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English in Global Commerce - Understanding its Role, Benefits, and Impediments

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KEYWORDS

Global business
communication, lingua franca,
cross-cultural collaboration,
English-mediated interactions,
language barriers in business

Abstract

The latter has brought about the dominance of the world language currently, in the global business arena—English. Indeed, there are more positives than negatives in the use of English for international business communication. In addition, it is true that not only does it improve mutual understanding and cooperation among teams of different language backgrounds, but it also enables large businesses to grow global contacts and finally get a much wider cover in the global market. Hence, English-based communication, with proper cohesion, makes the process of decision-making very smooth and coherent, and hence builds up the overall efficiency of the company. On the other hand, heavy reliance on the English language comes with its own sets of problems. Subtle distinctions in the translation of culture run the risk of being misunderstood and hence damage the potential of the regions to work harmoniously together. This could sideline the non-natives with a strong leaning towards English, hence putting at a disadvantage anyone less fluent in the language.

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Page | 282

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Abstract

The latter has brought about the dominance of the world language currently, in the global business arena—English. Indeed, there are more positives than negatives in the use of English for international business communication. In addition, it is true that not only does it improve mutual understanding and cooperation among teams of different language backgrounds, but it also enables large businesses to grow global contacts and finally get a much wider cover in the global market. Hence, English-based communication, with proper cohesion, makes the process of decision-making very smooth and coherent, and hence builds up the overall efficiency of the company. On the other hand, heavy reliance on the English language comes with its own sets of problems. Subtle distinctions in the translation of culture run the risk of being misunderstood and hence damage the potential of the regions to work harmoniously together. This could sideline the non-natives with a strong leaning towards English, hence putting at a disadvantage anyone less fluent in the language.

Keywords: global business communication, lingua franca, cross-cultural collaboration, English-mediated interactions, language barriers in business

Introduction

The business of the 21st century had to be globalised in nature that it called for effective communication across different cultures and languages. Among the different languages used in business forums, English has often been described as the lingua franca in the international business world. Moreover, it helps in finding some common language with which one person can express himself and in which they can communicate and cooperate. This paper is going to look into the advantages and disadvantages of using English as a business lingua franca. This research, when elaborated in varied dimensions, will be much useful in understanding the complexity with which it is associated. English as a lingua franca in business has been a buzz word for the last few years with the interconnectivity of the global economy. This chapter provides a glimpse into research conducted in the last decade to find the causes and effects of the global growth of English as a lingua franca (ELF) on conference interpreting in the fast-growing subfield of ITSELF (interpreting, translation, and English as a Lingua Franca) (Mikasa, 2021). The majority of multinational companies from diverse home countries do adopt English as the master language of communication. This, in turn, has turned out to be the subject of interest for academia to understand

how the linguistic dominance affects various aspects of business operation and interaction. The benefits of the English universal business language are, it helps in cooperating, trading, and communication across borders. Most of the time, it speeds up negotiations, makes effective work, and builds mutual understanding between cultures. There are, however, also pitfalls, such as miscommunication, cultural insensitivity, and unequal access to opportunities, so it is very important to take seriously language dynamics within the context of global business.

The major objective of this paper is to make a critical analysis of the benefits and negatives of the use of English as a lingua franca in business contexts. This writing seeks to look into the diverse nature of language use in international business and its relevance to cross-cultural communication. What, therefore, are the advantages of conducting international business communications in English as a common language? It was a detailed study focusing on issues and pitfalls related to language barriers and miscommunications in English mediated business interactions. It studied strategies and best practices that can help in mitigating the challenges that relate to language diversity in global business environments.

Rational of the study

The rationale of this study emanates from the dire need to understand the implication of using English as the Lingua Franca in business. There is, therefore, a need for its wide adoption. In such, addressing these matters becomes of the very essence to business, policymakers, and academicians since they form the very key and foundation toward global trade, corporate strategies, and international relations. The biggest positive is that it engenders effective international trade, collaboration, and the cultural exchange between nations. However, the disadvantages serve to guide businesses through the linguistic difficulties to ensure that the operations go on effectively while creating the most viable relationships. The study is very important since it helps in attaining the objectives of achieving effective communication and collaboration in the global business environment, according to Turmudi (2020). The following benefits and pitfalls of English as the lingua franca will describe how this research could benefit business leaders, educators, and policymakers in terms of the challenges of multinational team communications competencies (Turmudi, 2020).

