ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE OF THE MOST COMMONLY FOUNDBUSINESS ENGLISH ABBREVIATIONS USED IN A WORKPLACE: A CASE STUDY OF THE 4th YEAR THAI UNDERGRADUATES MAJORING IN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to survey how well the 4th year students who would be graduating and entering into a business industry recognized the most commonly used business English abbreviations in a workplace. All of 160 students majoring in English at a university in the Northeast of Thailand received the questionnaire, a research instrument, generated by the researchers and all of them returned the questionnaires to the researchers. The students were selected by using a purposive sampling technique with the qualifications that having pass grades on all courses relating to business communication and correspondence provided by the university. The questionnaire was employed as a main research instrument gaining the participants' personal information and their recognition of the business English abbreviations most commonly found in a workplace as well as knowledge of how to use them in a professional context. The statistics used to analyze the quantitative data collected were frequency and percentage, whereas an interview – an additional research tool - was randomly conducted so as to gain in-depth information from the participants assuring they knew those abbreviations correctly – to triangulate the data gained. The results showed that 32.50% of the students gained scores ranging 21-30 out of 30, 46.87% gained scores ranging 11-20 and 20.63% received less than 10 points. Additionally, the findings revealed the reflection of the management of the courses in the department curriculum which are necessary to be reconsidered so as to prepare graduands better and appropriate knowledge of useful business abbreviations to be used in a written discourse in their jobs in the future.

Keywords: Acquired Knowledge ; Business English Abbreviations ; Business Correspondence

INTRODUCTION

There are various significant factors in the workplace that can be beneficial and productive in terms of job growth. To work with many people in a particular profession, getting along well with co-workers is a crucial factor, but successfully communicating with them is even more benefit and important for the sake of working professionally. In a business industry, it is accepted that an email exchange is considered as the most-used means of communication for multinational companies (Shachaf, 2005). In business communication, an email is normally and frequently used at work nowadays. Using an email in this digital age is very common due to the fact that it is cheap, easy and convenient for all communicators involved in including in professional environments (Tagg, 2015). Moreover, it is beneficial to be a proof of communication, as it is a written discourse, which is different from a face-to-face conversation, interacting between people within and outside organizations (Kotarputh, 2020). That is, anyone who has to contact any organizations and/or people in English for professional reasons should be able to use this method of written communication effectively and successfully. Not only do people involved in these international communicative circumstances need to fulfill knowledge of English language skills, but also other useful and meaningful tactics must be applied in the business written communication.

One of those meaningful tactics in a written English business discourse is the use of abbreviations (e.g. 7ESL, n.d.; Belyh, 2019; Indeed Editorial Team, 2021; Kroos, 2016; Pujiyanti, Senowarsito&Ardini, n.d.; Triliska, 2017). English abbreviations are used to keep emails short and concise whereas the messages conveyed are still understandable and organized systematically. The main reason why employing abbreviations in email correspondence is to provide a quick, easy and convenient way of recognizing or indicating actual meanings without wasting time writing full forms of all or particular words or phrases. The full-form can be crucial in many ways, such as a group of words that are generally used in a long paragraph in a scientific term. Therefore, it is important to recognize the commonly found abbreviations used in business interactions and also know how to use them properly, especially in a workplace.

Most of the 4[th]year students studying at universities are those who would be soon graduating and then potentially entering into a business industry immediately after they graduate. Therefore, they should be those who are soon to be workers working in business contexts. This leads to the results that knowledge and know-how to utilize widely used abbreviations are crucial to be explicitly introduced to them preparing the graduands well before entering into the workforce; the students need to acquire such abbreviations to communicate professionally with others at the workplace.

The researchers realized the findings of this quantitative study could uncover the 4[th]year students' perception of the commonly used abbreviation usage and how they recognized the abbreviations in average. Additionally, the findings could also suggest the curriculum to revise how to better manage and apply more crucial and applicable knowledge into teaching modules in the English curriculum.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research participants

The graduands seemed to be the target group of this piece of research, however, the focus of this study was intentionally put more on the use of the

4th-year students majoring in English as they were credited to be exposed with an English language more frequently than those of their peers who were majoring in other fields. Besides, the number of graduated English major students who works in business where English is compulsory for their career is increasing constantly.

