main Themes and Their Prevalence Among Participants (N=7)

***Importance of English Proficiency for Professionals***

It is indeed beneficial for professionals to be proficient in English, as it greatly facilitates communication with international colleagues, employers, and clients. This sentiment was echoed by all participants, who acknowledged the immense value of English skills in their careers.

P7, who works as a branch manager in a coding course for kids, shared that his superiors encouraged him to enhance their English proficiency. He also added "If I can speak English well, I can get promoted more easily, my boss said so" he added. P3, who is working for an IT company, said that his company is currently working with a multinational company. This condition requires him to improve his English. While P2, who is working for a national company, said

"Even though I work in a national level company, I often participated in an international exhibition, so I need to be able to improve my English. So, I could communicate with everyone in attendance"

This further emphasizes the needs of learning English despite not working in an international company because at the end of the day, business needs to work globally and collaboratively.

While P1, who is working in an international company and also demonstrated a high level of English proficiency during the interview, highlighted that the benefits extend beyond traditional career progression. He emphasized its role in fostering better communication and building relationships with international coworkers. He specifically mentioned the importance of understanding and using idioms and common phrases in daily conversations. P1 said that "I wish to learn more native-like phrases". He explained that these phrases are crucial for expressing ideas effectively in a more natural way. "Using native-like phrases/idioms will also give the impression that we're an advanced English speaker," he added.

***Topics Should be Covered in Business English***

All participants generally agreed that English learning programs should focus on commonly taught topics such as simple tenses, business-related phrases and expressions, and business-related vocabulary. They felt these areas sufficiently cover the necessary skills for most of their work-related communication needs.

However, there are exceptions. P3, who works in IT, expressed a desire to learn IT-related vocabulary and expressions in English to better support his professional needs. He said that "There are some phrases or vocabulary which are specific for my field" (IT/Networking). Indicating the necessities to have a specific purpose program. On the other hand, P1 prefers more general English, emphasizing the need for additional expressions and idioms to enhance his daily conversations.

### ***The Ideal Business English Course***

Half of the participants prefer shorter but more frequent classes, valuing regular practice and reinforcement of learning. While the rest favor longer but less frequent classes, which they believe allow for a more in-depth exploration of topics and a deeper understanding during each session.

When it comes to class size, 6 out of 7 participants favor semi private (3 to 5 students) settings. They find that smaller groups allow them to concentrate better and interact with the teacher more easily without worrying about interrupting others. P5 and P6 argued that learning in semi-private settings would allow a more intense/focused learning while still allowing for discussion activity. Similarly, P7 also favors semi-private settings. However, he focused on his concern that he might hinder the learning process of other students if he's in a bigger class.

P4 was the only participant who favored larger classrooms. He believes that a bigger class size makes learning more effective. He said that in a larger classroom, there are more opportunities to learn from others' mistakes, which can be an invaluable part of the learning process.

In terms of language used in the classroom, almost every participant favors a "Full English" classroom. They believe it allows for more immersive learning and encourages consistent use of English in the classroom setting. Even P2 said that by making speaking English mandatory in a class, it will forcefully push the student to speak English. P4 expressed that English class must be delivered in full English. He argued that if students can speak both native and English, they would always prefer to speak in their native language. Most participants believe that making English mandatory in class can significantly enhance their language proficiency. However, P3 shares a differing opinion, arguing that the students' level of proficiency should be considered. He spoke

"If we force the students to only speak English in the classroom, then some students won't be able to keep up with the rest of the class, so It's better to used mixed language instructions"

He was worried that full English instructions could make some students not feel confident and left behind.

### ***Challenges of learning English for adults***

All participants concurred that several key obstacles hinder English language learning. A prominent challenge identified was low self-confidence. Many individuals expressed feeling ashamed of their current English proficiency, even though they possess a strong desire to improve. P6 said “and those who are already ‘experts’ often mock us who are still learning”. She added “many people want to learn English but their ‘friends’ aren’t supportive and keep mocking them”. Further proving the case, P1 even shared an instance when he was called ‘showing-off’ while he’s speaking English. It didn’t stop him from speaking English. However, he would understand that those comments might stop someone from learning altogether.