This study looks at the subtleties of using English as a lingua franca in global business environments, with an objective to analyse the advantages and challenges related to it that will affect intercultural communication. Thus, this research would propose to give a profound perspective in relation to effective global communication to both business and the linguistics fields. Through an evaluation of several aspects, this research seeks to provide guidance toward best practices, policies, and tactics that could cushion effective communication within business. The use of English as an international language is functional in that it upgrades communication and level synchronisation in international agreements and commerce. It will be able to create a common avenue through which there can be negotiation and commerce done. The only adverse

side is if these cultural subtleties and the prevalence of a region could effectively overpower non-native English speakers. Pay attention to cultural subtleties.

Literature Review

In the present world, business is global. In the course of conducting such businesses, partners, clients, and even consumers, among others, with whom the business entity will interact, come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Communication across such diversities is basic to the success of the venture. English is most spoken and used in business, and therefore it is the first language associated with commerce. A lingua franca is a language chosen by groups of speakers, each of whom has his native language, so that the chosen language can be used as the medium for common communication. This literature review purports to analyse the pros and cons of considering English as the lingua franca of the corporate workplace. It establishes a great stride toward critical insights in language complications accompanied by the use of the international business industry through an analysis of past research and academic articles.

Page | 284

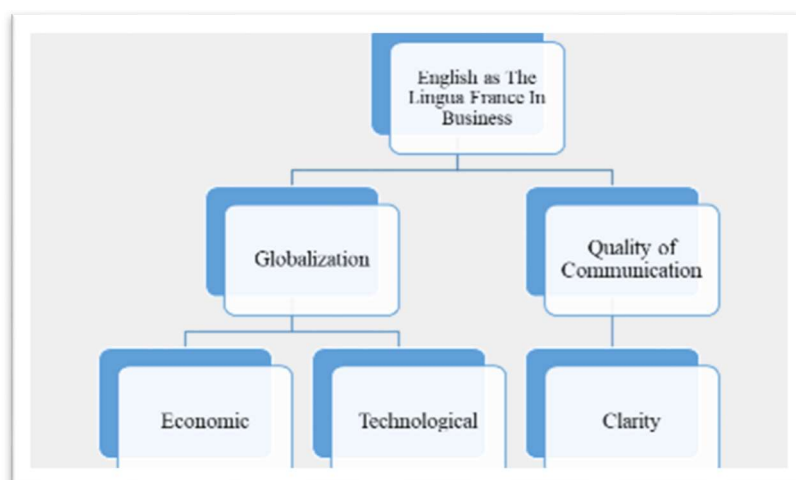


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Advantages of using English as the Lingua Franca in Business

On the downside, these are linked to the extensive application of the English language within the business field. They are among many challenges, the biggest being losing organisational culture diversity. However, English has become the language of business in the global world, and in all businesses, it largely takes the upper hand. Most multinational businesses have with time adopted English as their corporate linguistic to facilitate statement between varied locations and departments (Lopez, 2022).

As Nurmi (2020) points out, once English becomes the dominant language, there is a certain danger of cultural homogenisation because the valuable viewpoints and practices of the culture can be overridden or lost. This can create a narrowing of a diversity of thought, which might be a barrier to creativity and problem-solving, as it is found that multiple cultural viewpoints bring innovation. The use of the English language as a lingua franca in business is increasingly growing

within the globalised world (Nurmi, 2020). This trend is not without its reasons, as English is rife with many advantages as the common language in international business communication. This is going to particularly connect companies with different language and cultural backgrounds when it comes to doing international business. According to Suebwongsuwan (2020), p. 44, this makes the communication of ideas and information more effective, breaking communication barriers, and promoting cooperation between team members who come from the diverse corners of the world. It goes without saying that companies with English as their first language have a bigger market. English, through the first predominantly used first language in business negotiations and transactional trade, one automatically strategically positions themselves through proficiency to the business openings in the international trade, investment, and partnership agreements. It also facilitates internal processing within multinational corporations due to a common language. From creating standardised documentation to conducting training sessions, it is through English that the branches and departments are communicating, ensuring that the output is consistent and efficient (Suebwongsuwan, 2020). The world is ripe for a conversant English-speaking economy, where business entities that have good speakers of English will have added advantages. This will be able to help them in interacting effectively with a wider range of customers, meeting various customer requirements, and changing marketing strategies according to the need to lure a global audience, whereby eventually increasing the market share and return on their products. English is the leading language for academic research and technology development. Use of English in businesses places a company at a vantage point where, in the industry, it can get and request updates of fresh innovations, findings, and developments in quite a conducive manner to ensure learning and innovation continue happening within an organisation. Another circle of reasoning for going well with the English language is that proficiency in the English language brings employability to a higher notch in international markets. It makes it very easy for businesses to pick and employ the best talent from across the globe, which in turn makes their workforce a diverse, talented pool to drive innovation and creativity.

