
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Business English in the Globalized Economy: Trends and Insights from a Literature Review

Dzulhijjah Yetti^{1*}, Lilian Nethania Nava¹, Hayatul Khairul Rahmat²

¹ Polytechnic of Kampar, Bangkinang, Indonesia

² Universitas Islam Negeri Siber Syekh Nurjati, Cirebon, Indonesia

***Corresponding Author:** dzulhijjahyetti14@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

The globalization of economic activities has intensified cross-border communication, positioning Business English as a critical tool in international trade, multinational corporations, and global professional environments. English has evolved beyond a general lingua franca into a specialized medium shaped by business practices, digital communication, and intercultural interaction. This literature review examines key trends and insights related to Business English in the globalized economy by synthesizing peer-reviewed international studies published over the past two decades. The review explores the conceptualization of Business English, its role in global business communication, emerging trends influenced by digitalization and remote work, and the implications for workforce competence and education. Findings indicate that Business English increasingly emphasizes pragmatic competence, intercultural communication skills, and adaptability to digital business contexts rather than native-like linguistic accuracy. The literature also highlights persistent inequalities in access to Business English proficiency, particularly between developed and developing economies, and across organizational hierarchies. The review concludes that Business English functions as a strategic economic resource that shapes employability, organizational performance, and global competitiveness. Strengthening Business English education requires aligning language training with real-world business practices, technological change, and intercultural awareness. Future research should focus on longitudinal workplace studies, digital business discourse, and inclusive language policies in global organizations.

| KEYWORDS

Business English; Globalization; International Communication.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has fundamentally transformed economic structures, labor markets, and modes of communication. As firms expand across national borders, effective communication has become a strategic necessity rather than a peripheral skill. Within this context, English has emerged as the dominant language of international business, functioning as a shared medium among speakers with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Crystal, 2003; Neeley, 2017). This phenomenon has given rise to Business English as a distinct domain that reflects the communicative demands of global commerce.

Business English differs from general English in its focus on professional interaction, organizational discourse, and task-oriented communication. It encompasses activities such as negotiations, presentations, report writing, virtual meetings, and informal workplace interactions. The growing reliance on English in multinational corporations, international trade, and digital platforms has elevated Business English to a core professional competence linked to employability, productivity, and organizational competitiveness (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012).

The expansion of global value chains and the rise of knowledge-based economies have further intensified the demand for Business English. Employees are increasingly required to collaborate with international partners, clients, and colleagues, often in virtual environments. As a result, Business English is no longer confined to elite managerial roles but is relevant across occupational levels and sectors. At the same time, this expansion has raised concerns about linguistic inequality, cultural dominance, and unequal access to language resources.

Despite extensive research, the literature on Business English remains fragmented across applied linguistics, management studies, and international business research. Definitions, pedagogical approaches, and assessments of impact vary considerably. This literature review aims to synthesize key trends and insights from international scholarship on Business English in the globalized economy. The objectives are to examine how Business English is conceptualized, identify emerging trends shaped by globalization and digitalization, and discuss implications for organizations, individuals, and education systems.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative literature review methodology focusing on peer-reviewed international journal articles. The review draws primarily on sources indexed in Scopus and Web of Science to ensure academic rigor and international relevance. The literature search used keywords such as Business English, English for business purposes, English as a lingua franca, international business communication, global workplace language, and corporate communication. Publications from the early 2000s to 2024 were included to capture long-term trends associated with globalization and digital transformation.

Inclusion criteria required that studies explicitly address the role, use, or implications of English in business or professional contexts. Both conceptual and empirical studies were considered. Excluded were textbooks, practitioner manuals, and non-peer-reviewed sources. Selected articles were analyzed thematically, with attention to recurring concepts related to language use, communicative competence, power relations, and educational implications.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualizing Business English in a Global Context

Early definitions of Business English emphasized vocabulary and genres associated with commerce, such as correspondence, contracts, and meetings. However, contemporary literature increasingly conceptualizes Business English as a dynamic and socially situated practice rather than a fixed linguistic system (Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2013).

In globalized business environments, English functions primarily as a lingua franca, used among speakers for whom it is not a native language. This shift has profound implications for how Business English is understood. Rather than aiming for native-speaker norms, effective communication is measured by clarity, efficiency, and mutual understanding (Seidlhofer, 2011). Business English is therefore characterized by adaptability, negotiation of meaning, and pragmatic competence.