Another significant hurdle highlighted by the participants is the absence of speaking partners. P5 said that “It’s hard to find a speaking partner so I can’t improve my English.” While P4 said that “It is necessary to have a speaking partner as it would allow us to practice the daily conversation”.

## **Discussion**

### ***Understanding the Needs***

While English proficiency may not be a strict requirement for all employees, the study's findings strongly indicate that possessing strong English skills offers a significant advantage, even for those not working directly for international companies. This is because many organizations occasionally interact with “foreign elements,” such as clients or suppliers, where effective communication in English becomes crucial. This observation aligns with research by Parvathi (2016) and Rattan (2023), both of whom emphasize the vital role of English in facilitating seamless communication within the global business landscape.

This is aligned with “readiness to learn” which focuses on how practicality and benefits would motivate adults to learn (Knowles, 1970). This can be seen as participants shared that English would allow them to conduct business with international companies and even get promoted. This finding resonates with Hidayat's (2024) study, which similarly concluded that English proficiency is critical for career progression, particularly in international business contexts.

One participant, who demonstrated a high level of English proficiency during the interview, offered a compelling perspective: English skills extend beyond traditional career advancement. He highlighted its importance in fostering better communication and building relationships with international colleagues. He specifically noted the necessity of understanding and using idioms and common phrases in daily conversation, explaining that these linguistic nuances are vital for expressing ideas effectively at work, especially when navigating cultural differences. His insights echo Rattan's (2024) research, which found that English enables employees to integrate more smoothly and communicate more effectively in diverse work environments.

### ***Optimizing English Language Learning Programs***

Beyond general proficiency, the study's results suggest that English learning programs should prioritize vocabulary tailored to participants' specific needs, in addition to commonly taught lessons such as simple tenses, business-related vocabulary, and common phrases. Highlighting self-directed learning which is prominent among adult learners (Knowles, 1970). They believe that the currently available business English program is sufficient yet more specific phrases and vocabulary are welcomed. This aligns with Nisbet's (2010) recommendations for effective vocabulary instruction for adult ESL learners, which advocate for targeted, three-tiered frameworks that address unique needs and foster meaningful connections. This way, adult learners can have more meaningful and practical learning.

The class size also emerged as a crucial factor, with participants expressing a strong preference for semi-private settings with 3 to 5 students. This preference is supported by Harfitt's (2012) study, which suggests that smaller class sizes cultivate a stronger sense of security and reduce anxiety about negative evaluation, thereby boosting students' confidence to participate. Furthermore, Blatchford et al. (2002) found that smaller class sizes enable teachers to provide more individualized support, thereby enhancing the overall learning experience. Yi (2020) also concluded that smaller classrooms contribute to improved reading and listening proficiency, as well as better speaking skills. However, classroom size isn't consistent especially among adult learners in the university (Von Der Embse et al., 2020). Meaning that although the participants favor smaller classrooms, size of it shouldn't be the most determining factor.

Finally, participants generally preferred full-English classrooms over mixed-language environments. This approach is supported by research such as Flege and Liu (2001), which indicates that immersive target language learning can significantly improve students' language proficiency. Despite that, one minority opinion which advocated for adjusted classroom instruction language according to students' proficiency might also be considered. Rasman (2018) found that translanguaging could help learners to develop their multilingual competencies which include the English language.

### ***Challenges of Learning English for Adult Learners***

All participants agreed that some of the main challenges in learning English include low self-confidence, as people often feel ashamed of their own English skills despite their desire to learn. Horwitz et al., (1986) found that adult learners are afraid of being judged by their peers and teachers. This is experienced by most of the participants in this study. This finding is similar to Sweet et al., (2025) who identified socio-psychological factors as barriers, including fear of making mistakes (20%). It highlights that "Many students worry that others will judge them for making mistakes, causing stress and making them avoid practice" (Sweet et al., 2025). This highlights

how non-supportive peers and colleagues could hinder learning progress and even could make students stop learning altogether. Thus, it is important for teachers to create an inclusive non-judging classroom to prevent such things from happening.

