

Exploring the Impact of English Language Proficiency on Business Communication Effectiveness: A Comprehensive Research Analysis

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Abstract:

In today's globalized environment, the significance of English cannot be underestimated. It stands as the most widely utilized universal language worldwide and is the primary language in international business. For Bangladesh seeking to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the free market era, mastering global languages, particularly English, is imperative. Proficiency in English equips them for effective communication within the SAARC as well as BIMSTEC Economic Community and EU countries. In the business realm, English acts as the international language, ensuring seamless communication and facilitating successful cooperation among diverse stakeholders. Effective communication is indispensable in business operations; without it, collaboration between producers, distributors, and consumers falters, leading to decreased entrepreneurial effectiveness. Mastering English empowers us to engage confidently with international business partners, fostering connections with people worldwide.

Keywords: Universal language, International business, Free market era, Communication, Business operations, Entrepreneurial activities.

1. Introduction:

English holds significant importance in supporting contemporary social and economic interactions in the digital age. In today's complex world, individuals rely heavily on their smartphones to earn a livelihood. Using these devices, people can easily conduct various buying and selling transactions. There exist numerous reasons that serve as valuable references, enabling everyone to enhance their English proficiency. Kachru (1985) underscored the significance of recognizing the diverse forms of English spoken globally, classifying them into Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle comprises countries where English is the primary language, such as England, the USA, Canada, and Australia. The Outer Circle includes nations where English is widely used, often as a second language, like India and Bangladesh. Lastly, the Expanding Circle represents regions where English is learned as a foreign language, such as when people study English in Japan. Examining these circles,

Bangladesh falls within the Outer Circle category. In the context of Bangladesh, where English is not officially the second language, its importance remains paramount.

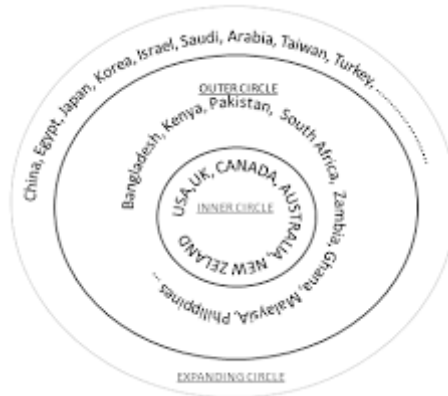


Figure: Concentric circle model (Adapted from Kachru (1997))

In addition to facilitating socioeconomic activities and operating electronic devices, English has played a crucial role in fostering international relations. According to Bryson (2009), over 300 million people worldwide speak English, and the rest are seemingly attempting to learn it. Language serves as a key factor in establishing connections with individuals across the globe, making it easier for us to build relationships with diverse cultures. The language itself can serve as a foundation for starting businesses, as effective communication is at the core of successful ventures in the global arena.

Communication serves as the process through which individuals, groups, organizations, and society create and utilize information to establish connections with their environment and others. Even when spoken language is not understood, communication can still occur through gestures, such as smiling, shaking heads, and shrugging. This form of communication encompasses various aspects like notifications, announcements, and promotions, all vital in our increasingly interconnected and multilingual world. In the contemporary era of globalization, the economic landscape has intensified business competition, both domestically and globally. Communicators need to develop intercultural skills, editorial expertise, and public speaking abilities, all crucial at the international level, as emphasized by Lemana, Rosa, and Juwardi (2017). Miina (2014) highlights that poor English language skills can impede effective communication, leading to misinterpretation, frustration, and barriers among employees. Mastery of all four English language skills—reading, speaking, listening, and writing—is essential. English holds a paramount position, inseparable from information and communication skills, especially in the realm of business.

Typically, individuals working for international companies, including employers, employees, and secretaries, are expected to possess effective communication skills and conduct all correspondence and documentation in English. Proficiency in English is essential for them to seamlessly continue their learning and confidently present themselves during interviews. Talking on the phone with representatives of foreign companies, negotiating, and expressing themselves in English should not pose a challenge. Moreover, the ability to organize trips and create documents to facilitate productive business conversations enhances the professionalism of individuals who have mastered and maintain proficiency in English for business communication.