Consequently, the participants of the study consisted of 160 English-major students studying at a university in the Northeastern region of Thailand. All of them were selected based on the purposive sampling technique to take part in this investigation due to the qualifications mentioned earlier.

Research Instruments

In order to obtain the information from the respondents, the researchers collected data by using the online questionnaire as the main research instrument. The reasons were that it was convenient for all the involved parties to access easily, the data collected could be immediately and systematically computed by the reliable formula, and this also could keep people physical and social distance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: 1) The personal information and schema of the commonly used English abbreviations in business communication, and 2) In the second part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to declare if they had seen and/or used the abbreviations which were generated by the researchers. The 30 business English abbreviations in the questionnaire were chosen from the 30 most frequently used abbreviations and acronyms in a written English business discourse widely introduced by 7ESL (n.d.); Belyh (2019); Indeed Editorial Team (2021); Kroos (2016); Pujiyanti et al., (2017) and Triliska (2017). Later, the additional follow-up interview was randomly conducted so as to assure if the respondents recognized the abbreviations and they knew how to use the abbreviations correctly in different situations or contexts. The participants who were interviewed were selected by using a simple random sampling technique. The data gained from this stage were to confirm their answers expressing their understanding of the use of the abbreviations.

Data Collection

Once the questionnaire was constructed, the researchers transitioned the link to the respondents online. The participants were contacted and distributed the link in September 2021, and all the responses from all participants were totally received inNovember 2021. After receiving all of the responses, the researchers checked all the items if they were filled in completely, and some were found unmarked making the process of collecting data late than expected. Those containing missing parts were resent to the respondents asking them to redo and fill in all the items missed. Eventually, all the questionnaires were completely received in December 2021.

Regarding to the additional interview, some of the participants, selected using a simple random sampling technique, were contacted in December 2021 asking to have a follow-up interview with video recording in January 2022 confirming what they had answered in the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The online survey collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using mean score and percentage illustrating the participants' characterizations and how wellthey have seen and used the selected business English abbreviations in a workplace.

In addition, the data collected by the method of the interview could confirm the data collected in

the first phase through the questionnaire whether the participants answered all the items in the questionnaire consciously and willingly.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The following tables and charts illustrate the quantitative data collected from the 160 participants.

Table 1 The respondents' personal information

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage
male	23	14.38
female	137	85.62
total	**160**	**100**

The information in Table 1 shows that most of the participants in this study were female (85.62%) whereas the male participants were considered 14.38% of the participants.

Table 2 The respondents' demographic information of their dream jobs

Job title	Number of respondents	Percentage
Content creator	15	9.38
Flight attendant	22	13.75
Government official	4	2.50
Interpreter	5	3.13
Office worker	17	10.63
Receptionist	2	1.25
Secretary	7	4.38
Teaching staff	19	11.88
Tour guide	11	6.88
Translator	8	5.00
Writer	2	1.25
Other/not yet decided	48	30.00
Total	160	100

The data shown in Table 2 reveals the data of the dream careers of the 160 students. From the most selected careers in the near future to the least, most

of the participants (48 students) werein a stage of deciding what to do in the near future marked as 30%. 22 participants wanted to be flight attendants (13.75%).19 participants wanted to work in a teaching profession (11.88%). 17 participants wanted to be office workers (10.63). 15 participants wanted to be content creators (9.38%). 11 participants wanted to be tour guides (6.89%). 8 participants wanted to be translators (5.00%). 7 participants wanted to take part in secretarial positions (4.38%). 5 participants wanted to be interpreters (3.13%). 4 participants wanted to be government officers (2.50%). And the 2 least desired job titles are receptionists and writers that 4 students wanted to be – 2 for each, considered 1.25% equally.

