

ENGLISH - LINGUA FRANCA FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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The aim of this paper is to analyse the fast-growing importance of the English language in the International Business world. While professions may vary, the need to be proficient in English is a basic skill for any global worker. A deficiency in this area may result in barriers for the employees' professional and personal development. The paper also presents the misunderstandings that are easily caused by the lack of rhetorical skills and which may result in uncertainty and communication problems.

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A language is a systematic means of communication by the use of sounds or conventional symbols. It is the code we all use to express ourselves and communicate to others. It is a communication by word of mouth, a system for communicating ideas and feelings using sounds, gestures, signs or marks. Any means of communicating ideas, specifically, human speech, the expression of ideas by the voice and sounds articulated by the organs of the throat and mouth is a language. This is a system for communication.

Communication has enabled mankind to progress and become advanced societies. Highly specialized skills, advances in technology, amazing inventions, spectacular breakthroughs in arts and sciences have limited value unless it is communicated effectively to its intended audience and communicated precisely for specific purposes. Communication is very important not only for smooth running of a business enterprise but it is also equally, if not more, important for the success and growth of individual executives and professionals. In the age of globalization, communication is of paramount importance. The lack of proper communication skills creates barriers and distortion leading to miscommunication and breakdown in meaning which can have some very negative repercussions for any company or business set-up.

While English is not the most widely spoken language in the world when you look at it in terms of the number of native speakers, it is the world's most prominent language.

It has been estimated that out of the roughly 6 billion people that are alive today about 350 million speak English. When analysing the importance of English for International Business, we should consider more than just the number of people who speak it, but also at what the language is used for.

Around the world, there is an estimated 1 Billion people learning English. Many factors point to the reason why learning English has seen exponential growth in recent years, but it all boils down to the English language being the "global language" of business, politics, international relations, culture, and entertainment for so many countries worldwide. And that is just an understatement as in fact, while English is not an official language in many countries worldwide, it is the language most often taught as a foreign or second language.

English is the ideal language for many governments around the world, and it is also prominent in business, education, world news, and communication. In addition to this, Western pop culture is also carried to foreign countries in the form of music or movies. There are a number of powerful tools that have allowed more people to learn English than ever before. One of these tools is the Internet. English as a universal language has become the key tool of globalization. The importance of English for International Business, depends on the number of people who speak it

and for what purpose the language is spoken. But what matters most, is to understand how to use English language rather than just knowing it.

As the globalization is a reality, the walls between nations are being torn down, and the whole world has become an arena of competition. Globalization is unfolding in a two-stage manner. In the first stage, global media and businesses extend their reach into new domains throughout the world. In a second stage, these same businesses and media are re-localized in order to best meet the economic and social imperatives of functioning in different regions of the world.

Globalization has already had an important impact on the field of TESOL. One of its consequences is the dominance of the communicative approach within the field of English language teaching. The increased global contact brought about in the new network society through international tourism, business, scientific exchange, and media places a premium on the ability for communication in a lingua franca. With these fast changes brought about by globalization and technological development, TESOL professionals need to understand current socio-economic factors and their influence on English language teaching. The industrial societies of the past are giving way to a new post-industrial economic order based on globalized manufacturing and distribution; flexible, customized production; the application of science, technology, and information management as the key elements of productivity and economy growth.

Thus, English has become a major international language for worldwide communication. Proficiency in English is a mandatory requirement for any professional working in a global business environment. Many companies have discovered early in the 21st century that they can cut their costs of production by sending their jobs overseas. The proper term for this is outsourcing, or off shoring. Some companies have also found that they can cut costs by bringing immigrants into the country on work visas. The employees will work for the company for a given period of time, and once their visa has expired, they can return home.

While many people in English speaking countries complain about the impact of outsourcing, it presents lucrative opportunities for people living in foreign countries. Learning how to speak English can allow you to travel to a Western country, work there for a few months, make more money than you would make at home, and then bring the money back home to your family. This is a practice that many people use, and it is factors such as outsourcing which have allowed them to do it. As you can see, learning how to speak English opened up a large number of doors, doors that would normally be closed.

Although there is a rapid growth in technology for global communications, many companies and individual professionals still fail in their quest for business or professional success. While professions may vary, the need to be proficient in English is a basic skill for any global worker. For example, the professional jargon used by a Computer programmer differs greatly from that of a physician but both professionals need to have a good command of the English language in their own fields. A deficiency in this area may result in barrier for the employee's professional and personal development. Employers expect the workforce to possess excellent communication skills apart from knowledge and expertise in their respective technical field. In the present day workplace, individuals require a range of occupationally specific knowledge and skills, personal attributes and attitudes, the ability to transfer knowledge and skills to different situations, etc. Most industry is quite concerned about the noticeable gap in *spoken* and *written* English.

