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## **English as a Crucial Tool in International Business Communication**

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**Abstract:** With globalisation shifting world's economies towards a common market, the need for a shared mean of communication emerged. The aim of this article is to recognise the importance of English as a contemporary communication tool in international business and identify underlying opportunities and weaknesses arising from one's proficiency. Simultaneous considerations cover the roots of assigning the *lingua franca* role to English and illustrate its varieties among speakers. The research methods used to evaluate the issue are descriptive, comparative, and include the analysis of the literature on the subject. The examined literature is based on quantitative research methods that are used to identify economic benefits of English usage. Moreover, chosen qualitative methods are used to discover socio-cultural settings and individuals within them. The results encapsulate economic, cultural and technological potential of English by presenting key areas in which it can be applied strategically to achieve long-lasting benefits.

**Keywords:** international communication, English language, business communication, linguistic diversity.

### **1. Introduction**

Cross-cultural interactions are embedded into international business as its participants represent various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. With globalisation shifting world's economies towards a common market, the need for a shared mean of communication emerged. What is more, facilitating mutual understanding became relevant to maintaining long-term business relationships. The challenge lies in handling these relationships so that they accelerate development on an individual, company, and global level. Driving growth requires the adaptation of a shared mode of speech that would reduce communication barriers and accommodate knowledge exchange. This is not yet to happen, as English has already fulfilled the role of the global business language (Neeley, 2012, p. 2). It poses as a catalyst for keeping global market free of barriers and provides transparency between parties from distinct backgrounds. This article aims at recognising the importance of English as a contemporary tool to communicate in international business and identifying underlying opportunities and weaknesses arising from one's proficiency. Deliberations are complemented by the following research questions that outline specific issues:

- What is the role of English in international communication?
- What are the barriers to English adaptation and what facilitates its international recognition?
- How social, cultural and linguistic aspects influence global English usage?
- Which business areas are impacted by English and how does it correlate with performance?
- How English proficiency accelerates or hinders development?

Simultaneous considerations cover the roots of assigning the *lingua franca* role to English and illustrate the varieties of its usage among speakers. Practical application of studied theories is reflected in particular areas and sets English communication as the basis for international activities such as investment, acquiring partnerships, negotiations, knowledge transfers, building a global brand and maintaining customer satisfaction. It seeks to identify how English influences cooperation, and how its strategic application leads to the competitive advantage on individual, group (company) and global level. Illustrated examples underline the importance of English as a contemporary tool to communicate in international business and recognise underlying opportunities and weaknesses arising from one's proficiency. Additionally, strategic application of the language to different business contexts is shown and considered as an accelerator of growth.

## **2. English: a universal tool of communication in international business**

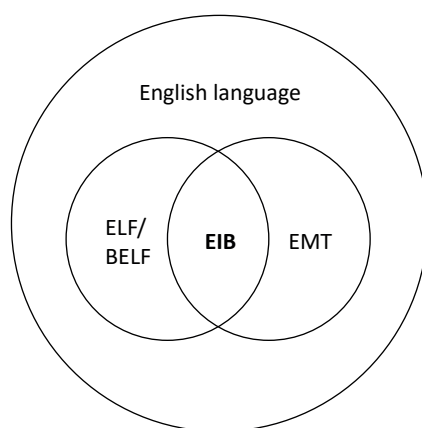
### **2.1. English as a *lingua franca***

Progressing economic globalisation means closer integration of the countries of the world (Stiglitz, 2006, p. 179). It is about acting towards a common goal and removing barriers to flow of knowledge, capital, trade and people. Erasing these barriers entails not only economic matters but also cultural and linguistic ones. Global communication is accordingly unified using English as the mode of speech available to wider range of people and businesses. The language poses as a catalyst for keeping international business free of barriers. It has the potential to provide stability and transparency between market participants. The need for a global language is becoming even more important nowadays as globalisation resulted in the common international market. The prospects are that English is likely to continue to spread as a global *lingua franca*, therefore dominating the languages used in global communication so far.