Table 3 The number of the participants responding to perceptions of the commonly used business English abbreviations

No.	Abbs.	Seen and used	Seen, not used	Never seen
1	AM	94 (58.75%)	61 (38.13%)	5(3.13%)
2	ASAP	143 (89.38%)	16 (10.00%)	1 (0.63%)
3	ATTN	74 (46.25%)	76 (47.50%)	10 (6.25%)
4	AWOL	66 (41.25%)	71 (44.38%)	23 (14.38%)
5	BCC	60 (37.50%)	86 (53.75%)	14 (8.75%)
6	BTW	132 (82.50%)	26 (16.25%)	2 (1.25%)
7	CC	73 (45.63%)	75 (46.88%)	12 (7.50%)
8	CEO	125 (78.13%)	31 (19.38%)	4 (2.50%)
9	COB	56 (35.00%)	74 (46.25%)	30 (18.75%)
10	COD	103 (64.38%)	46 (28.75%)	11 (6.88%)
11	Cr	141 (88.13%)	14 (8.75%)	5 (3.13%)
12	EOD	57 (35.63%)	83 (51.88%)	20 (12.50%)
13	ESP	59 (36.88%)	86 (53.75%)	15 (9.38%)
14	FAQ	122 (76.25%)	29 (18.13%)	9 (5.63%)
15	FYI	67 (41.88%)	81 (50.63%)	12 (7.50%)
16	Inc.	100 (62.50%)	41 (25.63%)	19 (11.88%)
17	N/A	68 (42.50%)	79 (49.83%)	13 (8.13%)
18	OOO	54 (31.88%)	79 (49.83%)	27 (16.88%)
19	PM	103 (64.38%)	52 (32.50%)	5 (3.13%)
20	POD	84 (52.50%)	46 (28.75%)	30 (18.75%)
21	PR	80 (50.00%)	70 (43.75%)	10 (6.25%)

Table 3 The number of the participants responding to perceptions of the commonly used business English abbreviations (Cont.)

No.	Abbs.	Seen and used	Seen, not used	Never seen
22	QC	100 (62.50%)	54 (33.75%)	6 (3.75%)
23	Qty	97 (60.63%)	45 (28.13%)	18 (11.25%)
24	RE	32 (20.00%)	105 (65.63%)	23 (14.38%)
25	RSVP	63 (39.38%)	68 (42.50%)	29 (18.13%)
26	TBA	98 (61.25%)	42 (26.25%)	20 (12.50%)
27	TBD	47 (29.38%)	83 (51.88%)	30 (18.75%)
28	TIA	59 (36.88%)	63 (39.38%)	38 (23.75%)
29	VIP	142 (88.75%)	14 (8.75%)	4 (2.50%)
30	YTD	91 (56.88%)	55 (34.38%)	14 (8.75%)

The information in Table 3 illustrates how well the respondents recognized and/or used the commonly used business English abbreviations along with the calculation in a form of percentage considering an individual one line by line.
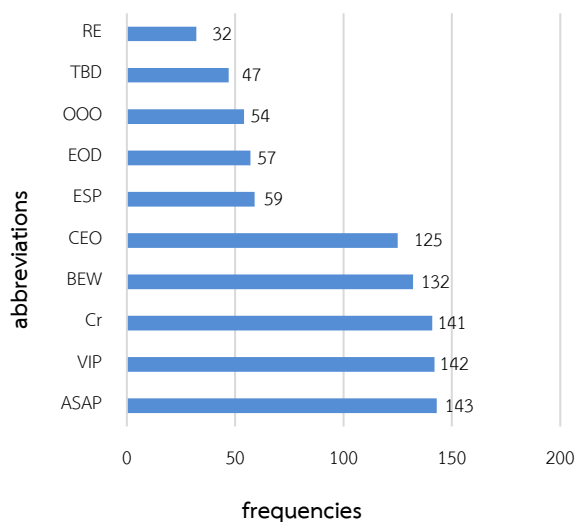