As businesses expand, the pressure to find more effective ways of communicating with workers and the outside world intensifies. Companies operating on a global scale are obligated to excel in English

proficiency, leading them to recruit employees fluent in the language. English serves as the primary language in international business, scientific research, and academic publications, with over 80% of academic journals written exclusively in English (Van Weijen, 2012). Effective communication is crucial as it involves the responsibility of providing information, and misunderstandings with communication counterparts are not uncommon. In the business context, communication plays a vital role and is one of the fundamental aspects of running a successful company. This communication can take various forms, including verbal and non-verbal methods, encompassing opinions, ideas, and information. It can occur on a personal or interpersonal level, highlighting its importance in the business environment.

Effective communication is paramount in the realm of business. Without clear communication channels between producers, distributors, and consumers, the efficiency of entrepreneurial activities is compromised. Therefore, understanding how to apply English in the business context is crucial. In the domain of language arts within business, narration plays a significant role. Narration is essential to establish a connection between consumers and the products being offered, fostering a sense of inner attachment and relationship. Additionally, the choice of words in business communication holds immense importance, as each word carries a distinct meaning. Entrepreneurs should also consider catering to the language preferences of consumers. For instance, in countries like India and Singapore, businesses adapt to the market they enter by using languages such as English, Hindi, or Chinese to facilitate effective communication with their target audience. This adaptability ensures a stronger connection between businesses and consumers, enhancing the overall success of entrepreneurial ventures. However, about 47.87% of people in Bangladesh spoke English with the reason that it opened up more international opportunities. Introducing English as a corporate language is not an easy task, since using English brings both advantages and disadvantages for companies. English proficiency can significantly enhance the perceived value of a product. The focus of this study was to explore the importance of English in the business context and the impact of English as a communication tool on achieving business goals.

2. Discussion

2.1 Communication Business

Many people recognized the importance of understanding communication phenomena in order to understand business symptoms. If we viewed business and communication as both a social process, we would come to the conclusion that communication was business and, conversely, business is communication. It means, at the symptom level, communication and business are integrated symptoms. It could not be separated. Business and communication both started their activities by carrying out the production process. More details could be explained as followed:

a. In the realm of communication, the output is referred to as information. Information encompasses data, facts, and knowledge that is conveyed from one entity to another. On the other hand, in the context of business, the products generated are goods and services. Businesses create tangible goods and intangible services to meet the needs and demands of consumers.

However, it's worth noting that there are instances where information and goods/services intersect. In specific contexts, information itself can be considered a product, especially in media and publishing industries. For example, newspapers, magazines, television programs, and online content deliver information to consumers, essentially making information a commodity. In this way, information

becomes a product in the business sense, blurring the line between pure information and traditional goods/services.

b. Then, business and communications conveyed the product to other parties. In communication, the other party could be called the communicator, audience, destination, etc. Meanwhile in business activities other parties were often referred to as consumers, clients, buyers, and so on.

Communication and business interactions evoke specific reactions and encounter distinct obstacles. Commercial exchanges serve as a means to establish partnerships, leverage intellectual resources, and facilitate the exchange of ideas. Whether it involves a product, service, or organization, the objective is to create value for the business in operation. Business communication requires a profound understanding of both internal and external aspects of the business.

Internally, communication encompasses elements such as the company's vision, strategy, plans, corporate culture, values, fundamental principles, employee motivation, and ideas. According to Lathifah (2007), companies are not only competing within domestic markets but also on the international stage, necessitating effective communication to foster strong relationships between companies.

External communication, on the other hand, involves areas such as branding, marketing, advertising, customer relations, public relations, media relations, and business negotiations. Regardless of the form it takes, these communication efforts share a common goal: to create business value. By understanding and addressing both internal and external communication needs, businesses can enhance their operations, build meaningful relationships, and thrive in the competitive global market.

