

Business Communication & Soft Skills Impact of Using English in Business Communication in Indian –MNCS



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Abstract:

“An organization with excellent internal communication will run smoothly, allowing its members to progress toward a mutual goal, which will ultimately affect the quality of external communication.” — Scribendi, Effective Business Communication. Indian companies are internationalizing and becoming progressively involved in global business. It has become more and more common in India to use English, the global language of business. Recently, English has been introduced as the official language of a few Indian corporations and discussions are going on in many other companies. English is not used for international operations solely but it is required in almost all functions. The aim of this study is to examine the effects of using English in Indian-based multinational corporations, communication barriers and English language development, using qualitative research method, Four main topics are discussed in the study. Firstly, the role of language skills in cross-cultural business communication is analyzed. Secondly, the effects of using English in Indian companies are studied on two levels including individual and company levels. There were two main findings in this study. Firstly, English language skills can contribute to better job performance and promotion in Indian-based multinational corporations. Employees with English language skills seem to have better chances for promotion and overseas assignments, and have wider career choices.

Introduction:

The statistics on English speaking ability tends to be unreliable for a host of political reasons, but it is generally accepted that somewhere in the range of 30% are able, to varying degrees, speak English—though only a third

have some semblance of reading and writing aptitude. Still, it is unadorned disenfranchisement and an embarrassing plight for the other 70-80% of Indians. Contextually, this would mean anywhere from 770-900 million people are being oppressed on a daily basis. Even if one subtracts the 25-30% who are illiterate (another matter entirely), this is still about 577-630 million. For argument's sake, let us say that this affects only 200 million people: this is still thrice the population of the U.K. Is this acceptable for a purportedly “socialist democracy?” Of the myriad of India's social constructs this is possibly the simplest matter to amend and remedy.—(Forbes ,Nov,2014). Hosting English as a corporate language is a present-day topic in India. A few Indian companies such as IBM, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and Google Inc., have already launched English as corporate language and discussions are taking place in other companies. Yet, it seems that introducing English as a corporate language is not an easy task, since using English brings both advantages and disadvantages for companies (Goldman 1994. English enables cross-cultural communication and makes it possible to expand businesses globally. However, using English can also create a barrier (Welch et al. 2005).

Historical Background:

In 1835, the British Government in India designated English as the medium of education for schools and universities. During over a century of British rule, English grew in popularity as a language of power, prestige and convenience. Although it was a foreign language at that time, native Indians were quick to take to the language, and even those opposed to British rule would voice their resistance primarily in English. Even after India gained its independence from Britain, English continued to be



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widely used, and, in fact, the new constitution makers deliberated and wrote the Indian Constitution in the English language. While Article 343 of the Indian Constitution designated Hindi as the official language of the Union, it also provided for the continued use of English language for all official Union purposes for a period of 15 years.

Objectives of the study:

To study the effects of communicating in English at workplace.

To examine the impacts of English in Indian-based multinational corporations.

To analyse the present usage of English language in the companies.

To evaluate the benefits of using English as a global language.

To understand the essential communication, personal, interpersonal and life skills required for a successful manager.

The main research study of business communication: What kinds of effects does it bring to use English in business communication in Indian-based multinational corporations in their departments located in India? In order to get a more detailed picture of the effects of using English, three sub questions are introduced. Sub-questions aim at creating a more comprehensive picture of the situation. The first sub-question is:

1. What is the role of language skills in cross-cultural business communication?
2. How do English language skills affect individuals' job performance in Indian based multinational corporations?

Methodology:

Primary data Sample study 500 executive engineering and management personnel in IBM, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and Google Inc.

Data Analysis And Interpretation:

This paper presents a qualitative empirical study. The paper starts with a literature review and continues with a practical study. The outline of the paper can be seen in table

ENGLISH IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN INDIAN COMPANIES

Interviews

“Like a human being, a company has to have an internal communication mechanism, a “nervous system”, to coordinate its actions.-Bill Gates. Three interviews were conducted in companies A, B and C - one interview in each company. Participants held managerial or senior positions in global human resources or personnel departments of the companies. Because of their positions in the companies, it was considered that they would have some perspective and experiences about the effects of using English at workplace.

Interview A

Reasons to use English at work place.

“Communication must be HOT. That’s Honest, Open, and Two-way.” - Dan Oswald Firstly, the interviewee was asked to tell about the current situation of using English in company A. The interviewee explained that English is required when communicating with group companies since most of the company A’s sales come from foreign countries. Moreover, the company’s aim is to become global and to create a global talent pool – to make it possible, English has to be used. In company A, some foreign employees are hired in Hyderabad to promote using English more. On ideological level, the company is promoting using more English in India. The company has willingness to go global.