The outcome of progressing globalisation of the world's markets was growing relevance of English as a mean of communication. It has become increasingly important in the international business, and is therefore used as a *lingua franca* by business professionals across the world. To understand the meaning of English as

a mode of speech between market actors there is a need to introduce a notion of a *lingua franca*. The concept is defined as a common language different from the parties' native language, very often English (Cuypers, 2015, p. 430). There are two terms used in reference with a *lingua franca*: English as a *lingua franca* (ELF) and Business English as a *lingua franca* (BELF). The first is solely about the use of English between non-native speakers (Firth, 1996, p. 237), whereas the latter refers to the use of English for business purposes between speakers whose first language is not English (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005, p. 403).

Moreover, the terms "International English", "Global English" or "English as an International Language" function parallelly as broader concepts. These expressions are more flexible as they include the communication act between ELF/BELF speakers and English as a mother tongue speakers (EMT). Finally, there is a common conceptualisation of "English for International Business" (EIB) that can be used as a reference to English as a shared language in business context. In this way, both ELF/BELF and EMT speakers are included in the framework (Rogerson-Revell, 2007, pp. 104, 105). Figure 1 illustrates described conceptualisations of "Englishes" spoken in the global context and how they correlate with each other.



**Fig. 1.** Types of English conceptualisations in the international usage context

Source: own elaboration.

Using the EIB term will serve as the basis for further deliberation, where interactions between all international business participants are taken into consideration. Including both native speakers of English as well as non-native ones makes it possible to clearly describe the phenomenon of using the language as a common tool in corporate communication. It also identifies dependencies between English knowledge and its relation to business. In general, proficiency in English is perceived from the perspective of non-native users. Native speakers of

the language do not acquire it throughout their lives, hence English-only communication is eased for them. The challenge lies rather in decoding non-native user's message and understanding their accent. The success of a communication act between ELF/BELF and EMT speakers depends more on non-native one's capabilities to express themselves using English. For this reason, the environment in which English is a *lingua franca* will be more focused on the language as a tool of communication learnt by non-native speakers.

While there are many concepts and categorizations of "Englishes" globally, the function of a *lingua franca* persists. It is inherent in English regardless of where it is applied. The forms that emerged throughout the years of its common usage add relevance to its international recognition. The complexity of English's functions and areas of usage proves that the role of a *lingua franca* did not come out of nowhere. It has been spreading across different countries and adapting to local environments. Then, the language became rooted in socio-cultural backgrounds and remained essential part of communication – both internally and in reference to external parties. Up until today, its role is changing and gaining importance, while lasting as the current *lingua franca*.

## 2.2. The growing role of English in the global market

International business is about undertaking commercial activities that promote the transfer of technologies, goods, services, resources, people and ideas across national borders (Hill, 2008, p. 4). The key concern is therefore to facilitate the flow of these factors so that they are diffused efficiently and equally. Communication between business participants plays an important role in the process, as effective information exchange leads to proper allocation of resources and achieving benefits. English, being a contemporary *lingua franca*, has been chosen to perform this role – so its significant impact on the corporate world is inevitable. As of 2022, it was the most spoken language globally with 1,452 million users who spoke it either natively or as a second language at a time of a survey (Ethnologue, 2022). The extent to which it is present in business communication may be limited geographically depending on transaction parties – English is not the only mode of speech, for instance, between trading partners that both speak the same language natively. However, as trade is being internationalised, there is still a need to use a *lingua franca* on the common ground.