Business English as a Strategic Economic Resource

The literature consistently frames Business English as a form of human capital. Proficiency in Business English enhances individual employability, facilitates career mobility, and increases access to global labor markets (Grin, 2016). At the organizational level, effective use of Business English supports coordination across subsidiaries, integration of global teams, and knowledge transfer (Neeley, 2017). Multinational corporations often adopt English as a corporate language to streamline communication and reduce transaction costs. However, studies show that this strategy can produce uneven outcomes. While a common language facilitates coordination, it may also marginalize

employees with lower proficiency, reinforce power asymmetries, and increase cognitive workload (Piekkari et al., 2014).

Intercultural Communication and Pragmatic Competence

A central insight from the literature is that Business English competence extends beyond linguistic accuracy to include intercultural and pragmatic skills. Business interactions are embedded in cultural norms related to hierarchy, politeness, decision-making, and conflict management. Misunderstandings often arise not from grammatical errors but from pragmatic mismatches (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Research highlights that successful Business English users are those who can adapt their communication style, interpret implicit meanings, and manage relational aspects of interaction. This is particularly important in negotiations, leadership communication, and teamwork. As a result, Business English training increasingly integrates intercultural communication competence as a core component.

Digitalization and the Transformation of Business English

Digital transformation has significantly reshaped business communication practices. Email, instant messaging, video conferencing, and collaborative platforms have become dominant modes of interaction. These technologies influence both the form and function of Business English. The literature notes a shift toward more informal, hybrid, and multimodal communication styles. Written communication often blends features of spoken discourse, while virtual meetings require new turn-taking and politeness strategies (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2018). Business English in digital contexts prioritizes speed, clarity, and adaptability over formal correctness. Remote work and global virtual teams further intensify the importance of Business English. Employees must navigate linguistic diversity, time-zone differences, and reduced contextual cues, making communicative competence a key factor in team effectiveness.

Business English and Inequality

While Business English facilitates global integration, it also raises issues of inequality and exclusion. Scholars argue that the dominance of English privileges those with access to quality language education and disadvantages others, particularly in developing economies (Phillipson, 2009). Within organizations, employees with limited Business English proficiency may experience reduced participation, lower confidence, and limited career advancement. These dynamics can reinforce existing social and economic inequalities. The literature emphasizes the ethical responsibility of organizations to provide language support and inclusive communication practices.

Implications for Business English Education

The evolution of Business English has significant implications for education and training. Traditional language instruction focused on grammar and standardized tests is increasingly viewed as insufficient. Instead, the literature advocates for task-based, experiential, and context-sensitive approaches that reflect real workplace practices (Basturkmen, 2010). Effective Business English education integrates authentic materials, case studies, simulations, and digital tools. Collaboration between educators and industry stakeholders is essential to ensure relevance. Lifelong learning perspectives are also emphasized, as Business English competence must evolve alongside changing technologies and business practices.

CONCLUSION

This literature review demonstrates that Business English plays a central role in the globalized economy as a medium of communication, a form of human capital, and a driver of organizational effectiveness. Contemporary research emphasizes that Business English is not merely about linguistic

accuracy but about pragmatic, intercultural, and digital competence. While the widespread use of English facilitates global business interaction, it also generates new challenges related to inequality, power relations, and inclusion. Addressing these challenges requires a shift in how Business English is taught, assessed, and managed within organizations. Future research should focus on longitudinal workplace studies, the impact of artificial intelligence on business communication, and strategies for inclusive language policies. By aligning Business English practices with the realities of globalized and digitalized work, organizations and educators can better support sustainable and equitable economic development.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bargiela-Chiappini, F., Nickerson, C., & Planken, B. (2013). *Business discourse*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- [2] Basturkmen, H. (2010). *Developing courses in English for specific purposes*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- [3] Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language*. Cambridge University Press.
- [4] Douglas, D. (2013). ESP and assessment. *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*, 367–383.
- [5] Grin, F. (2016). The economics of language. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2016(242), 1–13.
- [6] Kankaanranta, A., & Louhiala-Salminen, L. (2018). ELF in the global workplace. *Journal of Business Communication*, 55(3), 331–355.
- [7] Louhiala-Salminen, L., & Kankaanranta, A. (2012). Language as an issue in international internal communication. *Journal of Business Communication*, 49(3), 262–285.
- [8] Neeley, T. (2017). *The language of global success*. Princeton University Press.
- [9] Phillipson, R. (2009). *Linguistic imperialism continued*. Routledge.
- [10] Piekkari, R., Welch, D., & Welch, L. (2014). Language in international business. *Journal of World Business*, 49(4), 499–507.
- [11] Seidlhofer, B. (2011). *Understanding English as a lingua franca*. Oxford University Press.
- [12] Spencer-Oatey, H., & Franklin, P. (2009). *Intercultural interaction*. Palgrave Macmillan.