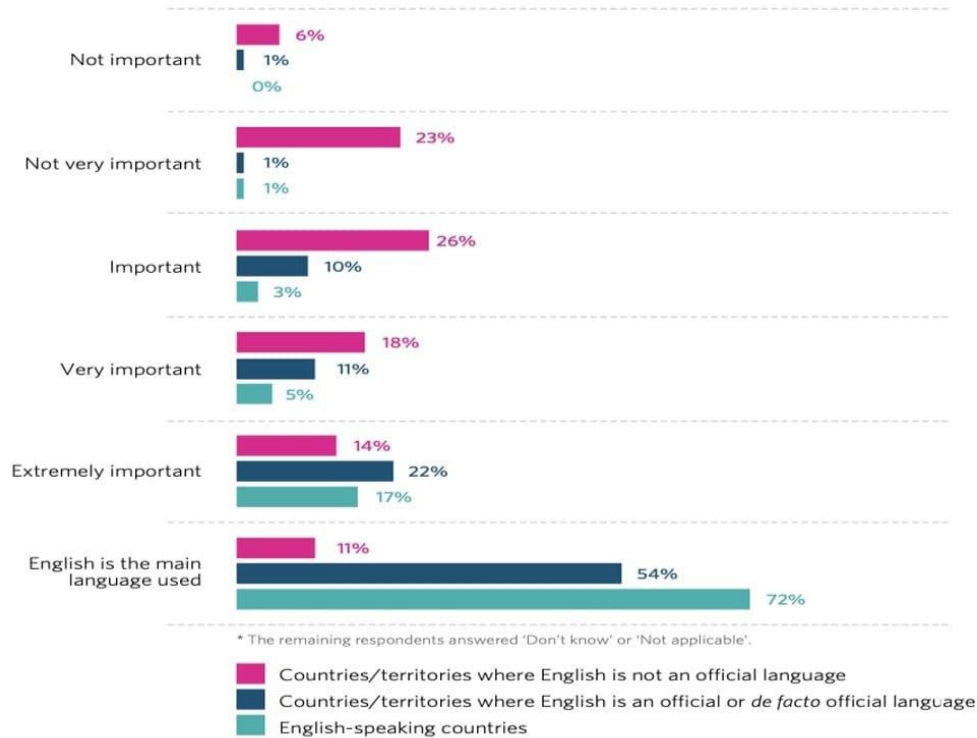
The effectiveness of communication within an organization hinges on the consensus among the individuals engaged in communication activities. Several factors influence this consensus, including the clarity of the message, the manner in which the message is delivered, the behavior exhibited during communication, and the communication situation, including the specific place and time of the interaction.

Organizational communication typically employs a combination of communication methods, including verbal, written, and broadcast channels. This diverse approach makes it easier and clearer to convey and retrieve information, ensuring that messages are comprehensible and accessible to all involved parties. By carefully considering these factors and utilizing various communication methods, organizations can foster understanding, collaboration, and successful outcomes in their internal interactions.

2.2 The Importance of English in Business

In this millennial era, English was one of the languages that we should master. By 2015, the organization announced that the average employee's English language score had increased since the initiative began (Harvard Business Review, 2015). A recent EU study found that 94% of upper- secondary school European students are learning English as a foreign language (Eurostat, 2013). To a certain extent, English had become the global language of business all over the world, and in certain industries, such as shipping and aviation, English had become the standard official language. In order to keep up with the times, English was needed in many fields. especially in business. If you were proficient in English, you could promote your brand overseas without problems. Basically, if you were interested in developing your business, then you should be proficient in English as a communication tool between you and your customers, so that your business would be easier to operate. Because, by understanding English, you would be able to market around the world. In addition, people working in a certain company also needed

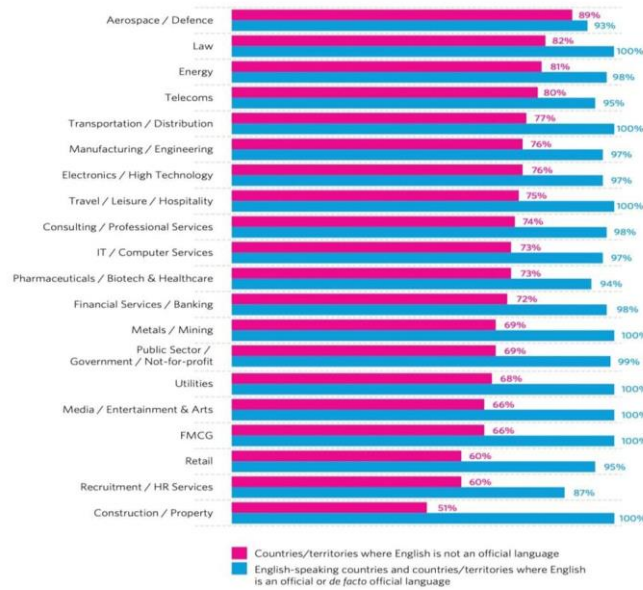
English to meet business needs. This meant that English was important to everyone, whether or not they came from an official language.



Graph 1. Percentage of employers that said English is important (Cambridge English, 2016).