The role and worldwide perception of English is constantly evolving, so is the number of its users and proficiency levels among them. The latter may change over time as a result of rapidly changing business environment and prerequisites to succeed in the industry. What makes language competencies more valuable is progressing globalisation, resulting in a growing role of English both in individual and societal dimensions of a business. The global spread of English as a *lingua*

*franca* led to essential changes in corporate and academic communication. Its growing importance coerced the adaptation of one language as a universal tool to exchange information. This, in turn, requires rethinking of previously used schemes and establishing new ones aligning with the current system. Not only is English becoming more relevant but also the reaction of people to its common usage. There are different models of English implementation depending on the environment which is adapting it. One crucial aspect of English usage is its growing presence at work environment. More international companies have been mandating English-only policies for their internal and external communication. Examples include corporate giants such as Microsoft, Airbus or Samsung (Neeley, 2012, p. 1). The language influences communication in a workplace and recruitment processes, task-related actions or promotion opportunities. According to the findings of EF English Proficiency Index, English knowledge in the industries has remained stable since 2012, with the gap between them decreasing by 20% (EF Education First, 2020, p. 14). This is translated into the statement that the language is gaining more importance, while being a frequent job requirement. Yet, there is still a room for global improvement so that the skills shortage gap is eliminated in the future and employees are provided with career development. English should be treated as an inclusion tool at workplace because its sufficient knowledge prevents structural inefficiencies and boosts competitiveness. Its presence on the international market is justified by companies pursuing globally oriented strategies as well as customers accessing diversified products from all around the world. For this reason, English relevance is still growing while it is becoming a standard in business communication.

### **3. Socio-cultural and linguistic aspects of using English**

#### **3.1. Culture and language**

Nowadays, as commercial activities have transcended national boundaries, the challenge of defining culture and its position in business remains the concern of researchers. Anthropological definition of culture captures its complexity describing it as “transmitted and created content and patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic- meaningful systems as factors in the shaping of human behaviour” (Kroeber & Parsons, 1958, p. 583). In simpler terms, among elements of culture we can distinguish symbols, language, beliefs, values, and artifacts (Barkan, 2016, p. 72). These components are embedded in a specific group and shape one’s actions. Another concept views culture as the “software of the mind” (Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, 2010, pp. 4, 5). By this, it is supposed to guide certain practices and differentiate one group from the other. As of definition, language and culture seem to be distinct terms; however, they are inextricably connected with each other. Language is not only the product of a culture but also its symbol

(Gleason, 1961, as cited in Mohammed, 2020, p. 22). Development of the language affects the culture that is associated with it, while transmitted cultural patterns are coded in that language. Such a mutual relation leads to perceiving the language to be both inherent in a culture and also an embodiment of it (Welch, D. E., & Welch, L. S., 2008, p. 341). It is a way of expressing social identity, conveying and interpreting ideas.

Defining the socio-cultural background in relation to language usage is challenging as globalisation has shifted the simple understanding of culture towards more compound internationalised dimension. Even though national cultures and their transmission remain within countries' borders, they are no longer persistent by themselves. What emerged, is a global concept of culture that includes sharing ideas, values and practices that are acquired and adapted worldwide. The mutual relationship between language and culture, when applied to English as an international tool of communication, puts it in the centre of this transfer. Apart from being the main carrier of ideas, English shapes attitudes on individual, company and global level. Its role is a result of interconnectedness and interdependence between different cultures. In that sense, globalisation is seen as a cultural blending making English language a mean of expression. What is more, with the spread of English and its varieties, so called "localisation due to globalisation" process occurs (Sharifian, 2016, p. 2). Such a "glocalisation" means that particular groups that use English as a communicative tool adjust it to meet societal needs. In this way, language is aligned with a specific cultural conceptualisation of the community.

