

English Language Training for MSMEs: A Strategy to Improve Competitiveness in the Global Market

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Abstract

This research aims to assess the effectiveness of English language training in improving the competitiveness of MSMEs, with a case study on My Zahro Collection, an MSME in the field of Muslim fashion. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method in the form of community service. Data was collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, as well as pre-test and post-test to measure the improvement of participants' skills after the training. The training involved four main sessions, namely business communication in English, international business transactions, product description creation, and digital marketing strategies. The results showed that before the training, the majority of My Zahro Collection employees had limitations in business vocabulary (65% low category), speaking ability (70% low category), and understanding of digital marketing strategies (75% low category). After the training, there were significant improvements in each skill aspect, with understanding of digital marketing strategies increasing by 55%, ability to write product descriptions by 50%, speaking ability by 45%, and understanding of business vocabulary by 40%. In addition, 90% of participants felt more confident in communicating with international customers. This research confirms that practice-based English language training is effective in improving MSMEs' business communication skills. Hence, similar training programs need to be developed sustainably to support MSMEs in improving their global competitiveness.

Keywords: MSMEs, Business English, Training, Competitiveness, Digital Marketing.

1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have a very important role in the Indonesian economy, especially in creating jobs and improving people's welfare (Priandi et al., 2022). The existence of MSMEs has proven to be able to maintain economic stability, even showing strong resilience during the economic crisis, thus becoming the main driver of national economic growth (Maurina & Rusdianto, 2023). However, in the era of globalisation and increasingly fierce market competition, MSMEs are faced with various challenges, one of which is limited mastery of foreign languages, especially English. This language barrier hinders communication with foreign buyers, reduces the effectiveness of marketing strategies, and narrows opportunities for expansion into international markets (Yose, 2023).

In addition, MSMEs also face other constraints such as limited capital, lack of digital literacy, and limited access to technology and digital platforms (Anatan & Nur, 2023). To address these challenges, the Indonesian government has implemented various policies to improve the competitiveness of MSMEs, including digital transformation and providing access to wider resources (Haqqi, 2023). Various initiatives, such as language training and business digitalisation, have also been developed to assist MSMEs in expanding their market reach to the global level (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). In the era of globalisation, Micro, Small and



Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are required to have higher competitiveness, especially in the face of international competition.

One crucial aspect in improving competitiveness is English language proficiency, which enables MSME players to conduct business transactions and promote their products to the global market (Surani & Kusuma, 2020). This ability is becoming increasingly important in the face of regional economic integration, such as the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), where mastery of English serves as a key asset in international trade communication (Nurcahyo et al., 2015).

A number of English language trainings have been designed specifically for MSME players to improve their communication skills in a business context. For example, the English for Business training organised in Kuningan Regency, West Java, aims to equip MSME players with the ability to communicate effectively in an international business environment (Chalisyah et al., 2025). In addition, training focusing on exports and business correspondence in English with a motivational persuasive communication approach has also been implemented to help MSME players understand more professional communication techniques, especially in drafting business correspondence based on 'WH' questions (Alhazami et al., 2024).

However, despite the high awareness of the importance of English language proficiency, many MSME players still face various obstacles in accessing relevant training. A study conducted among MSME players in the Islamic finance industry in Jepara shows that there is a gap between the need for English language skills and the availability of training that can be accessed by these businesses (Prasetyo et al., 2025). Therefore, a more effective strategy is needed in providing English language training for MSMEs, especially those oriented towards business transactions and product promotion, in order to increase their competitiveness in the international market.

One of the MSMEs that has great potential to grow in the global market is My Zahro Collection, which is engaged in Muslim fashion. The quality products produced have the opportunity to attract foreign consumers, especially with the increasing demand for Muslim fashion in various countries. However, the limited mastery of English, especially in business communication, product description creation, and promotion on digital platforms, is a challenge that needs to be overcome so that My Zahro Collection can be more competitive and expand its market. With a structured and business-appropriate English training, My Zahro Collection can improve its capability to reach global market and strengthen its competitiveness in the international Muslim fashion industry.

To address these challenges, English language training for MSME players, especially those who focus on business communication strategies and international marketing, is a relevant solution. With the right training, MSME players can understand the basics of business communication in English, write attractive product descriptions, and interact with international customers and business partners more effectively. Therefore, this study aims to assess the effectiveness of English language training in improving the competitiveness of MSMEs, with a case study on My Zahro Collection.

2. Methods

2.1. Type of Research

This research is a descriptive qualitative research in the form of community service activities. This programme aims to improve the English language skills of My Zahro Collection

employees, especially in business transactions and product promotion in the international market.