Pitfalls and Challenges of Using English as the Lingua Franca in Business

Globalisation has opened its way to a trend in which companies take up their operation in overseas territories. Working at an overseas territory opens the gates of business in languages that differ, and many business houses make an effort to work in the same line with one business language.

Ujiie (2020) emphasises that because English is a very common language of communication, this does not imply that the communication carried out by its use is free from any misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Accordingly, communication may suffer from different accents and dialects and different levels of fluency. Moreover, there is always an inborn bond between language and cultural practices. Misinterpretation of some terms or even some of the cultural signs will lead to some aspects of culture being misunderstood, which may be injurious, say, to interpersonal relations or business. It can also lead to one not being fluent in the English language, hence feeling left out, and this does affect the self-esteem of the victims negatively, hindering conversation participation (Ujiie, 2020). This then means that the company is fully dependent on the English

version and thus it loses out on more delicate cultural differences and does not target the local market. Hence, the lack of richness in vital exchanges in business. Regularly using a language that is not his mother tongue could bear a cognitive weight on the employee, and with time, it might be taking its toll on his well-being, probably resulting in fatigue. However, though there are many good points to designate English as the main corporate language, firms should be aware of its downside. It becomes, therefore, obligatory to react to such challenges with investment in cultural familiarisation initiatives, languages learning, and sophisticated communication resources. However, the key, according to the author, is an even perspective that does not overstate the importance the common business language would have over the need for culturally sensitive environment and diverse communication. This has the effect of more benefits emanating from using English as the main language for business, from wider reach in the market, increased opportunity for business, better teamwork, and smooth international exchanges. However, this is always accompanied by challenges such as cultural misunderstandings and unevenness in the language skills of the team. In fact, companies have to identify these barriers and succeed in eliminating them to harness the real benefits that could be reaped from English as the world business language.

Research Question

Q1: What are the key advantages of using English as the lingua franca in international business communication? How do these advantages contribute to global business success?

Q2: What are the common pitfalls and challenges multinational companies face when implementing English as the primary language for business operations?

Q3: How do cultural differences affect the perspective and implementations of English as the lingua franca in different regions?

Method

This chapter focuses on the structure & models used by a researcher while performing research. Proper choices of technique & tools are important to complete the research successfully. Apart from that, the relevant data is important for completing the research. This chapter can be helpful for a successful outcome of the research.

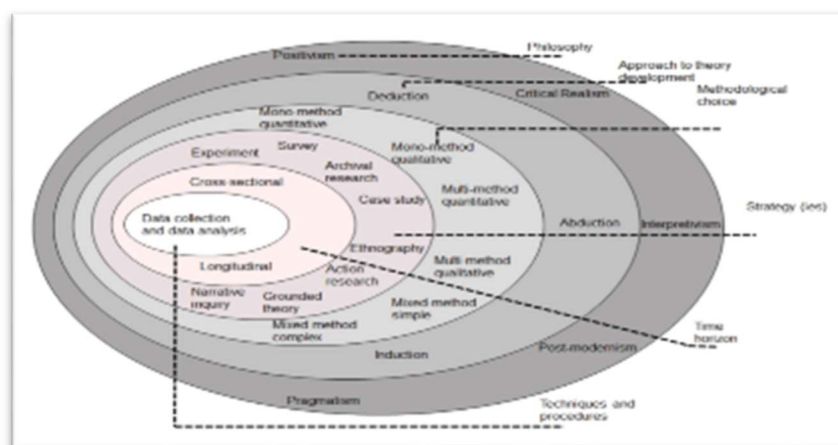


Figure 2. Research Onion

(Source: Saunders et al., 2019, p. 108).

The present study arrives at the research objective in a way that was taken up through a combination of mixed methods. According to Bhat, Silllalee, and Kandasamy (2023), it is really important that the research onion should come into play in order to arrive at the research purpose. The layers of the research onion emphasise sticking to a proper methodology. This approach will be inductive and linked with the dynamic understanding of philosophy and history. Factors of multi-disciplines are used in order to emphasise the importance of the philosophical perspective in this approach. (Bhat et al., 2023)

Research philosophy is the part where the examination, conduction, and composition could be discussed. This is based on theories and ideas that are used in research. While undertaking research activity, four types of philosophies are underscored; Positivism, Interpretivism, Realism, and Pragmatism.



