



THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN ENHANCING BUSINESS COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

English proficiency is a crucial competency for effective business communication amid the ongoing processes of globalization and digitalization. This study aims to analyze the importance of English proficiency in enhancing business communication skills, assess current levels of English proficiency and business communication competence, identify obstacles to the use of English, and formulate strategies for improving English skills in business contexts. A quantitative approach using a descriptive survey method was employed. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to individuals engaged in business activities and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and an analysis of the relationships between variables. The findings indicate that English proficiency plays a vital role in supporting effective business communication, particularly in presentations, negotiations, meetings, document preparation, and the development of professional relationships. The identified obstacles include limited vocabulary, difficulties with grammar and pronunciation, and a lack of self-confidence. Therefore, job-oriented Business English training is essential for improving the effectiveness of business communication.

Keywords:

English language proficiency, business communication, Business English, professional competence, the professional world.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization, digitalization, and economic integration have increasingly opened up the boundaries of business activities across countries. Companies no longer interact only with customers, suppliers, and business partners from local environments, but also with individuals from different countries and diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This condition makes the ability to communicate effectively one of the essential competencies in the workplace. In the context of international business, English holds a strategic position because it is widely used as a common language or Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) in interactions among professionals who do not necessarily share the same native language. Peltonen, Hu, and Rose (2025) emphasize that cross-border business communication requires both linguistic competence and an understanding of cultural aspects to ensure effective communication.

English proficiency in the business world is not limited to the ability to understand vocabulary or grammar, but also includes the ability to convey ideas,



provide explanations, conduct negotiations, compose emails, prepare reports, deliver presentations, participate in meetings, and build professional relationships. Lee and Schmidgall (2020) demonstrate that English writing skills play an important role in international work environments because written communication activities are used to support coordination, collaboration, and the implementation of various tasks. Therefore, strong English proficiency can help individuals convey information more clearly, systematically, and professionally to others.

The need for English is increasingly evident in companies engaged in cross-border business activities. Nielsen (2019), through a study of business professionals in multinational companies in Norway, found that English is used intensively in various work activities, ranging from routine tasks to more complex activities such as business meetings. These findings indicate that English is not merely an additional skill but has become an integral part of everyday professional activities. The intensive use of English makes the ability to understand and use the language an important factor in supporting effective communication and the successful completion of tasks in international business environments.

Effective business communication is not determined solely by the ability to speak fluently, but also by the ability to convey messages in ways that can be clearly understood by the interlocutor. Kaur (2021), through an analysis of communication in business meetings conducted using BELF, found that the strategy of explaining is used to improve communication clarity and establish shared understanding. These findings indicate that English proficiency needs to be directed toward practical communicative competence rather than merely mastering language structures. In a business context, individuals must be able to adapt the way they communicate according to the needs, situations, and characteristics of their interlocutors.

In addition to oral communication, English proficiency is also highly necessary for written communication in business environments. Hofweber and Jaworska (2022) analyzed hundreds of internal emails used by multilingual employees in an international insurance company. The study demonstrated that the use of request strategies in business communication is influenced by linguistic background, power relations, organizational position, and communication context. These findings strengthen the view that English business communication requires pragmatic competence, namely the ability to use language appropriately according to professional relationships and communication situations.

The need for English proficiency is also related to the gap between the abilities acquired through education and the actual needs of the workplace. Roshid and Kankaanranta (2023; published in the 2025 journal edition) conducted research among workers in the international garment industry and found a gap between English language learning in higher education and the communication needs of the industry. The workplace requires practical abilities such as the use of job-specific vocabulary, clarity of expression, intelligibility, and experience in communicating



within work-related contexts. These findings indicate that English proficiency needs to be developed contextually in accordance with the needs of the business world.

Problems related to English proficiency may also arise when graduates enter the workplace. Research on university graduates in Hong Kong conducted in the study *University Graduates' Transition into the Workplace* (2021) found that graduates face various challenges when using English for work, particularly when they need to understand professional communication genres and enter new fields of employment. These difficulties are associated with limited disciplinary knowledge and levels of English proficiency. The findings indicate that English proficiency needs to be combined with an understanding of professional communication contexts and practices so that graduates can adapt to workplace demands.