Chart 1 The 5 most and the 5 least seen and used abbreviations

In terms of the 5 most often seen and used abbreviations in Chart 1, they were 1) 'ASAP' chosen by 143 respondents marked as 89.38%, 2) 'VIP' indicted by 142 respondents marked as 88.75%, 3) 'Cr' selected by 141 respondents marked as 88.13%, 4)

'BEW' indicted by 132 respondents marked as 82.50%, and 5) 'CEO' indicted by 125 respondents marked as 78.13%. On the opposite side, the 5 least often seen and used abbreviations were 1) 'RE' chosen by 32 respondents marked as 20.00%, 2) 'TBD' selected by 47 respondents marked as 29.38%, 3) 'OOO' chosen by 54 respondents marked as 31.88%, 4) 'EOD' selected by 57 respondents marked as 35.63%, and 5) 'ESP' indicted by 59 respondents marked as 36.88%.
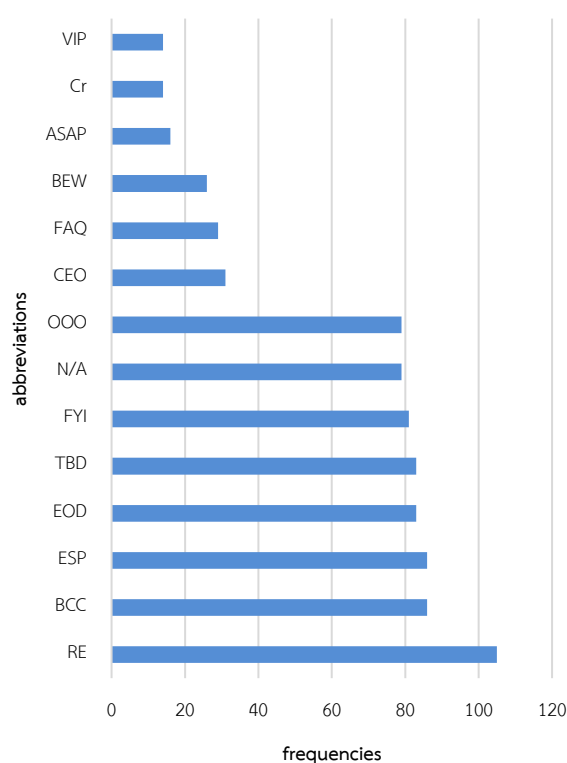

Chart 2 The 5 most and the 5 least seen but never used abbreviations

Interestingly, some of the respondents revealed the ideas that they had seen some of such abbreviations in their daily-life communication, but they had no idea what they really.In Chart 2, the 5 most frequently seen but never used abbreviations were 1) 'RE' revealed by 105 participants considered as 65.63%, 2) 'ESP' and 'BCC' revealed by 86 participants considered as 53.75%, 3) 'EOD' and 'TBD'

revealed by 83 participants considered as 51.88%, 4) 'FYI' revealed by 81 participants considered as 50.63%, and 5) 'N/A' and 'OOO' revealed by 79 participants considered as 49.83%.Meanwhile, the 5 least frequently seen but never used abbreviations were 1) 'Cr' and 'VIP' revealed by 14 participants considered as 8.75%, 2) 'ASAP' revealed by 16 participants considered as 10.00%, 3) 'BEW' revealed by 26 participants considered as 16.25%, 4) 'FAQ' revealed by 29 participants considered as 18.13%, and 5) 'CEO' revealed by 31 participants considered as 19.38%.
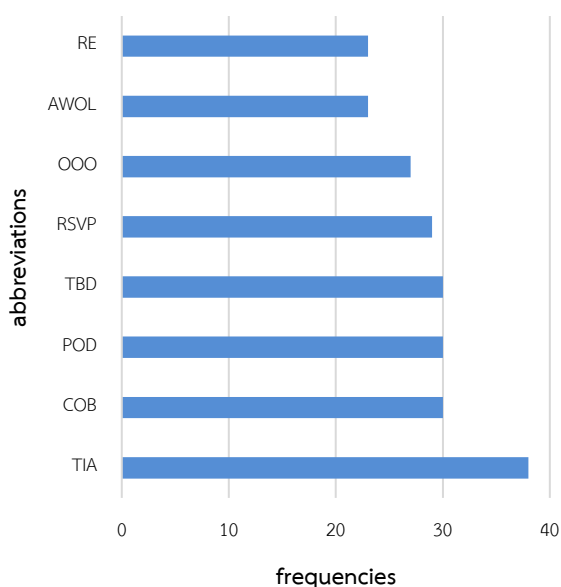