Figure 3. Research philosophy

Justification of the chosen research philosophy

The philosophy has four main subdivisions. The particular study has been described through the use of Positivism. The observation and the related thoughts have been used in this part of the

research. General positivism, on the other hand, generalises that society observes reality based on generalising products of society. This is according to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020).

Research Approach & Design

The research approach helps a researcher to construct the format of the study. The research approach is such a part in which the researcher can detail the findings and the information, which is collected by the different kinds of sources, based on the topic. The research approach has two main subdivisions, namely inductive approach & deductive approach.

Page | 288

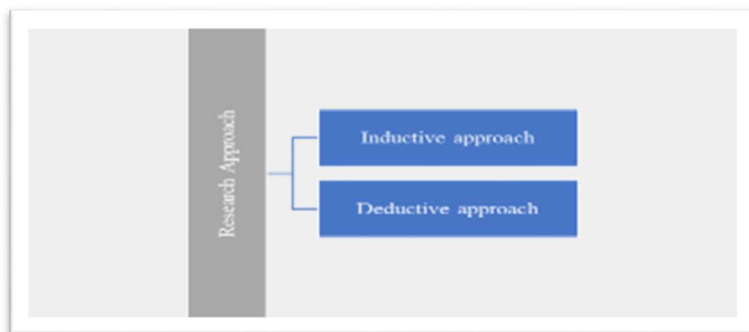


Figure 4. Research Approach

Justification for choice of research approach

The researcher has based the study on the inductive approach. "Dorow, 2011" defines "deductive approach" as an approach to reasoning by drawing inferences from established premises, either general principles or facts, to draw a conclusion. It begins broadly with the theory and, as a result, makes use of specific observation or evidence in reaching a definite and relevant conclusion. It is also related to formal logic and is characterised with the emphasis on certainty and preservation of truth.

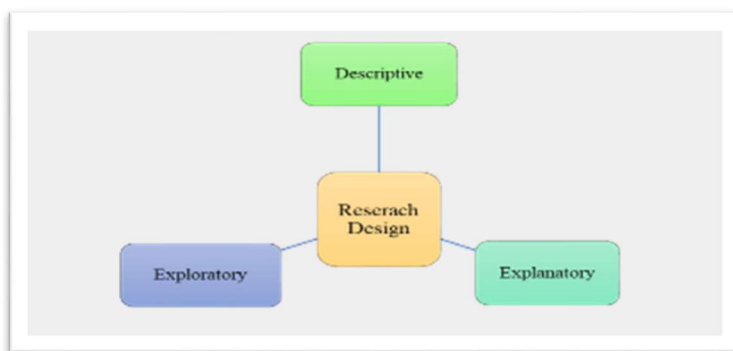


Figure 5. Research Design

Justification for choosing the research design

Descriptive research design is the design, which helps the researcher, be directed to design and identify the issues regarding the research. Moreover, by the help of descriptive research design, he

gets a chance to discuss and interpret the topic of research properly. This research paper is a descriptive type, targeting to describe, analyse, and develop a report on the following topical report based on the given case (Keng'ara & Makina, 2020).

Data collection method

Data methodology outlines the systematic approach and technique used to collect, analyse, and interpret data. It includes methods of collecting data, data storage, among many more. This paper plays an important role in the analysis part of the research.

Page | 289

Quantitative and qualitative data

Quantitative data analysis is one of the research methodologies through which statistical and numerical information from a data set can be summarised. It includes meaning to the interpretation of numerical data using a survey, experiment, or measurement. Therefore, the researcher utilises statistical techniques in order to come up with a detailed analysis of the patterns, relationships, and trends within the data. This is an indispensable method in fields such as economics, psychology, and natural sciences. Interpretation of qualitative data involves a process of understanding all types of non-numerical information available, of which text and visual data are commonly used. In this method, the researcher employs methods like thematic analysis.