Undoubtedly, the English language is the global language for business and having a good command of English will definitely give one who is eyeing globally competitive business or career a clear edge. Today we are living in a "Global Village". As the Internet explosively grows, more people are becoming aware of this "Global Village" on a personal level. People correspond with others from around the globe on a regular basis, products are bought and sold with increasing ease from all over the world and "real time" coverage of major news events is taken for

granted. English plays a central role in this "globalization" and it has become the *de facto* language of choice for communication between the various peoples of the Earth.

Informationalism has given rise to economic, social, and cultural dynamics which are very different than those of the industrial area and which are shaped by a real contradiction between the power of global networks and the struggle for local aspects. People's lives are increasingly affected by international networks operating via financial markets, multinational corporations, and the Internet which influences traditional seats of authority and meaning, such as family, patriarchy, and nation. In response to the increased power of global networks, people -as individuals and in collectivity- struggle to assert control over their identity and defend what they see as essential of their own self.

The importance of the Internet grows rapidly in all fields of human life, including not only research and education but also marketing and trade as well as entertainment and hobbies. This implies that it becomes more and more important to know how to use Internet services and, as a part of this, to read and write English.

Before the Internet, it was hard to learn English if not attending a college or university. These were the only institutions where the language was widely spoken. Because Internet usage has expanded throughout the world, more people are being exposed to English. The advent of online universities has now made it possible for more people to study English, people who may live in countries where access to standard education facilities is limited. While it may have been impossible for these people to learn English in the past, the Internet has opened up new career opportunities. These people are now able to learn English, and they can use their English skills to get better paying jobs at home, or they can use them to find jobs overseas. In any case, the Internet has played a powerful role in allowing English to spread across the world, and the number of people learning it is likely to increase in the future.

With this increasingly borderless world and the subsequent expansion of inter-cultural contacts, the importance of creating institutions to protect cultural and intellectual heritages is becoming a pressing issue. Yet, at the same time, many nations are also seeking ways to develop effective means of conveying their own culture and customs to others. In both instances, language plays a key role, although with the emergence of English as the dominant and global language, the question of how those in the non-English speaking world will protect and project their own cultures, intellectual traditions and languages, is an open issue.

Multinational companies and their subsidiaries are an increasingly important part of the global business landscape. First, we should take into account that the majority of multinational parent companies are not located in English-speaking countries. Second, the geographic (and implicitly the linguistic) spread of their networks is widening as the larger multinationals are now present in so many countries. Finally, the host countries being considered for future investments exist in developing areas of the world, characterized by a shortage of parent company language skills.

We cannot escape the conclusion that in some way these problems of increasing communication intensity, increasing linguistic diversity, and increasing scale of operations could aggravate the problems presented by the language barrier. These problems should be manifested in distinguishable patterns in the way multinational companies adjust strategy, structure, and systems in order to cope. The notion that cultural differences can be a significant barrier to doing business is now commonly accepted. Language barriers are therefore likely to play a key role in any multilingual group relationship.

However, perhaps the most pronounced manifestation of the language barrier at work can be found in the relationship between a multinational parent company and its network of international subsidiaries. Generally, the communications are not interpersonal in nature, but more typically are encounters between language groups: a parent company management team and the corresponding management team of the subsidiary. Even if the managers are relatively competent in the language of the other party rhetorical skills are not always present, referring here to the use

of humor, symbolism, sensitivity, negotiation, persuasion and motivation, which requires a very high level of fluency. Misunderstandings are therefore easily caused, resulting in uncertainty and communication problems. Where the parent company managers are working without the ability to communicate fluently, they will be seen as lacking charisma, confidence and leadership skills and the subsidiary management may then choose to ignore their direction. This could determine frequent disagreements between the workforce and the management, which of course would lead to a decrease in production.

In conclusion, it is commonly accepted that communication, and language implicitly, is a key factor not only for concluding good contracts and developing profitable business, but also for integrating and adapting to various social contexts. English, as the new „lingua franca” has managed to get people closer and to allow the interpersonal communication. However, we should be aware of the fact that the cultural barriers cannot be completely overcome by the possession of good linguistic abilities. They just open doors for a better knowledge.

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