The influence of a language on a culture and *vice versa* is inevitable. On the one hand, its communicative function facilitates information exchange within and outside the culture. It is a tool to transfer ideas, beliefs and values on both local and global scale. On the other hand, language influences one's identity and is an instrument to express it. The functions of the language and their relation to the culture, when put in the business communication context, explain attitudes and behaviours pursued by individuals and groups. Different corporate cultures are comprised of single employees' beliefs that steer company's operations. Their perception is, among all, impacted by the language spoken and the way in which it shapes their identity. Moreover, external relations are dependent on how various cultural backgrounds are respected and treated in communication acts. Translating ideas is a challenge embedded into this process as linguistic diversity leads to barriers in intercultural transmission. It is not only about cognitive and behavioural aspects but also technical ones. When trying to transfer the message from one language into another, lack of vocabulary, idiomatic and conceptual equivalence makes it difficult to retain the original meaning. For this reason, considering the culture is crucial to effectively deliver the point by adjusting it to the recipient's context. As English is considered the language for international business, understanding its connection with local and global culture is a prerequisite to explain how it affects the communication.

### 3.2. The current state of language research in international business

Effective communication in the global market requires not only language proficiency but also the knowledge of the interlocutor's background and how they interact with others. While the practical application of language to international business is already recognised, its conceptualisation remains in exploration. Both theoretical and empirical setting of how language influences communication is a subject of research. Discovered theories entail disciplines varying from psychology to neuroscience so as to more accurately describe the relationship between language and business context in which it is used. Scholars' approach to language research in international business is concentrated on three concepts, namely, national languages spoken in multinational corporations, officially mandated languages in corporate setting and English as a global lingua franca (Tenzer, Terjesen, & Harzing, 2017, p. 816). The literature on these issues unlocks the field of one's language acquisition process as well as more complex area on how the language shapes the multinational company's operations or how it impacts global trade and knowledge flows. The agenda of the research can be therefore further classified into different themes: individual, company, global. The business relationships covered by the investigations include internal and external ones. Hence, analysing the theoretical background of language in international business leads to better understanding of communication process' components and aligning one's goals with appropriate communicative system.

### 3.3. Social identity formation through language

One crucial aspect of international business environment is how intergroup and in-group relations are tackled. As accomplishing common goals requires participation of different parties, examining their background is important to understand decision-making and working patterns. Group membership, regardless of its profile, is a subject of social psychology research to determine how it impacts one's attitude and behaviour both within the group and in relation to others. Social identity concept explains how people's self-categorisation is dependent on a social group belonging (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, pp. 33–37). This theory, when applied to multinational company (MNC), shows how language diversity creates boundaries and separates employees that share the same language (Born & Peltokorpi, 2010, as cited in Tenzer et al., 2017, p. 825). The notion of a "linguistic identity" is proposed to illustrate how individuals in the MNC define their identity through language use (Bordia, S., & Bordia, P., 2015, p. 416). Employee categorisation into a specific group is therefore based on familiarity with those that speak the same language. Using various languages across MNC is challenging as coordinating the communication between headquarter and subsidiaries requires deliberate approach. With various language-based groups among employees, coherent organisational identity

formation becomes a complex process. What is more, using English for international business (in this case mandating it as a corporate tool to exchange information) may influence linguistic identity by supporting knowledge flows (Iwashita, 2022, p. 2). Apart from positive contribution, it may also lead to organisational issues or resistance of employees to express themselves in a non-native language.

In analysing the language-based social identity, the distinction into intergroup and in-group relations arisen as a result of a shared language categorisation. Such a distinction, when occurred in the MNC, may lead to discriminatory practices within the organisation. Identification within the group leads to social (not personal) perception where a common concern is experienced by the group as a whole. Then, the out-group members in the intergroup communication are exposed to negative attitudes (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000, p. 603). When the MNC has a multilingual environment, relations between employees that do not share the same language natively may be disturbed and categorisation into nationalities may occur. English adapted as a common corporate language may as well lead to conflicts as ELF/BELF speakers may be differentiated from EMT speakers. In this way, the organisational identity is dispersed into particular groups and effective knowledge flows are harder to maintain.