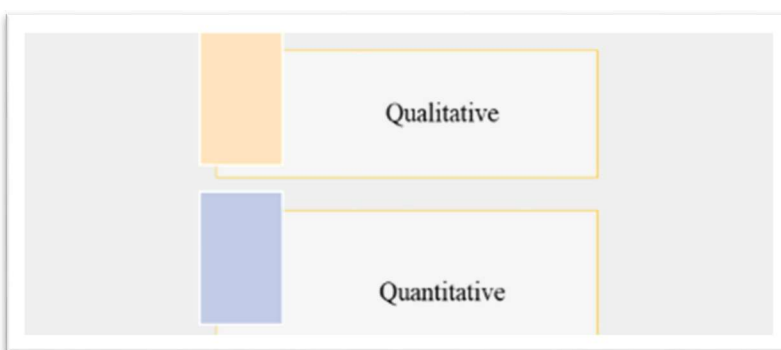


Figure 6. Data Collection Method

Data analysis technique

General techniques of data analysis are methodologies designed for the interpretation, examination of data, and deriving insights from datasets. Generally, these methods are statistical procedures, machine-learning algorithms (MIL), or the use of qualitative approaches. MIL is a relatively new tool in the set of any analyst. These algorithms, like predictive modelling and classification techniques, try to identify the patterns within a huge dataset. The system does not refine its outputs, unlike the statistical methods used traditionally, but rather continuously to an improved precision over time in the reception of more data. Qualitative approaches fall within the field of non-numeric data. Thematic analysis techniques look to pierce into textual or visual data with the intention of getting at underlying motivations, emotions, or patterns. This will give a understanding—an illumination, in other words—of the "why" data. Effective application of the techniques is,

therefore, of much importance. Properly analysed data might shed light on hidden insights, strengthen existing theories, or, in some rare cases, even support other researchers to make new discoveries. The path from collecting data to deriving some results is meaningful, though not straightforward. More importantly, the researchers have to select the most suitable of them for their particular objectives and the nature of the data. Only with meticulous analysis can raw data be transformed into actionable, credible findings.

Sample Selection

Here in this research, the surveyor has selected 50 samples. In this research, the researcher has used the samples with a random sampling method for the selection.

Results

Data collected by survey & analysed by quantitative data analysis are important for successful completion of the research. There are 13 questions, and the researcher has collected 50 samples in total. Moreover, the questions have focused on the concerned topic & that helps the researcher to collect data accordingly, reference Appendix 1 for the figures. The summary content provides an overview of the facts and figures about different aspects of using English in business communication and the effect it might have been perceived to result in global business operation. The respondents were found to be entry-level by about 34%, whereas the senior management has 30%, which shows good diversity at the hierarchical levels of participation. Its first place among 36% of companies and third and second places among companies in finance, technology, and healthcare. A maximum of the respondents working in the current company/industry has experience of 0-2 years. Almost 40% are used to speaking English often while communicating during business, and approximately the same percent is strong in feeling that English should be a common language for flourishing in international business collaboration. Further, 56% admit that the English language, in business communication, has expanded the company in its global coverage. However, 34% agree, but it is a consensus that fluency in English really places someone in a competitive niche in the global market.

The level of English proficiency has varied, and this was a cause of miscommunication for 64% of the respondents. Concerns rose that the reliance on English could take away cultural subtleties in regions that do not speak English, with 28% strongly agreeing with this argument. Nearly 44% are in agreement that sometimes they missed business opportunities for this priority of the English language, while facing the difficulties; 66% of the company's reportedly trained employees in English proficiency and 36% found the training useful for business communication. Further, the leaning is very high in favour of embracing proficiency in multiple languages to serve regions or clients, standing at 40%.

Discussion

In a connected, globalised world, the major role of the universal language in business takes precedence like never before. More than 1.5 billion across the world speak the language,

positioning it at a very high level in international discussion. It will be much easier to transact with English in business environments, to be more efficient in the transaction processes. Oftentimes, it speeds up the process of making decisions and eliminates problems faster. A high percentage of essential business materials, including research papers and education resources, are produced in English. This, in effect, provides professionals who have a good mastery of the language with up-to-date and direct access to the latest developments and knowledge in his line of business. English is recognised across six countries as the professional dialect. It is not taken as part of the language skills one possesses but rather as an essential requirement in the hiring procedures (Nielsen, 2019).

Page | 291

The neutrality of the English language has been so much preferred to fill the breach between cultures. It will, by its very nature, inadvertently bypass culturally preferred means of communication, hence avoid any possible or existing misunderstanding, when it becomes the commonly used medium of communication in areas of its use. This, in turn, even further leads to uniformity in the varied industries through the wide-ranging use of English. Such standardisation nurtures the growth of terminologies and practices that are agreeable by all, thus making uncomplicated and bringing into conformity operations on an international level. This is a great benefit for companies whose operations are mainly done in the English language toward their strive in the world market. They can easily negotiate, engage, and communicate even with partners or clients located in the furthest ends of the world. Again, companies with a basic operating language of English are a pull factor to global talent. Prime professionals, more so those sourced from diverse linguistic backgrounds, normally prefer employers who provide an enabling environment linguistically in day-to-day operations. Further, the companies are enabled to save important operational costs in translation and interpretation, if any, since they focus their operation predominantly in English, savings that are very paramount to large-scale multinational entities. Truly, the inclination towards more of an English-centric mode of communication is today slowly shifting, not just by trends but by demand for the widest transmission of ideas and borderless interaction. Regular interaction in the office, within English, has time again shown itself to be very valuable in the smooth and efficient running of organisations (Nielsen, 2019).