Despite the low rankings of these countries and regions, at least 50% of employers still spoke English as important to their organization/company. Companies usually needed employees who were good at marketing. Of course, in this case, marketing involved marketing between countries or multinational companies. Therefore, good English was required to do it. More and more multinational companies used English as the language of general companies, such as Airbus, Daimler-Chrysler, Nokia, Renault, Samsung and Microsoft Beijing (Harvard Business Review, 2015). Usually, some companies also sent employees to school for free. The cost was borne directly by the company. There were some important things of English in business:

a. In the current job market, proficiency in English has become a mandatory requirement for employment in various companies. This prerequisite is especially crucial in the era of globalization, where companies strive to stay competitive and up-to-date with the changing times. Employees fluent in English have access to greater job opportunities. According to Mooij and Keegan (1994), in industries like advertising, mastering English is deemed highly important, with companies often refusing to hire individuals who do not speak English. When applying for jobs, many companies prefer candidates with English proficiency. This preference arises from the need to communicate not only with fellow Indonesians but also with international colleagues and clients in the workplace. Naturally, individuals with higher levels of English proficiency have better chances of securing positions in reputable and competitive companies.



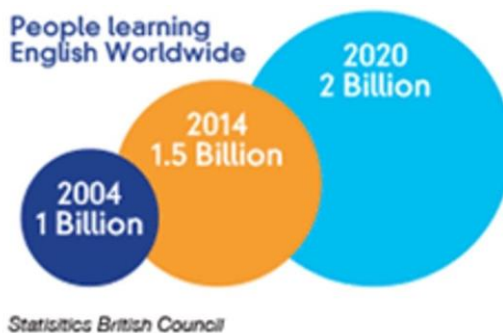
Graph 2. Percentage of employers that said English is significant (Cambridge English, 2016).

We could see from the graph that English was significant to the industry/company. In countries and regions where English was not an official language, the industries that were least likely to speak English as important (less than two-thirds of employers speak English as important to their organization) were: 1) Construction and Property 2) Recruitment and HR Services 3) Retail.

As per Blair and Jeanson (1995), having a high proficiency in the English language, particularly in oral communication skills, is invaluable for resolving various workplace issues. This applies not only on a national level but also internationally, as in the case of Bangladesh entering the BRICS Economic Community, opening up broader business opportunities. Becoming a business entrepreneur has become more accessible due to the rise of online businesses. With online platforms, entrepreneurs can expand their market reach, selling products to a wider audience, both domestically and internationally. This global connectivity emphasizes the importance of strong English language skills, enabling effective communication and participation in the international business arena.

b. Make us ready to be a successful businessman

According to Wachter and Maiworm (2011), the use of English in higher education is also increasing. For example, English- medium undergraduate and master's degree programmes in Continental Europe have more than tripled over the last seven years. No wonder so many people today could use English I well. Some people learnt English from year to year. This obliged them not to fall behind in life, as in education and in the business world.



Picture 1. People learning English worldwide (British Council),

Understanding English could bring many benefits to anyone who intended to become a businessman. As a businessman who wanted to start a business, of course we had to equip ourselves with communication skills. By mastering English, it would be easier for us to communicate with anyone. Especially on the internet, there were a lot of creative ideas written in English. Of course, we would understand these creative ideas more easily with English. After that, we could try to apply these ideas to our efforts. As we know, unique or interesting ideas could make our business grow fast because they attracted the interest of many people. Then, it would help you to grow your business.

As we know, businessmen wanted to have a thriving business. When the business had really grown, it would require further promotion to introduce our business to the international market. By mastering English, we could do promotions without having to be confused. That was, we could use English to promote our business. That way, introducing our business to anyone would not experience obstacles when we mastered English. Not only that, we could also cooperate with other businessmen abroad. We did not need to be confused when met another businessman from abroad. Even though we could employ translators, mastering English was much more important because it could prevent us from being scammed.

c. Helps strengthen relationships with business relations

Running a successful business requires establishing connections and nurturing relationships to facilitate its growth. Enrolling in business courses and mastering English can significantly enhance our ability to communicate with business partners from different countries, offering substantial benefits. Proficiency in English enables us to confidently engage with international business associates, making it easier to introduce our business to partners abroad. Moreover, English proficiency empowers us to participate in discussions with individuals from diverse parts of the world. For instance, when seeking input related to our business, being able to communicate effectively in English allows us to engage with a wide range of experts and stakeholders, enriching our understanding and improving our business strategies.