2.2. Location and Time of Research

This training activity will be carried out at My Zahro Collection MSME. My Zahro Collection is a micro, small and medium enterprise located in Malang City, East Java. This business is engaged in fashion, especially Muslim clothing, and has actively participated in various training programmes to improve the quality and management of its business.

2.3. Target and Participants

The main targets of this programme are My Zahro Collection employees, especially those involved in marketing, customer service, and business communication, with the following criteria:

1. Employees responsible for transactions and communications with international customers.
2. Employees involved in creating product descriptions and promotions on digital platforms.
3. Employees who have a basic to intermediate level of English comprehension.

2.4. Implementation Method

The training will be conducted face-to-face at My Zahro Collection's premises and will include the following methods:

1. Pre-Test and Need Analysis
 - a) Before the training began, a pre-test was conducted to measure the employees' level of English comprehension.
 - b) A need analysis was conducted through interviews and questionnaires to determine the aspects of English that are most needed in the operation of MSMEs.
2. Delivery of Training Materials

The training will take place in several sessions with the following materials:

 - a) Session 1: Introduction to English for Business
 1. Basic vocabulary in international business transactions.
 2. Common phrases in business communication.
 - b) Session 2: English for Transactions
 1. Simulated conversations with foreign customers.
 2. Handling customer complaints in English.
 - c) Session 3: Creation of Product Description in English
 1. Techniques for writing compelling product descriptions.
 2. Practice writing product descriptions for e-commerce and social media.
 - d) Session 4: Digital Marketing in English
 1. Product promotion strategies in social media and global marketplaces.
 2. Use of persuasive language in digital marketing.
3. Evaluation and Post-Test
 - a) After the training, a post-test was conducted to assess the improvement of employees' English language skills.
 - b) Interviews and participant satisfaction surveys are conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

2.5. Data Collection Technique

The data in this study was collected through the following techniques:

1. Observation, namely by directly observing the training process and the implementation of English language skills by employees.

2. Interviews were conducted before and after the training with employees and management to determine the effectiveness of the training.
3. Questionnaires to collect data related to English language needs and participants' satisfaction with the training.
4. Pre-Test and Post-Test to measure the level of understanding before and after the training.

2.6. Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis technique in this research uses a qualitative descriptive approach carried out through three main stages. First, the data reduction stage was carried out by filtering relevant information from the results of observations, interviews, and questionnaires. This process aims to eliminate unrelated data so that only significant information is analysed further. Secondly, the reduced data was then presented in various forms, such as tables, graphs and narratives, to provide a clear picture of the changes that occurred before and after the training. This presentation helps in understanding the patterns and impacts resulting from the training activities on My Zahro Collection MSMEs. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the analysis of the data that has been presented, focusing on the effectiveness of the training provided. In addition, recommendations are also made as strategic steps for My Zahro Collection MSMEs to improve their business management in the future.

3. Results and Discussion

The face-to-face English language training at My Zahro Collection's premises was designed to improve employees' communication skills in the context of international business and transactions. As a first step, a pre-test and needs analysis were conducted to identify the level of English understanding and the most relevant aspects for MSME operations. The training consisted of four main sessions covering introduction to business English, transaction simulation, product description writing techniques, and digital marketing strategies in English. The learning methods applied included material delivery, interactive simulations, and practical exercises to improve participants' understanding and skills. After the training, a post-test and evaluation were conducted to measure the effectiveness of the programme and obtain feedback from the participants. This approach is expected to provide practical benefits in improving employees' English competence, especially in supporting the expansion of MSME businesses to the global market.

3.1. Pre-Test Results

Prior to the training, a pre-test was conducted for employees to determine their initial level of understanding of English in a business context.

Table 1. Pre-test Results

Ability Category	Low (%)	Medium (%)	High (%)
Business vocabulary comprehension	65%	30%	5%
Speaking ability	70%	25%	5%
Ability to write product descriptions	60%	35%	5%
Understanding of digital marketing strategies	75%	20%	5%

Based on the pre-test results, the majority of My Zahro Collection employees have a limited understanding of English, especially in the aspect of business communication. As many as 65% of the participants had a low level of understanding of business vocabulary, while

only 5% were classified as high. This shows that most of the participants were not familiar with the terms commonly used in international business transactions.

English speaking ability is also a major challenge, with 70% of participants being in the low category, and only 5% having good speaking skills. This difficulty can hinder their interactions with foreign customers, especially in explaining products and conducting negotiations. In the aspect of writing product descriptions, 60% of participants were still at a low level, indicating that they are not yet able to compose descriptions that are attractive and in line with international e-commerce standards. This skill is crucial in digital marketing, as good product descriptions can increase customer appeal and trust.