The neutrality of the English language has been so much preferred to fill the breach between cultures. It will also inadvertently avoid possible or existing misunderstanding, because when it becomes the commonly used medium of communication in areas of its use, by its very nature, it will bypass the culturally preferred means of communication. This further causes uniformity in varied industries with the use of English. In fact, such standardisation does help the growth of terminologies and practices, which are agreeable by all and further make it uncomplicated and bring operations into conformity on an international level. This comes as a great opportunity and benefit to companies that engage most of their operations in the English language, as they thrive in the world market. They can easily be in a position to negotiate, engage, and communicate with even a partner or a client who can be located to the farthest ends of the world. Again, for companies whose base operating language is English, it really acts to pull the global talent to them. The prime professionals, and more so those sourced from diverse linguistic backgrounds, normally prefer an

employer who provides an enabling environment, lingually, during day-to-day operations. Further, the companies under the JSON umbrella achieve significant savings in important operational costs related to translation and interpretation, if applicable, by predominantly operating in English. These savings are extremely crucial for large-scale multinational entities. Truly, slowly but surely, today, more of an English-centric mode of communication is shifting not just by trends but by demand for the widest spread of ideas and borderless interaction. Routine interaction within the office, English has been time and again proven to be very valuable for the smooth and efficient running of organisations (Nielsen, 2019).

Page | 292

The most pronounced benefits are that of English integration into business operations: effective, clear, and succinct communication together with smooth team collaboration. Naturally, any consistent language supports the framework of international transactions. It does, in fact, develop a climate of understanding, reduce ambiguities, and dramatically drop the chances of misinterpretations. In turn, this increased the importance given to English fluency as a golden ticket in the job market, facilitating countless opportunities for people, serving as a bridging language for knowledge exchange at an international platform. English-speaking countries have to climb on the globalisation bandwagon. With the language being proficiently English, the client companies will also be able to reach markets that were earlier not accessible to them. In fact, any digital asset from English-written websites, promotional stuff to details of the product documentation, will invariably find favour with huge global audience, thus affecting the clientele and revenue drive in a positive manner. At an organisational level, a united language ethos breeds an atmosphere of camaraderie, puts the spirits of the employees into life, and further moves the cause of their collective endeavours. Notwithstanding the avalanche of research on the merits and demerits of English as a global business language, evidently, there seems to be a gap in understanding the same to its all-encompassing implications, especially with the subtleties of linguistic diversity and the socio-economic dynamism attached to the prerogatives of language primacy. The gap between may be filled, and it is very important, through effective communication strategies, for the maintenance and enhancement of the spirit of doing business regarding this linguistic and cultural diversity.

Conclusion

It is very common to find English being adopted and used as the language for business transactions in this era. The benefits and challenges that come along with such evolution need to be properly managed by the enterprise and practitioner for the purpose of effective communication and collaboration within varied linguistic and cultural partitions. Communication and understanding within various teams made up of people from different backgrounds would work much better if English were the main language for commerce. Mastering English allows people from different cultural backgrounds to work together coherently. The sharing of ideas, insight, confluence, and specialisation is eased in the bid to foster creativity and originality in the transnational company. With English as an international or universal language, there will be no language barriers to facilitate more participation in all dialogues and activities by all members, regardless of their first