In the Indonesian context, the need for English proficiency for business communication is also becoming increasingly evident. Puspendari, Utari, and Miftachudin (2024), through an analysis of professional English communication needs, emphasized the importance of English competence in addressing global communication and industrial demands. The study indicates that educational institutions need to prepare human resources with language competencies that correspond to professional requirements. In line with this finding, research by Windari, Ashari, and Ainun (2024) involving Pelindo employees demonstrated a need for Business English in the workplace, particularly in dealing with legal terminology and preparing complex business documents.

The need for English is not only experienced by employees but also by students as prospective members of the workforce. Kholis and Iryanti (2021), in their needs analysis of a Business English course, found that students need speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills that are directly related to business contexts. Topics such as job interviews, curriculum vitae preparation, and presentations constitute important components of their learning needs. These findings demonstrate that English language learning for prospective employees needs to be directed toward real-life situations that they will encounter in professional environments so that the language skills acquired can be directly applied.

Similar findings were reported by Wulandari (2023), who conducted a needs analysis among Business Management students. The study demonstrated that students require English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction that is aligned with the needs of management and business fields. Simaremare, Sinambela, and Manik (2023) also found that Business Administration students need Business English to meet professional demands and improve their ability to use English in workplace contexts. Meanwhile, Winantaka (2024) found that management students in Indonesia still experience difficulties in English speaking skills in business contexts and require more dynamic learning models. These three studies demonstrate that English proficiency needs to be developed during the educational period so that prospective employees possess communication skills that correspond to the needs of the business world.



English proficiency is also associated with an individual's ability to obtain and develop professional opportunities. Budi and Zuhro (2024), through research involving students at Politeknik Negeri Jember, demonstrated that English for Business skills are needed to support job-search skills, including preparing job application letters, developing curriculum vitae, and participating in job interviews. Maulana, Azkiyah, Dewi, and Kustiwan (2025), through interviews and focus group discussions with workers from various fields, also demonstrated that English proficiency is associated with career development and business growth. Therefore, English proficiency can be regarded as an important competency that helps individuals enter the workforce while simultaneously enhancing their ability to communicate professionally.

Based on these empirical studies, it can be understood that English proficiency plays an important role in improving business communication skills, both in oral and written communication, internal and external communication, as well as local communication oriented toward international contexts. English functions not only as a means of conveying information but also as a tool for building professional relationships, conducting negotiations, expressing ideas, solving problems, expanding business networks, and creating employment opportunities. Peltonen, Hu, and Rose (2025) further demonstrate that the development of linguacultural competence can enhance professional readiness for cross-cultural business communication. Therefore, improving English proficiency needs to receive attention in the development of human resource competencies, particularly among students, prospective employees, and professionals who will operate in increasingly global business environments. Based on these conditions, research entitled "The Importance of English Language Proficiency in Improving Business Communication Skills" is relevant to provide a deeper understanding of the extent to which English language proficiency can support effective communication in business activities and enhance an individual's professional competence.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative approach using a descriptive survey method. A quantitative approach was selected because the study aims to obtain an objective description of the level of English proficiency and business communication skills based on data collected from respondents. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a quantitative approach is used to examine relationships among variables through the collection of measurable data that can be analyzed statistically. Data were collected using a questionnaire developed based on indicators of English proficiency, including reading, writing, listening, speaking, as well as the use of business vocabulary and terminology. Meanwhile, business communication skills can be measured through the ability to convey information, deliver presentations, participate in discussions, conduct negotiations, prepare written communications, and establish professional relationships. The selection of these indicators is



consistent with Kaur and Birlik (2021), who demonstrated that the use of communication strategies, such as providing explanations, can improve clarity and effectiveness in business meetings.

The study population consists of individuals who are involved in business-related activities, while the sample was determined using purposive sampling based on criteria relevant to the research objectives. Primary data were obtained through the distribution of questionnaires using a Likert scale, while secondary data were obtained from books, scientific articles, and relevant previous studies. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive analysis to determine the level of English proficiency and business communication skills, followed by correlation or simple regression analysis if the study was intended to examine the relationship between or effect of English proficiency on business communication skills. The selection of this method is further supported by Peltonen and Hu (2025), who position linguacultural competence as an important component of successful cross-cultural business communication. The study by Peltonen, Hu, and Rose (2025) also indicates that competencies related to Business English can be developed and measured through a research approach that combines quantitative measurement with qualitative data.