Interview B

Reasons to use English in Indian MNCs

“Communication works for those who work at it.” - John Powell According to company B interviewee, the reason to use English in the company is to communicate with foreigners. In company B, there are foreign people working in foreign departments so that English is required when communicating with them at the office in India. In most international contacts, English is the common language, although some other languages are also used, for instance Chinese is used with some Chinese contacts. The interviewee states that, nowadays, people in all functions have to communicate with foreign affiliates.

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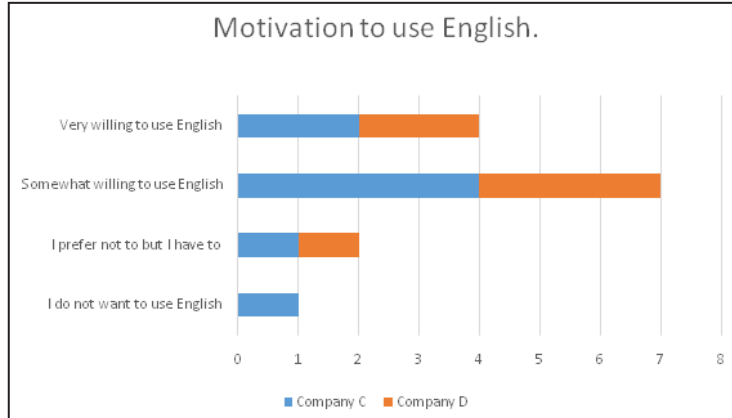
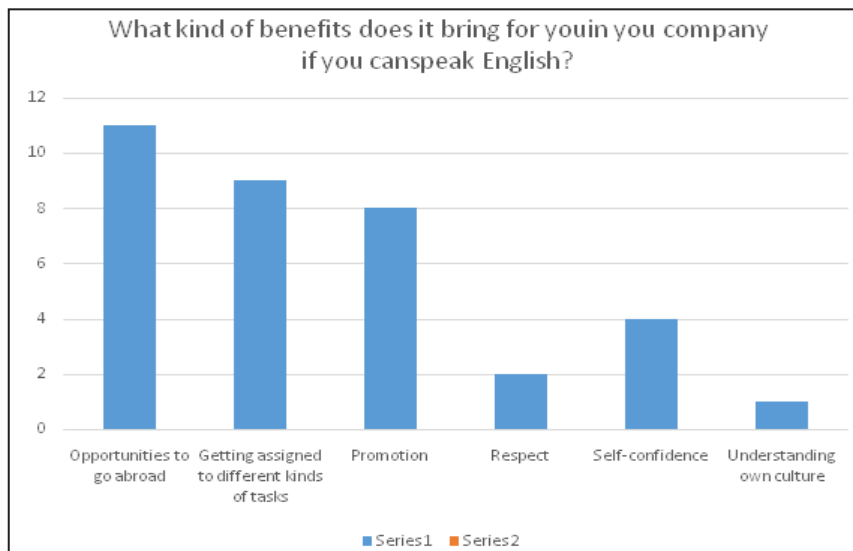


Figure 2. Motivation to use English.

When respondents were asked to describe the attitude towards English in their companies, most of company C respondents (7) told the atmosphere was ‘somewhat encouraging’, one of them described it as ‘very encouraging’ and one of them as ‘indifferent’. In company D, two people said the atmosphere was ‘very encouraging’, three people considered it ‘somewhat encouraging’ and one of them as ‘indifferent’. Differences can be seen between companies C and D regarding the question of how much English is used (figures 3 and 4). Respondents were asked if they feel that English is now used more in their company than before. The answers from respondents from company C varied a lot, half of the people considering that the situation had not changed much, and three of them saying the opposite: English is used much more than before. In company D, most of the answers indicated that English is used much more now than before. This can be considered natural, as the company introduced English as the corporate language a few years ago.

Benefits and challenges:

“Many relationship problems are rooted in a communication break-down. These can be as simple as not really hearing what the other person is saying, because we get caught up in our own fixed perspectives.” - Sumesh Nair
The respondents were asked about the benefits that English language skills offer them in their company (figure 5). Most of the respondents (6) said that language skills can offer them possibilities to go abroad. It was also reported that if employees can speak English, they can have the opportunity to get assigned for different kinds of work tasks (9 respondents). More than half of the respondents reported that language skills can contribute to promotion. Four people said that English language skills give self-confidence, and two of the respondents mentioned that it is possible to gain other employees’ respect if they can speak English. One of the respondents added that being able to speak English makes it easier to understand Indian (culture or language).