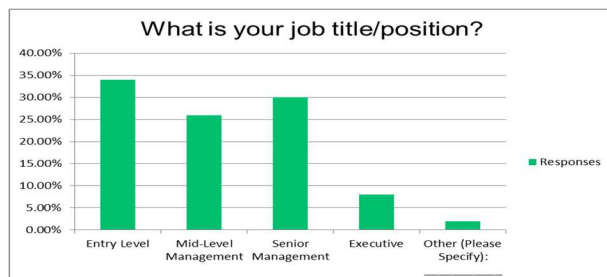
languages. Another very important benefit would be the fiscal advantage that links a unified language in global business dealing. Companies that otherwise would have considered English a source of their main official language would manage to substantially reduce their translation costs, hence make their operations much coherent. This uniformity makes the negotiations smooth and the contracts easy, and one walks through legal commitments without barriers, which many a time tends to be a source of misconceptions. In this way, business can communicate with the maximum range of audience and the maximum world across much easier in the English language, thus acquiring customers and partners from abroad. Nevertheless, the primary use of English at the workplace has some cons, though they are associated with evident pros. One of the major concerns is that this waste should not erode cultural diversity within the firm, and there is actually a risk that goes with the waste or even vanishing away, if at all the predominating language in the industry is English, of cultural insight and tradition. This is what is referred to as cultural uniformity. It would then be a case of failing on the aspect of diversity of thought, consequently easily compromising the ability of originality in problem-solving, since most of the inventive ideas emanate from a combination of different cultural perspectives. Differences in proficiency in languages among employees may also translate into differences at workplaces. This would therefore imply that they have an awkward time explaining their ideas or points of view, while those who have a poor knowledge of the language would have them sort of 'isolated' in the discussions of some group activities aimed at decision-making. On the contrary, it can be said that such linguistic discrepancies do not allow proper teamwork, which would affect overall efficiency in an adverse manner for the enterprise. While the business use of English as the worldwide language indeed brings with it many pluses for financial efficiency, international reach, and communicative effectiveness, there are things for companies to be aware of. Employers need to become champions of linguistic diversity and must ensure they provide employees with tools and resources to assist in developing good English communication skills. The integrated communication approach, including language improvement programs and translation facilities, would counter such challenges and enable every worker to participate and benefit from the global business environment. The key lies in balancing the advantages of a common business tongue with the conservation of cultural plurality.

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Quantitative analysis (Survey) questions with percentage