### **3.4. Translation as a process of cultural interaction**

Apart from potential group collision, intercultural communication creates barriers arising from the linguistic aspects of translation. Ideas transmission is dependent on how they are expressed in a language used. The role of English as global *lingua franca* increases the need for translation as more actions become internationally oriented. The language is perceived as easily accessible instrument in this case; however, multilingual business studies maintain its dynamic nature drawing attention to translation, socio- and psycholinguistic studies (Tenzer et al., 2017, p. 817). Distinction between cultural and linguistic diversity in translation context is significant. The term linguistic diversity captures that in addition to group members' variety of mother tongues, there are multiple interpretive mechanisms. Thus, different understanding is determined by different backgrounds of speakers who do not share the same interpretation, even when communicating in a common language (Kassis-Henderson, 2005, pp. 69, 70). For an effective communication act in international business, translation should be considered as a process of interaction across cultures, not a lexical meaning transmission (Chidlowa, Plakoyiannaki, & Welch, 2014, p. 18). Achieving communicative goals is dependent on accepting linguistic diversity and its underlying interpretations. Even when the common non-native language is used by the speakers, original ideas are re-evaluated to linguistically and culturally match the shared context. Hence, with the usage of English as a global *lingua franca* comes a challenge of assigning the primary value to the messages transmitted. Both transaction parties are willing to transfer the idea



easily expressed in their native language, while describing it so that it retains the original meaning and context. The solution lies in treating the exchange as the cultural interaction. By this, social, cultural and linguistic aspects should be taken into account during cross-cultural communication act.

### **3.5. Linguistic relativity theory and its application to English usage**

Socio-cultural aspects of using English in international business explore various fields related to one's attitude and behaviour in cross-cultural communication on individual, company (group) and global level. Culture, social identity formation and translation all captures the dimension related to interactions. Cognition is another noteworthy field that captures the language and its influence on behavioural patterns. From a linguistic perspective, human perception is shaped by the language and its structure. In other terms, different languages speakers are led to different observations pointed by the semantics. Such a phenomenon is described as linguistic relativity theory or a Sapir/Whorf hypothesis (Carroll, 1956, p. 221). A common definition is also captured as "the claim that the words your language gives you determine and limit what it is possible for you to think" (Leavitt, 2015, as cited in Sharifian, 2017, p. 83). The question arises whether the language accelerates perception or hinders it.

In international business research, the linguistic relativity theory is applied in reference to consumer behaviour and economic activity. The relation between the language and consumer behaviour is examined using two approaches. Psycholinguistic one describes how bilingual recipients process information in their native language, compared to the acquired second language. It suggests that when memorising a message transmitted, the first language stimuli is superior to the second language one. Such an asymmetry is visible because processing a message conceptually is more likely to happen when receiving it in the native language (Luna & Peracchio, 2001, p. 284). The second, sociolinguistic approach, is highly connected with previously explained socio-cultural aspect of language usage. By this, so called "biculturals" are explored, i.e., those speaking two languages that are associated with distinct cultures. Hence, their perception is motivated by culturally determined identities and views rooted in the language spoken (Luna, Ringberg, & Peracchio, 2008, p. 279).

To answer the question whether the language hinders or accelerates the perception in the business context, the response is that it can affect it in both ways. Depending on the situation, the interplay between language and behaviour helps to choose a marketing strategy or identify potential weaknesses in terms of long-term goals accomplishment. Linguistic relativity may also help to establish a communication pattern, in reference to internal and external relations. Choosing a tool to transfer knowledge or advertise a product can be based on the conditions of decoding information in a language. Again, the issue of translation evokes to

complement the choice of communication style. Noticing different worlds created by different languages requires an open-minded attitude and deliberate understanding of semantics; however, when studied with scrutiny, it may positively influence international business activities.

## **4. Practical application of English to business communication**

### **4.1. Key areas shaped by English**

Global recognition of English as a communication tool is inevitable as its relevance has been growing throughout the years. Geographical dispersion of language led to the emergence of different types of “Englishes” spoken. In the business context, English has been adapted as a shared corporate language within companies as well as in external relations on the market. English for international business is therefore used in interactions between Global Marketplace participants, becoming a crucial aspect of a success. The complexity of such a standardisation of communication process lies in tackling cultural and linguistic diversity. What is more, interplay between domestic and common language has a significant influence on business activities. Underlying issues of skills level, translation, identity and intergroup conflicts impact international business relations and performance of individuals and firms.