HASIL PENELITIAN

1. The Level of English Proficiency among Individuals Involved in Business Activities

English proficiency is one of the essential competencies for individuals involved in business activities, particularly when their work requires communication with customers, business partners, suppliers, or colleagues from international environments. Such proficiency is not limited to the ability to understand grammar but also encompasses reading, writing, listening, speaking, understanding business vocabulary, and using language appropriately in professional situations. Nielsen (2019) showed that business professionals in multinational companies use English intensively in various work-related activities. These findings demonstrate that English proficiency has become an integral part of professional communication needs in an increasingly international business environment.

This is further supported by Kim (2021), who conducted a study involving 51 employees of Korean companies who routinely use English in their work. The findings indicated that English language needs in the workplace have several dimensions and encompass both transactional and non-transactional communication, with varying levels of importance depending on the profession. Meanwhile, Chan (2014), through a survey of 215 workers in Hong Kong, found that professionals require English communication skills in both oral and written forms and experience different levels of difficulty across various forms of workplace communication.



In the Indonesian context, Windari, Ashari, and Ainun (2024) found that Pelindo employees have high motivation to develop their Business English skills due to job demands, but they still experience difficulties in understanding legal terminology and preparing complex business documents. These findings indicate that English proficiency should be assessed not only in terms of general language ability but also in terms of the ability to use language appropriately according to the specific field of work. Therefore, the level of English proficiency among individuals involved in business activities can serve as an indication of their readiness to meet professional communication demands at both local and international levels.

2. Business Communication Skills in Supporting the Implementation of Business Activities

Business communication skills refer to an individual's ability to effectively convey and receive information within a professional environment. Business communication can take place through direct conversations, meetings, presentations, negotiations, telephone calls, emails, reports, and various forms of digital communication. Effective communication is necessary to ensure that information is properly understood, minimize misunderstandings, facilitate coordination, and support the achievement of organizational goals. In business activities involving individuals from different linguistic backgrounds, the ability to use English communicatively becomes increasingly important.

Kaur and Birlik (2021) conducted a study of six internal business meetings with a total duration of 293 minutes and found that professionals from different linguistic backgrounds used explaining strategies to improve communication effectiveness in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF). Such strategies enable speakers to provide additional information or background so that clarity and mutual understanding can be established. These findings indicate that effective business communication does not depend solely on speaking ability but also on the ability to explain information according to the needs of the interlocutor.

Chan (2014) also demonstrated that professional communication needs encompass various forms of oral and written communication, while Chan (2019) found that professional communication needs may change as individuals progress in their careers. The executives examined in the study faced challenges particularly in non-technical communication genres that require language skills, interpersonal competence, appropriate attitudes, and diplomacy. Based on these findings, business communication skills can be regarded as competencies that support the overall execution of professional tasks, as individuals are required not only to convey information but also to build professional relationships, coordinate activities, resolve problems, and maintain relationships with various stakeholders.



3. English Proficiency as a Means of Improving Business Communication Skills

English proficiency is closely related to business communication skills because language serves as the primary instrument for conveying information, ideas, instructions, and professional interests. Individuals with stronger English proficiency have greater opportunities to understand messages, express ideas clearly, participate in meetings, deliver presentations, and interact with business partners. Therefore, English proficiency should not be viewed merely as an academic ability but as a competency that can be directly applied to professional activities.

The findings of Kaur and Birlik (2021) provide evidence that the use of particular communication strategies in English-language business meetings can improve communication clarity and facilitate the development of shared knowledge among participants. Furthermore, Indrianti and Husniyah (2020) found that students and graduates in Business Administration perceive Business English as beneficial for career development and workplace communication, particularly in foreign companies. Graduates also stated that the Business English knowledge and skills acquired during their studies could be applied in the workplace.

These findings are consistent with Huh (2006), who conducted a task-based needs analysis to identify Business English tasks frequently performed by business professionals in Korea. The study highlighted the importance of identifying communication tasks that professionals actually perform as a basis for developing Business English competencies. Meanwhile, Peltonen, Hu, and Rose (2025) emphasized the importance of linguacultural competence in Business English communication because cross-cultural business communication requires the ability to understand both language and cultural contexts. Based on these findings, English proficiency can contribute to improving business communication skills when learning and language use are directed toward authentic communication situations that correspond to workplace needs.