Page | 295

Figure 1

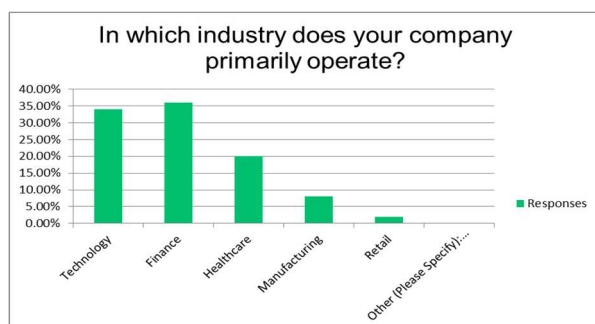


Figure 2

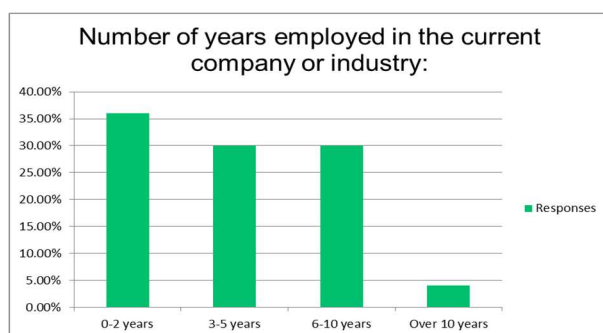


Figure 3

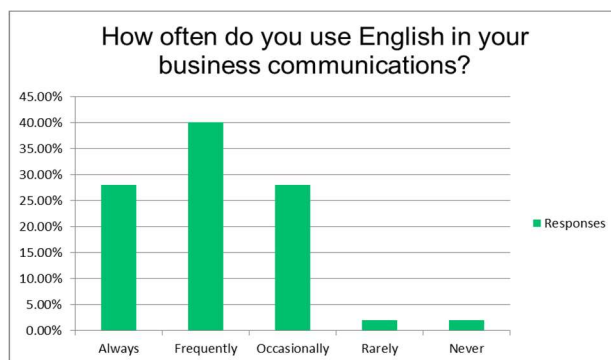


Figure 4

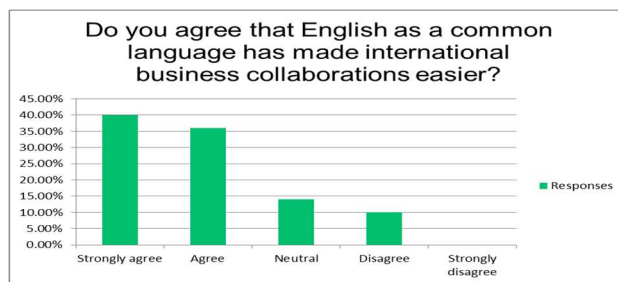


Figure 5

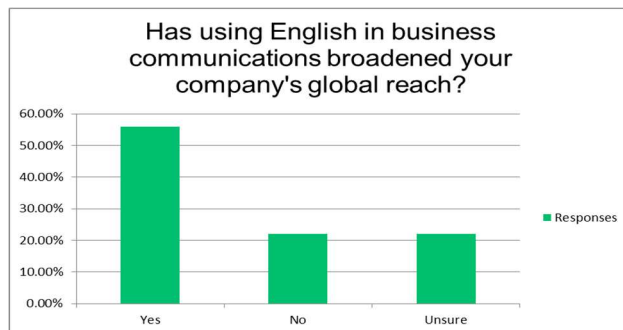


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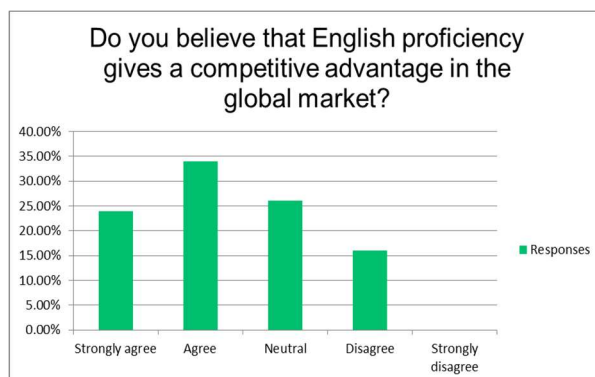


Figure 7



Figure 8

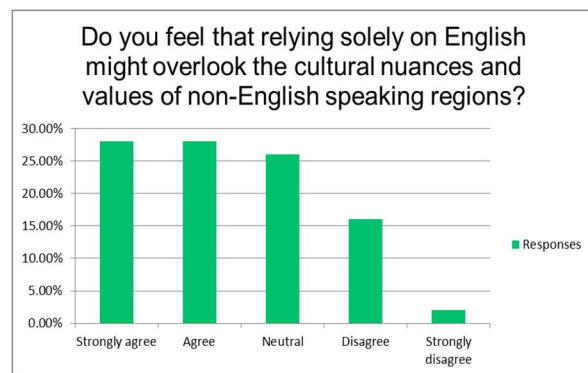


Figure 9

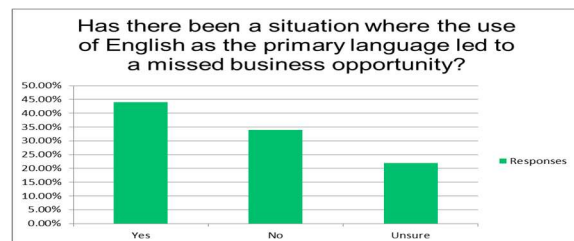


Figure 10



Figure 11

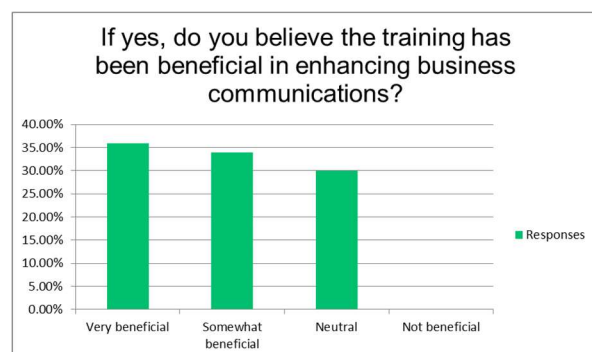


Figure 12

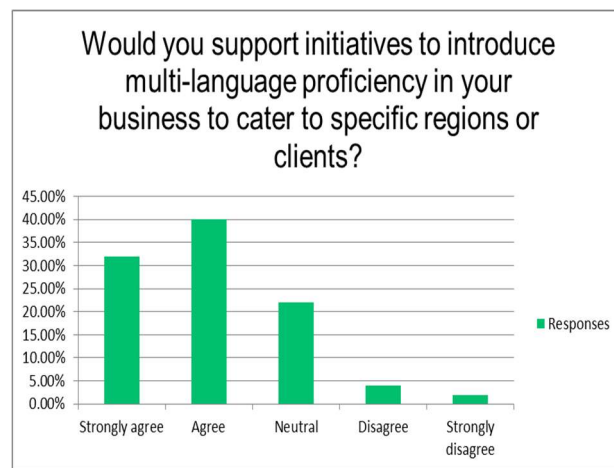


Figure 13

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