As proficiency in English is deemed critical to performance, there are six main business areas identified that proved a correlation between one’s skill level and success. The key fields are: Business Intelligence and Supply Sourcing, Negotiations and Tenders, Investment and Sales, Brand Value and Customer Satisfaction, Cooperation and Competitiveness (British Council, n.d., p. 6). To come up with this distinction, both abilities of graduates entering the market and already experienced employees were measured and evaluated in terms of value added to business results. English proficiency was therefore considered regarding opportunities and barriers arising from either adequate or poor knowledge of the language. The examination is complemented by underlying theories on socio-cultural and linguistic aspects of using English and their application to business activities. Altogether, it forms a framework to describe the language as a relevant tool in international communication. The question about whether English accelerates or hinders growth is put into specific situational contexts and its role in relation to particular areas is discovered accordingly.

### **4.2. English as an accelerator of growth**

While English is applied to many business areas, it brings various opportunities to individuals and companies. The benefits gained from its usage are seen on individual and company (group) level; however, they can be further translated into wider perspective and have a significant global influence. Distinction of key areas shaped

by the language is the basis for identifying underlying opportunities. Global recognition of English as a communication tool increases both educational and career mobility. Underlining the importance of diversity and multilingualism is a goal of international institutions as they recognise language skills as a driver of employability nowadays (European Commission, n.d.). Consequently, English becomes an instrument to access international academic institutions and companies. Globally oriented students, when enrolling in Erasmus programs accommodated by English, are proved to gain intercultural competences, adaptability, and innovative approach towards problem-solving (Brandenburg, Berghoff, & Taboadela, 2017, p. 63). Such a set of soft competences facilitates working in diverse teams and contributes to productivity. The implementation of English to development initiatives stems from its asset function in the global context. Such an attribute led to the emergence of “English as a language for international development” trend (Seargeant & Erling, 2013, p. 5). Realisation of this discourse is seen by undertaking projects aimed at inclusion of individuals in socio-economic opportunities brought by English skills. In this way, value added to societies is recognised, whereby the language is a tool to growth.

Opportunities arising from English implementation are reflected in business interactions where language acts as a common ground. Facilitating international negotiations and tenders is challenging because of cultural diversity determining the discourse. Applying English to communication allows parties involved to neutrally articulate their bids and discuss counter-offers. In this case, proficiency is required to reach one’s point and finalise transaction. Using English for business interactions expands the range of prospect partners, therefore increasing development opportunities and financial options. What is more, English accelerates international expansion by facilitating cross-border investments and export activities. This, in turn, is highly connected with contract execution governed by universal standards, whereby English is a tool to convey regulations and interpret them. While pursuing internationalised strategies, English is an instrument to communicate marketing messages to wider audiences and building a global brand. Underlying values and consumer perception are then shaped by the language and influence buying decisions. Lastly, English is embedded into global cooperation of different entities. What follows, are growth opportunities resulting from knowledge transfers and achieving competitive advantage by applying English to particular areas of interest. Even though monolingualism does not seem to be a persistent solution nowadays, recognising a common mean of communication is crucial to international business operations. Effective cross-cultural interactions are dependent on one’s English proficiency, however linguistic diversity cannot be underestimated. If existing differences are not recognised when adapting English globally or as an official corporate language, barriers to its implementation may arise and hinder the performance. While high English skills create many socio-economic opportunities, weak proficiency impedes global business communication and translates into poorer results.