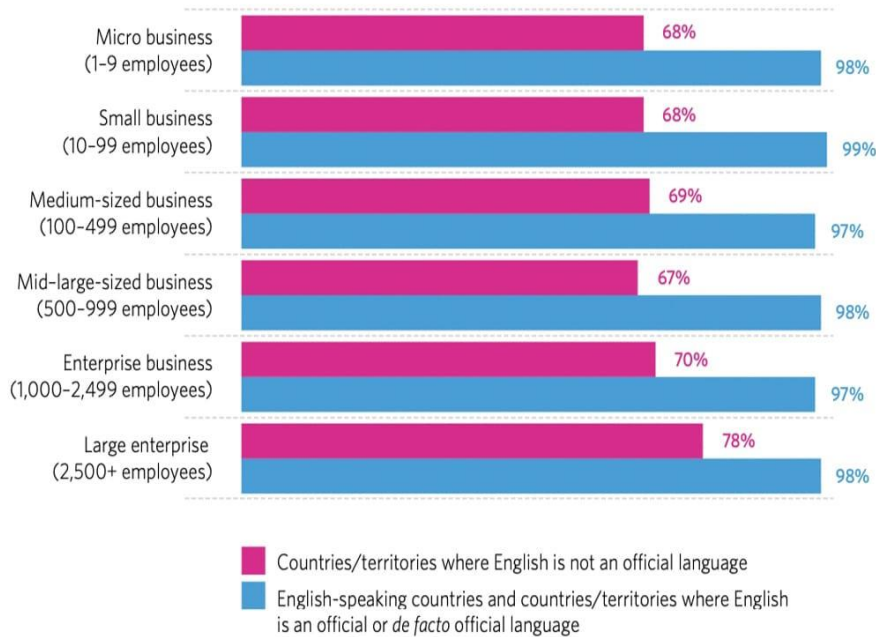
Mastering English opens up opportunities to seek input on various forums, even those frequented by foreigners. Engaging with a diverse audience allows us to gather valuable insights and opinions from people worldwide. By leveraging our English language skills, we can actively exchange ideas and perspectives with a broad spectrum of individuals. This exchange not only enriches our understanding but also helps us discover opinions that can significantly contribute to the advancement of our business. Engaging in discussions and seeking input from a global community enhances our business strategies, fostering innovation and growth.

2.3 The effect of English as a communication tool on business goals

In our contemporary globalized business landscape, an increasing number of local companies in Bangladesh are venturing into the international market. Simultaneously, international companies are expanding their presence in the local market. Consequently, the use of English as the language of business is becoming increasingly imperative. This necessity becomes evident in cases where negotiations falter due to misunderstandings with potential foreign partners, project timelines are disrupted due to communication breakdowns with clients from other countries, job applications at foreign companies are rejected due to insufficient English proficiency, and opportunities to collaborate with international-grade companies are missed due to the unavailability of English-speaking workers.

This trend is not limited to Bangladesh; it is a global phenomenon. For example, in China, the English language learning market is experiencing significant growth, with an annual growth rate of approximately 20%, primarily driven by school-aged learners (Technavio, 2016). This growth underscores the increasing recognition of the importance of English proficiency in the global job market and business interactions, emphasizing the need for individuals and organizations to invest in English language skills to remain competitive and successful in the international arena.

Using foreign languages in daily communication has significant impacts. According to Williams and Chaston (2004), individuals who excel in English and can speak multiple foreign languages have a notable advantage in the market. People who regularly communicate in foreign languages tend to appear more intelligent, a fact supported by scientific research. Engaging in communication using foreign languages not only enhances language skills but also sharpens decision-making abilities. Bilingual individuals, in particular, exhibit a heightened awareness and a broader perspective, allowing them to understand their environment better. In the context of business, this proficiency in foreign languages is immensely valuable, especially when communicating with international partners. The ability to speak multiple languages not only facilitates effective communication but also demonstrates a high level of adaptability and cultural understanding, which are crucial attributes in global business interactions.

