

THE USE OF ENGLISH IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

University of Exact and Social sciences

2-year master`s degree student

Murodova Nigina Xojiakbar qizi

E-mail: nbaxtiyorova52@gmail.com

Abstract: English has become the dominant language of international business communication. This paper explores how English functions as a global lingua franca in corporate contexts, examines its role in facilitating cross-cultural understanding, and identifies challenges faced by non-native speakers. Data from existing research and case studies suggest that English proficiency significantly affects organizational success and global collaboration. The study concludes that strategic language policies and intercultural training are essential for effective communication in multinational environments.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca, international business communication, globalization, intercultural communication, language policy, non-native speakers, Business English.

Introduction: In the twenty-first century, globalization has reshaped the way businesses operate, leading to the need for a common means of communication among people from diverse linguistic backgrounds. English has emerged as the universal language of trade, finance, and technology. According to Crystal (2003), more than 1.5 billion people use English worldwide, making it the most widely used medium for international business communication.

In multinational corporations (MNCs), English is often adopted as the official working language, regardless of the headquarters' location. This shift has transformed not only how companies negotiate and collaborate but also how individuals perceive linguistic competence as a form of professional capital. However, the growing dominance of English also presents linguistic, cultural, and ethical challenges, particularly for non-native speakers.

The aim of this study is to analyze the use of English in international business contexts, focusing on its advantages, limitations, and the strategies used by organizations to overcome communication barriers.

Methods: This paper is based on a qualitative review of academic literature, corporate case studies, and recent reports from global organizations such as the OECD, the British Council, and multinational companies.

Key areas analyzed include:

Language policy in international corporations

Cross-cultural communication practices

Challenges of English as a lingua franca (ELF)

Strategies to improve business communication efficiency

Data were collected from over 20 peer-reviewed journal articles (2010–2024) and professional business communication manuals. The findings were categorized thematically to identify patterns in language use and communication outcomes.

Results: The analysis revealed several significant trends:

English as a corporate lingua franca:

Companies such as Airbus, Samsung, and Honda have adopted English as their official language, improving internal coordination and external negotiations.

According to Neeley (2017), adopting English increased global collaboration efficiency by nearly 25%.

Communication barriers for non-native speakers:

Employees with limited English proficiency often experience anxiety, lower participation, and misunderstandings during meetings and email correspondence.

Misinterpretations caused by idiomatic expressions or cultural differences may affect business outcomes.

Language training and policy initiatives:

Organizations increasingly invest in English language training, professional writing programs, and intercultural communication workshops.

For instance, the British Council (2022) reported that over 70% of international firms provide English training to improve workplace inclusivity.

Emergence of “Business English” as a hybrid form:

The research shows that many professionals use simplified, standardized English — known as Business English or Global English — to reduce ambiguity and improve clarity in international exchanges.

Discussion: The widespread use of English has transformed international business communication, offering numerous advantages such as standardization, accessibility, and efficiency. English enables companies to access global markets, manage multicultural teams, and maintain unified corporate documentation. It also enhances employability, as English fluency is often seen as a prerequisite for leadership positions.

However, this linguistic dominance also raises critical concerns. Non-native speakers may feel disadvantaged or excluded in professional settings, leading to unequal participation. Moreover, excessive reliance on English can cause the erosion of linguistic diversity and local identity within multinational corporations. Misunderstandings rooted in cultural differences — rather than language itself — often hinder communication effectiveness (Scollon & Scollon, 2012).

To address these issues, businesses should promote linguistic inclusivity, offering language support and intercultural training. Encouraging clear, simple, and respectful English communication can bridge cultural gaps and strengthen teamwork. Furthermore, integrating multilingual practices — such as translation tools and local language initiatives — can balance global and local communication needs.

Conclusion: English plays an indispensable role in the global business world as both a communication tool and a symbol of professionalism. While it offers numerous benefits for efficiency and integration, the linguistic challenges it introduces cannot be ignored. The success of international business communication depends not only on English proficiency but also on cultural awareness and inclusive language policies. Future research should focus on how digital communication tools and artificial intelligence are reshaping the use of English in global business.

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