### 4.3. How weak English skills impede international business activities

As underlined, English proficiency has a crucial impact on individual's and company's success. In a globalised market, it is a prerequisite to better educational and career prospects as well as international expansion of a brand. Lack of sufficient skills may therefore negatively influence business relations and prevent growth. While there are different conceptualisations of English as a global language, one considers it as an officially mandated corporate language in the MNC. English-only policy implementation is practiced by many firms that operate beyond domestic markets. In this way, communication process is coherent and knowledge flows between business units remain consistent. The notion of a corporate language is an organisational artefact of thought creation and its expression within the MNC (Brannen, Piekkari, & Tietze, 2014, p. 497). In this way, language is applied strategically to communicate and discuss ideas within global teams. Even though English is considered a factor of career mobility, its poor knowledge may negatively affect job progression. Pursuing one-language corporate policy was found to act as a glass ceiling whereby weak skills prevent individuals from career advancement (Piekkari, Vaara, Tienari, & Sääntti, 2005, p. 340). The term goes beyond a traditional understanding of a certain demographic exposed to vertical discrimination; however, the scheme of actions remains similar. Employees who are not proficient enough in the corporate language are proved to have limited mobility, both vertically and horizontally (Latukha, Doleeva, Järleström, Jokinen, & Piekkari, 2016, p. 8). The reasons behind weaker linguistic skills are embedded into employees' responses to the mandated language. One may display poor English abilities resulting from reluctance to acquiring the foreign language. On the other hand, difficulty in advancing with the proficiency may be determined by lack of linguistic competences or too late second language acquisition. In addition, implementation of English-only policy without appropriate skills verification and sufficient training of employees results in poorer performance and experiencing glass ceiling phenomenon. What follows, is decreased motivation and weaker internal and external relationship building.

As interactions between international business participants are facilitated by English as a shared tool to communicate, weak proficiency vastly impedes processes. Global expansion is then hindered as a company is not able to effectively operate on the market. Negotiations and tenders between unfamiliar parties whereby one does not possess linguistic competences have to be accommodated by a third party (translator). In such a case, retaining the original meaning becomes a process of cross-cultural translation that is less interactive and may prevent long-term relationship building with business partners. In addition, immediate counter-offering and strategic application of the language to achieve one's goal is not possible and translator may not be as responsive as expected and their intent may differ from company's objectives. Lack of sufficient English skills is as well a factor

impeding internationalisation. Therefore, a company may miss out opportunities to reach new markets and suppliers, that could result in cost reduction and profit making. Weak competences are also challenging for sales and maintaining customer satisfaction as the common language is the basis for cross-cultural interactions. Multilingualism is a costly solution for an enterprise and may negatively affect shaping global strategy. Even though national languages are a crucial part of each organisation and shall not be underestimated, such a divergence is problematic when establishing a global brand. Dissimilar language-based organisational identity disturbs common value creation and therefore may affect consistency of internal and external communication. A brand that lacks a coherent establishment is less likely to succeed globally and maintain customer retention. Lastly, poor English skills prevent cooperation and hinder knowledge transfers. This, in turn, stops innovation and deprive of competitive advantage that could be gained if English was applied effectively in communication. Companies and individuals should be aware of the consequences of weak English abilities. If the common language role in international relations is underestimated, many opportunities are let go by.

## 5. Conclusions

While globalisation led to the integration of economies and enabled them to interact on the common market, the need for a shared mean of communication emerged. The aim of this article was to recognise the importance of English as a crucial contemporary tool in international business communication and identify underlying opportunities and losses arising from one's language proficiency. English is therefore assigned a role of the global lingua franca that persists and continues to influence distinct business areas. Deliberations on the issue covered interactions between native and non-native English users with regard to different varieties spoken and socio-cultural backgrounds. Aspects considered led to distinguishing English conceptualisations and applying them to practical contexts to illustrate their relevance to global communication.