Meanwhile, understanding digital marketing strategies in English was the biggest challenge, with 75% of participants in the low category. Employees still experience difficulties in crafting effective marketing content on digital platforms, such as social media and global marketplaces. This lack of understanding could hinder My Zahro Collection's expansion into international markets.

Overall, the results of the pre-test and interviews show that limitations in business vocabulary, speaking skills, writing product descriptions, and understanding digital marketing are the main obstacles for employees in improving My Zahro Collection's competitiveness in the global market. Therefore, training that focuses on business transactions and product promotion in English is the right solution to overcome these problems.

3.2. Training Implementation

The training provided to My Zahro Collection MSMEs took place in four sessions with the main focus on improving English language skills in a business context. Based on observations and interviews with participants, it was found that each session had a different impact on their understanding and readiness to use English for transactions and marketing.

In the first session, participants showed improvement in understanding common business vocabulary and phrases. Before the training, most participants only had a basic command of English and were unfamiliar with international business terms. After this session, they were able to recognise and use some relevant business terms in simple conversations. The second session, which focused on business transactions through simulated conversations, had a positive impact on participants' communication skills. The simulation helped them practice interacting with foreign customers, especially in handling customer queries and complaints. From the evaluation results, participants felt more confident in dealing with international customers after attending this session.

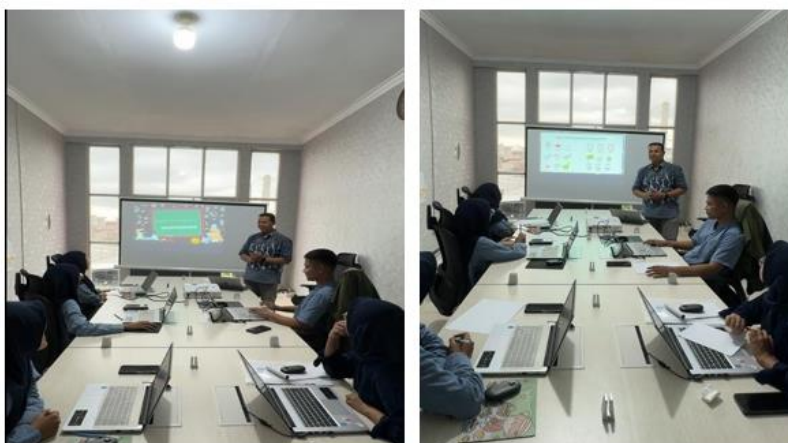
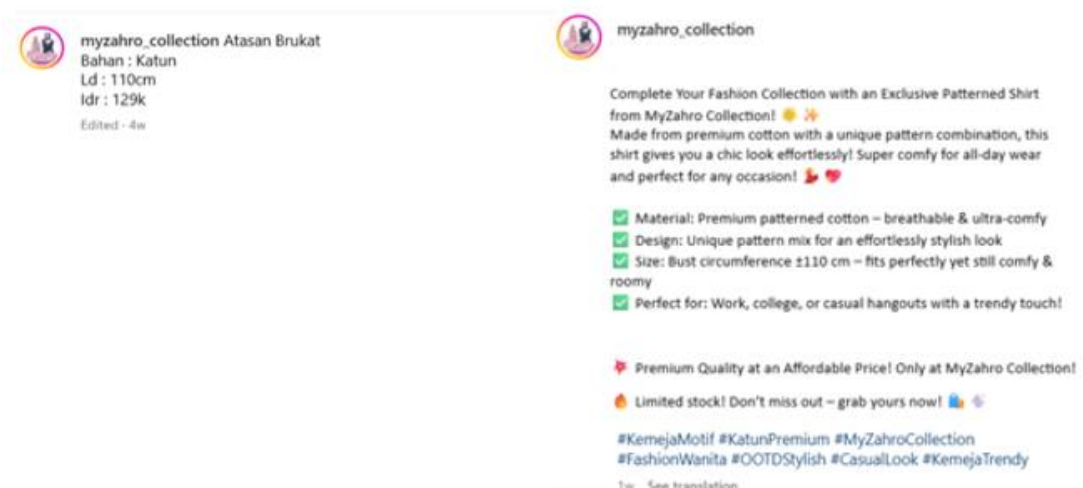


Figure 1. Delivery of Training Materials

The third session on creating product descriptions in English showed significant improvement in the participants' writing skills. Prior to the training, their product descriptions tended to be uninteresting and not in line with global e-commerce standards. After being given effective writing techniques, participants were able to compose descriptions that were clearer, more persuasive, and in line with the international target market.

The last session on digital marketing in English provided new insights for participants in utilising social media and global marketplaces to market their products. Most participants realised the importance of using persuasive language in digital promotion and started to implement more effective marketing strategies.