Another significant challenge is the absence of speaking partners, which means learners do not have anyone to practice with, further hindering their progress. A study by Rahimi, & Fathi, (2022) highlights the importance of speaking partners as it would encourage them to communicate in the target language. Additionally, societal attitudes are not always supportive; those who attempt to learn English often face mockery, which can discourage their efforts.

Similarly, Isik (2023) found that the challenges in teaching English to adult beginners encompass not only a lack of confidence and anxiety but also difficulties with vocabulary, comprehension, time management, and differences in educational backgrounds, cultures, and ethical systems. These factors collectively create a daunting environment for adults trying to improve their English proficiency.

### ***Methodological Contribution***

This study adopted a qualitative approach, prioritizing in-depth insights from a specific cohort of professional participants. The deliberate selection of individuals from diverse professional backgrounds aimed to explore nuanced perspectives on adult language learning anxiety, particularly concerning confidence and fear of judgment in contexts where communication demands are high. This approach provided rich, albeit confined, qualitative data relevant to this specific demographic.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, English for Business is a crucial skill for professionals, enabling effective communication with foreign colleagues, employers, and clients. It enhances the ability to engage in global business practices, fostering collaboration and improving career prospects. In terms of learning settings, a semi-private classroom is preferred by most adults, as it provides opportunities for peer interaction while allowing teachers to offer more individualized support.

Thus, enhancing the learning experience. Additionally, a Full-English classroom is favored for its immersive learning environment, encouraging students to consistently use English, which is essential for language development. However, learning English is not without its challenges. Many adults struggle with low self-confidence, often feeling ashamed of their language skills despite a strong desire to learn. The absence of speaking partners further hinders progress, as practice is key to improving fluency. Additionally, societal attitudes toward English learners can be discouraging, as those who make an effort to learn often face mockery or lack of support. These challenges highlight the need for more encouraging and supportive learning environments to help learners overcome obstacles and succeed in mastering English.



### **Implication**

For course designers, addressing adult language learners' confidence and fear of judgment is paramount. This necessitates smaller classroom sizes to foster a less intimidating, more participatory environment. Instruction should prioritize contextually relevant phrases and vocabulary, directly aligning with learners' needs and enhancing perceived utility. Crucially, fostering a non-judgmental classroom culture is essential; this means explicitly normalizing errors as part of the learning process and emphasizing communication over perfection, thereby bolstering learner confidence and reducing anxiety.

### **Limitation**

This study has several limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the small sample size of seven participants restricts the generalizability of the findings. While participants represented diverse job backgrounds, a formal saturation check was not conducted, meaning it's possible that additional interviews might have yielded new insights or perspectives. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution and not broadly extrapolated to the wider population of adult language learners.

Secondly, the pre-existing relationships between the researcher and the participants (i.e., participants being friends of the researcher) introduce a potential for response bias. Despite assurances that the study was anonymous and confidential, there remains a possibility that participants might have provided answers they perceived as more favorable or desired by the researcher, rather than fully candid responses. This could subtly influence the depth and authenticity of the data collected.

### **Future Directions**

The limitations of this study, particularly the restricted sample size of seven participants and the absence of a formal saturation check, highlight crucial areas for future research. Subsequent studies should aim for larger, more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of findings and employ robust saturation techniques to ensure comprehensive thematic development. Additionally, to mitigate potential response bias observed in this study due to pre-existing participant-researcher relationships, future research should implement strategies such as recruiting participants through neutral third parties or utilizing more structured interview protocols to encourage uninhibited responses. Building upon the preliminary insights gained here, future research can validate and expand upon these initial observations regarding anxiety and confidence among professional adult language learners.

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