English serves as the international lingua franca as it has been assigned the notion of power throughout the years. This power lies not only in the number of users but also in the economic, cultural and technological impact the language has on the market. The central setting of English in cross-cultural interactions was a consequence of globalisation that accelerated knowledge flows, globally oriented lifestyle patterns, and internationalised strategies. Its growing importance led to examining existing correlations between the language and one's attitude, perception or behaviour towards others. In this way, three main fields of interest emerged and conceptualised English in contexts of a global lingua franca, an officially mandated corporate language, and in reference to other national languages spoken. All these research fields are consequently studied, with regard to providing both theoretical and empirical evidence of how English influences business communication.

When discovering the aspects of English usage, socio-cultural and linguistic factors are distinguished to examine different drivers of language-based identity and attitude formation. Culture is inextricably connected with the language and plays a vital role in the process. In the international business setting, it is even more relevant because of linguistic and cultural diversity embedded into the market. Therefore, standardised English communication requires the recognition of differences and their impact on interactions. Accordingly, the current research captures the issues of individual and organisational (group) identity, linguistic relativity, and the cross-cultural translation process. All of these are considered crucial to internal and external relations building as well as one's performance in the global market.

Among key business areas influenced by English are not only those reliant on direct interaction, such as investment, sales, business intelligence, cooperation and supply sourcing, but also those resulting from English implementation, such as brand value, customer satisfaction, and competitiveness. The first group is highly influenced by one's proficiency and the ability to utilise skills to achieve objectives, whereas the latter is more complex in the process. By this, the outcomes are dependent on how English is used to form an organisational identity, values and brand image that is further communicated to the public. What is more, drivers of achieving competitive advantage by using English are realised by its strategic application and awareness of the benefits of high proficiency.

As a crucial tool of communication in international business, English may either accelerate or hinder growth. It is recognised as an "open door" to development as sufficient skills determine global orientation, cultural awareness and innovative problem-solving. These factors positively influence interactions within diverse teams and create opportunities to increase productivity, form a coherent organisational structure, and build a strong brand. On an individual level, English proficiency leads to better academic and career prospects that can result in higher earnings and job progression. On the other hand, poor English knowledge impedes both one's opportunities and chances of companies to communicate on the market effectively. Lack of required skills as well as socio-cultural and linguistic sensitivity prevents growth and negatively affects relationship building.

Implementing English as a shared language in cross-cultural interactions and establishing its standing in particular cultures is a complex process. Achieving benefits is possible on condition that social, cultural and linguistic aspects are acknowledged. Moreover, recognising the strategic application of English accelerates pursued communication goals. Described role of English in international business underlines its relevance and "tool" feature that enables market participants to implement it accordingly to succeed.

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## Język angielski jako kluczowe narzędzie komunikacji w biznesie międzynarodowym

**Streszczenie:** Globalizacja, wraz z towarzyszącymi jej procesami, doprowadziła do integracji gospodarek krajowych, w ten sposób tworząc potrzebę uniwersalnego narzędzia komunikacji. Celem tego artykułu jest zatem rozpoznanie języka angielskiego jako współczesnego środka wymiany informacji



oraz określenie możliwości i strat wynikających ze stopnia biegłości. Korzyści ekonomiczne płynące z wdrożenia języka angielskiego do interakcji w biznesie zostały zidentyfikowane na podstawie dostępnych badań ilościowych, podczas gdy metody jakościowe posłużyły do zilustrowania uwarunkowań społeczno-kulturowych w odniesieniu do używania języka angielskiego na poziomie jednostki, grupy oraz globalnej. Opisywane zjawiska zilustrowano na podstawie kluczowych obszarów biznesu, tj. negocjacji, sprzedaży, konkurencyjności, kooperacji, budowania marki oraz przepływu wiedzy pomiędzy jednostkami. Celem aplikacji teorii w kontekście praktycznym jest podkreślenie kluczowości języka angielskiego w międzynarodowej komunikacji wraz z wyodrębnieniem jego zastosowań dążących do efektywnej komunikacji maksymalizującej korzyści z działalności na globalnym rynku.

**Słowa kluczowe:** komunikacja międzynarodowa, język angielski, komunikacja biznesowa, różnorodność językowa.