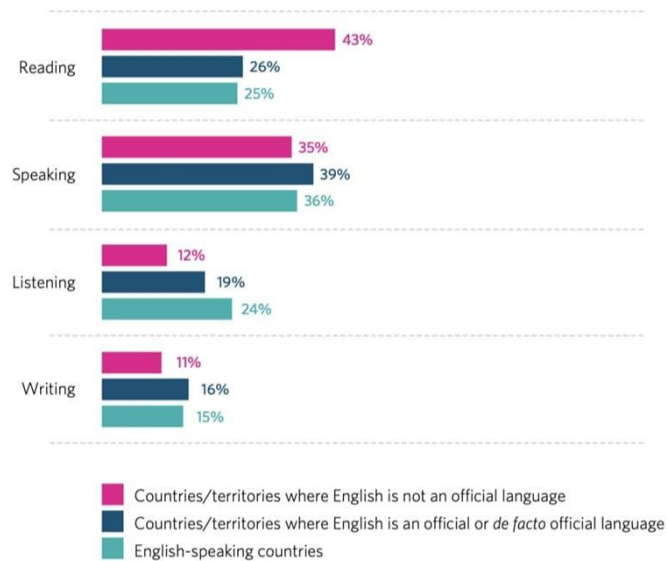


Graph 3. Percentage of employers that said English is significant for their organization organization size comparison (Cambridge English, 2016).

In countries and regions where English was not the official language, large enterprises, particularly those with more than 2,500 employees, were more likely to emphasize the importance of English proficiency. However, it is noteworthy that there was surprisingly little variation across organizations of different sizes. Regardless of the size, at least two-thirds of employers in various organizations considered English to be important, highlighting its significance in the global business landscape. This uniform emphasis on English proficiency suggests its universal importance, irrespective of the organization's

scale, emphasizing the need for employees to possess strong English language skills to thrive in diverse professional environments.

In today's modern world, marked by challenges and fierce competition, individuals are advised to possess not only a high level of education but also specific skills. Among the most crucial skills in this era is proficiency in English. As elaborated earlier, English is a global language. To stay ahead of the general populace, individuals need to master English comprehensively, honing skills in reading, speaking, listening, and writing. This mastery of English not only enhances communication abilities but also opens doors to various opportunities in both personal and professional spheres, ensuring individuals are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of the contemporary global landscape.



Graph 4. The English language skill employers said was most important for their organization language status comparison (Cambridge English, 2016).

Based on the most important skills, reading and speaking were identified as crucial abilities. In countries and territories where English was not an official language, reading was the most important skill sought by employers. Conversely, in English-speaking countries and regions where English was an official or de facto official language, speaking was deemed most essential for employers. According to Jones and Alexander (2000), English serves as the primary medium of communication for business professionals across various countries. This communication in English may involve speakers from diverse language backgrounds, such as Swedish and German, Japanese and Italian. English enables individuals, including those whose native language is not English, to communicate effectively with native English speakers, underscoring its significance in international business interactions.

Certainly, using English can boost self-confidence as proficiency in a foreign language enhances one's self-assurance. Confident individuals tend to appear more attractive to others, making social interactions, including meeting new people and making friends, less daunting. Engaging with diverse individuals broadens one's perspective and enriches life experiences. Effective communication and openness to others facilitate the process of making new friends. Developing such social skills not only fosters

personal relationships but also paves the way for successful business interactions, allowing individuals to achieve optimal outcomes in their professional endeavors.

3. Conclusion

In the contemporary globalized era, effective communication has gained paramount importance. With the rapid pace of business and technological advancements, international opportunities for exchanges have expanded significantly. English, being a major business language, plays a crucial role in business development. Mastering English is essential as it opens doors to promising career prospects. English proficiency is a valuable asset in the global workforce, and most cross-border exchanges are conducted in English. International companies typically expect their employees to be fluent in English, making it indispensable for business and professional needs.

In today's interconnected world, English remains the language of business across various sectors, including manufacturing, services, information technology, and the internet. Proficiency in English offers several advantages, such as increased job opportunities, preparation for successful entrepreneurship, and strengthening relationships with business partners. Being proficient in English not only enables smooth business operations but also instills confidence in communicating with partners and clients.

When establishing a business, having sufficient capital and adhering to regulations is crucial, and English proficiency is increasingly becoming one of these essential requirements. Mastering English opens up numerous opportunities for business development. In essence, being proficient in English is a necessity in the modern workplace. Multinational companies prioritize candidates with strong English language skills, and using English for business purposes yields positive outcomes for companies, making it a valuable asset that benefits both individuals and organizations.

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