4. Challenges Faced in the Use of English in Business Communication

The use of English in business communication does not always proceed smoothly. Individuals may encounter various challenges, such as limited vocabulary, difficulty understanding specialized business terminology, inadequate ability to construct sentences accurately, pronunciation errors, difficulty understanding different accents, and low confidence when speaking. These challenges can become more complex when communication takes place with individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, identifying barriers to the use of English is an important part of efforts to improve the effectiveness of business communication.

Chan (2014) found that professionals face various challenges in both oral and written workplace communication, including difficulties with particular forms of communication that require language skills and an understanding of professional contexts. Meanwhile, Windari, Ashari, and Ainun (2024) found that Pelindo



employees still experience difficulties in understanding legal terminology and preparing complex business documents despite having high motivation to learn Business English. This indicates that language-related challenges in the workplace may be specific to the characteristics of particular industries and occupations.

A study by Yahaya and Miskam (2024) involving Malaysian polytechnic students also identified several barriers to learning Business English, including difficulties in understanding business terminology, expressing opinions, using tenses accurately, and developing confidence in communication. More recent findings by Ahmad, Jefri, and Hajar (2026) indicate that limited vocabulary, pronunciation errors, grammatical difficulties, low confidence, and lack of motivation are factors that hinder the speaking abilities of Business English students. Thus, challenges in English communication need to be addressed comprehensively through improvements in linguistic competence as well as psychological and social aspects.

5. Strategies for Improving English Proficiency to Support Effective Business Communication

Improving English proficiency to support business communication requires learning strategies that are oriented toward actual workplace needs. Learning should not focus solely on grammar and vocabulary memorization but should also provide individuals with opportunities to practice communication in business situations such as presentations, meetings, negotiations, interviews, email writing, report delivery, and professional discussions. A needs-based approach is important to ensure that the materials provided are relevant to workplace demands.

Chan (2014) emphasized the importance of linking workplace communication needs with the development of Business English curricula. His research demonstrated that professional communication needs should be considered when determining learning content so that language training is genuinely relevant to occupational requirements. Furthermore, Kim (2021) showed that employees' communication needs may differ depending on their professions and the types of communication they engage in. Therefore, English proficiency development programs need to be continuously evaluated and adjusted based on changes in workplace communication needs.

Another strategy is to increase direct communication practice and establish a supportive learning environment. Yahaya and Miskam (2024) showed that Business English students need to improve their speaking, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar skills while also facing challenges in developing confidence. Meanwhile, Kaur and Birlik (2021) demonstrated that the explaining strategy can help improve communication clarity in business meetings. Based on these findings, strategies for improving English proficiency can be implemented through workplace needs-based training, regular communication practice, simulations of business situations, enrichment of professional vocabulary, presentation and negotiation exercises, and



continuous feedback. These strategies are expected to improve English proficiency while simultaneously enhancing the effectiveness of business communication.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion regarding the importance of English proficiency in improving business communication skills, it can be concluded that English is one of the essential competencies in supporting the effectiveness of business activities, particularly in dealing with an increasingly globalized work environment. English proficiency encompasses not only the ability to read, write, listen, and speak, but also the ability to use appropriate vocabulary, terminology, and communication strategies within a business context. These abilities can help individuals convey information clearly, deliver presentations, participate in meetings, negotiate, build professional relationships, and communicate with business partners from diverse backgrounds. Although there are still challenges, such as limited vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, self-confidence, and understanding of specific terminology, English proficiency continues to play an important role in improving the quality of business communication and supporting individuals' readiness to meet the demands of the workplace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion, it is recommended that individuals involved in business activities continuously improve their English proficiency through learning that is oriented toward workplace needs. Educational institutions and companies should also provide more practical Business English training through simulations of presentations, meetings, negotiations, interviews, email writing, and communication with customers or business partners. Furthermore, learning should not focus solely on grammatical aspects but should also enhance business vocabulary, speaking skills, self-confidence, cultural understanding, and the ability to adapt language use to different communication situations. Through these strategies, English proficiency is expected to develop into a professional competency that can improve communication effectiveness, productivity, and individual competitiveness in the business world.

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