Before training

After training

Figure 2. Writing attractive product descriptions after training

After the training, there was a significant difference in writing more interesting and persuasive product descriptions. Before the training, product descriptions only included basic information such as product name, material, chest measurement, and price without any attempt to attract buyers' attention. The information was very minimalistic and did not provide an interesting picture of the product. In contrast, after the training, the product descriptions became more complete, communicative, and persuasive. The use of evocative sentences, such as 'Complete Your Fashion Collection with an Exclusive Patterned Shirt,' made the product sound more exclusive. In addition, the advantages of the product are explained in detail, ranging from premium materials that are comfortable, unique designs, to size suitability. The delivery of product benefits is also clearer, emphasising that the shirt is suitable for various occasions such as work or leisure.

In addition, the use of the checklist symbol (☑) makes key points easier to read and draws attention. There are also elements of urgency and exclusivity, such as 'Limited stock! Don't miss out,' which encourages shoppers to make a purchase immediately. The use of hashtags also helps in increasing product visibility on social media. Overall, after the training, the product descriptions were more effective in attracting the attention of potential buyers, increasing product appeal, and driving purchase decisions compared to the pre-training descriptions which tended to be flat and uninteresting.

3.3. Post-Test Results

After the training, a post-test was conducted to measure participants' skill development. The results showed significant improvement compared to the pre-test:

Table 2. Post-Test Results

Ability Category	Improvement (%)
Business vocabulary comprehension	40%
Speaking ability	45%
Ability to write product descriptions	50%
Understanding of digital marketing strategies	55%

Based on the post-test results presented in Table 2, there were significant improvements in various aspects of participants' skills after the learning programme. The highest improvement occurred in the understanding of digital marketing strategies, which reached 55%, followed by the ability to write product descriptions by 50%. Speaking skills improved by 45%, while understanding business vocabulary improved by 40%. Overall, 80% of participants showed an improvement of more than 30% compared to their pre-test results, indicating the effectiveness of the programme in improving their competencies. In addition, 90% of participants also reported feeling more confident in communicating with international customers, indicating that the programme not only improved technical skills, but also the psychological aspects of practical business language use.

Participants also stated that the interactive and practice-based learning methods helped them better understand and apply English language skills in a business context. Further interviews revealed that most participants hoped for further training to deepen their professional communication skills. This suggests that the training not only had a positive impact on improving technical skills, but also on participants' motivation and confidence in using English in the work environment.

The English language training provided to My Zahro Collection employees proved effective in improving international business communication skills, especially in product transactions and promotions. Evaluations conducted through pre-test and post-test showed significant improvement in various aspects of English skills required in a business context.

Overall, the training not only improved participants' technical competence in communicating in English, but also increased their confidence in dealing with foreign customers. The success of this programme demonstrates that a practice-based learning approach is highly effective in improving English language skills in a business context. To maintain and improve this achievement, further training programmes are expected so that employees' international business communication skills continue to develop and become more competitive in the global market.

4. Conclusion

Based on the pre-test results, the majority of participants had a limited understanding of English. Most employees had low levels of business vocabulary, speaking ability and product description writing skills. Understanding digital marketing strategies in English was also a major challenge, potentially hindering My Zahro Collection's business expansion into the global market. After the training, the post-test results showed significant improvement in every aspect of the skills tested. The highest improvement occurred in the understanding of digital marketing strategies (55%), followed by the ability to write product descriptions (50%), speaking skills (45%), and understanding of business vocabulary (40%). In addition, 90% of

participants reported feeling more confident in communicating with international customers. Significant changes were also seen in the participants' ability to write more interesting and persuasive product descriptions. Before the training, the product descriptions were flat and only contained basic information. However, after the training, the descriptions became more communicative and effective in attracting the attention of potential buyers, with the use of more interesting language, visual symbols, and urgency elements that encourage purchase.

My Zahro Collection should organise further training with a focus on advanced business communication and negotiation in English. In addition, the company can provide training materials in the form of digital modules or e-learning so that employees can continue to hone their skills independently. Build an internal community or forum for employees to practice English regularly through discussions or business transaction simulations. Inviting practitioners or professionals who are experienced in international business communication is also a strategic step to provide additional insights and real case studies.

With the improvement of employees' English skills, My Zahro Collection has a greater opportunity to penetrate international markets and increase competitiveness at the global level. Employees' ability to write compelling product descriptions can increase the effectiveness of digital marketing, potentially increasing sales and company branding. Continuous training will create a culture of learning within the company, which ultimately contributes to improving the overall quality of human resources. In addition, employees' confidence in communicating with foreign customers can improve service quality and expand international business networks.

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