Chart 3 The 5 most never seen abbreviations

Apart from the noticed abbreviations, there were some that the participants had never seen in business written communication. In Chart 3, the top 5 unseen abbreviations were 1) 'TIA' responded by 38 students or 23.75%, 2) 'COB', 'POD' and 'TBD' responded by 30 students or 18.75%, 3) 'RSVP' responded by 29 students or 18.13%, 4) 'OOO' responded by 27 students or 16.88%, and 5) 'RE' responded by 23 students or 14.38%. Furthermore, there were some more abbreviations in the category of unseen or never that only a few respondents had

selected. That is, some of the most commonly found abbreviations generated from specific technical terms were rarely noticed by the participants in this study. They were 1) 'QC' reported never ever found by 6 participants considered as 3.75%, 2) 'AM', 'Cr' and 'PM' reported never ever found by 5 participants considered as 3.13%, 3) 'CEO' and 'VIP' reported never ever found by 4 participants considered as 2.50%, 4) 'BEW' reported never ever found by 2 participants considered as 1.25%, and 5) 'ASAP' reported never ever found by 1 participant considered as 0.63%.

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

Relating to the results of the study, it was found that overall, the participants had known almost all of the 30 selected abbreviations in the questionnaire and also had opportunities to use them in communicative circumstances. It is not beyond the researchers' expectations because all of the abbreviations gathered in this research instrument were systematically selected from various sources of the widely used abbreviations and acronyms as mentioned earlier in the part of constructing the research instrument. However, there still were some surprising data uncovering that in all of the 30 selected abbreviations, not any abbreviations were totally noticed by the participants. That is to say, in case of the most frequently seen and used ones 'ASAP', 159 participants reported that they had at least seen if never used, but there was 1 participant insisted that this abbreviation had never come through his life.

For the commonly found abbreviations in business English correspondence, 'RE', 'CC' and 'BCC' could be good examples as these abbreviations are definitely included in the course of business email and letter writingwhich all of the students in this

investigation had to enrolled and gained a pass grade. Nevertheless, 'RE' was revealed to be the 5th never seen abbreviations in this study. After the follow-up interview was generated, the participants replied the researchers in that they might have an opportunity to meet such abbreviations, but they might completely forget them as they had never used the abbreviations since they passed the courses when they were 2nd year students until they were asked to join the research at the stage of being 4th year students at the time of data collection. It is supported by Mirabela, P. A. and Ariana, S. M. (n.d.) in that even though not all of the abbreviations are commonly used and found, they are the most significant and dynamic area of business English language so as to let workers be well-prepared for particular professions.

SUGGESTIONS

The findings of the study can confirm that the process of introducing meaningful and useful abbreviations in English business contexts into the courses at a tertiary level is important, but more importantly, the process of maintaining the knowledge gained is necessary; exposure to the essential abbreviations and their use cannot be overlooked. As Crystal (2009) proposed "The largest abbreviation dictionary contains more than half a million entries and the number is growing all the time", all the graduands need to be educated with this kind of things so as to be well-prepared and ready to create effective and proficient written communication in their business contexts in their workplace in the near future after they enter into workplaces.

The limitation of this study was the questionnaire distribution. It could not be done as face-to-face due to the pandemic outbreak of COVID-19. As a result, the researchers obtained the data from the respondents using an online questionnaire because it is convenient and easy to use. For further study, one thing that the researchers could realize after analyzing the data is that the time limit for completing the questionnaire should be prior set before they were generated. It is because this possibly affected how the participants responded to the research questionnaire considering the reliability and trust worthiness when filling in the instrument.

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