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There are specific things to do that can improve communication skills: "I'm a great believer that any tool that enhances communication has profound effects in terms of how people can learn from each other, and how they can achieve the kind of freedoms that they're interested in." - Bill Gates

1. Listen, listen, and listen.
2. Who you are talking to matters.
3. Body language matters.
4. Check your message before you hit send.
5. Be brief, yet specific.
6. Write things down.
7. Sometimes it's better to pick up the phone.
8. Think before you speak.
9. Treat everyone equally.
10. Maintain a positive attitude and smile.

AJ HOGE'S 7 RULES FOR EFFORTLESS ENGLISH SPEAKING

RULE 1: Always Study and Review Phrases, Not Individual Words

Never study a single, individual word. Never. When one find a new word, always write down The Phrase it is in. Always. When review, always review all of the phrase. Not just the word. One must collect phrases. Then speaking and grammar will improve 4-5 times faster. Always better to write the complete phrase. Never again study a single word. Never write a single word in your notebook.

Rule 2: Never Study Grammar

"I don't know the rules of grammar. If you're trying to persuade people to do something, or buy something, it seems to me you should use their language." — David Ogilvy Most people, particularly students find grammar dull and difficult. This is because grammar books contain many grammatical terms, rules, and exercises without relating to its meaning. In fact," It will be impossible to live without grammar as it will be impossible to live without language." Language and grammar are inseparable .Another fact with grammar books ignore is that everybody whether educated or uneducated unconsciously uses grammar. "A learner who started learning with grammar couldn't speak any English. That student had studied English grammar many years, but grammar should be learnt unconsciously.

RULE 3: The Most Important Rule--Learn With Your Ears, Not Your Eyes

It is the most important rule. Most schools ignore it."Give me the gift of a listening heart." - King Solomon. Umar Jany is from Venezuela. He moved to Canada a few years ago. He studied English in Venezuela for many years-- mostly grammar. In fact, Umar Jany learned English with his eyes- by reading textbooks, by studying grammar books, by remembering word lists. He thought his English was good. But when he came to Canada he was surprised and shocked-- he couldn't understand anyone! He joined an English school in Canada. He went to school every day. What did they teach him?

We have to spend most of our study time listening- that is the key to great speaking-AJ Hoge.

Rule: 4 Deep learning:

The fourth rule for speaking excellent English. Now, this rule is also very simple. In fact, all of these rules are simple, but when you use them, when you use all of them, change the way you use English, you will get fantastic results. So rule number 4 is also very important. Rule number 4, again, is very simple, and it is this: Learn deeply. Deep learning."Any problem, big or small, within a family, always seems to start with bad communication. Someone isn't listening." - Emma Thompson. Well, deep learning means repeating what you learn repeatedly and again, many, many times. So this, again, is very different from the way you learned in school. Unfortunately, most schools have a lot of pressure to go fast, fast, fast, fast. They're always pushing the students to learn more vocabulary, more vocabulary, very fast.

View Mini-Stories

**Rule 5: A Story.

Vazeera did very well on grammar tests. She knew all of the grammar rules. She knew English verbs. But Vazeera had a problem. She couldn't USE the grammar in a real conversation. She could explain the past tense, but when speaking, she would say "Yesterday I GO to school". Vazeera was confused. How could her grammar tests be so good, but her speaking so bad?Vazeera said: "Before Effortless English, I knew all the grammar rules, but I couldn't speak correctly. I couldn't feel English grammar. After using Point of View stories, I feel it and use it correctly.



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Now my grammar is great when I speak. I never think about it, I just automatically use correct grammar.

Rule:6 Only use real English materials.

“They had nothing in common but the English language.”
— E.M. Forster, *Howards End* Here comes the rule number 6 to speak excellent English. The rule number 6 is to use real English materials. Only use real English materials. Now, before as discussed: stop using textbooks. In fact, the research tells to throw away your textbooks.

Rule: 7 Use listen-and-answer mini stories.

The last rule, rule number 7. In addition, rule number 7 is very, very powerful. This rule helps you to speak quickly and to understand instantly, automatically, immediately. This is true fluency, true automatic speaking.”We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.” – Epictetus.

Conclusions:

This paper aims at answering the main research question What kinds of effects does it bring to use English in business communication in Indian-based multinational corporations in their departments located in India?.

Firstly, language skills can directly affect how well and effectively people perform their work tasks in which they need English. With good English skills people can more effectively participate in communicating with foreigners, perform new kinds of work tasks, get assigned to overseas and have better chances to get promoted. Poor language skills can hinder job performance, most commonly by causing misunderstandings and slowing down communication.

Finally, the main research question was related to the effects of using English in business communication in Indian companies. It seems necessary to use English in Indian companies in order to compete in global markets. It can be stated that using English brings effects on various levels including individual level and company level. Using English has effects on individuals' job performance and career development as well as on company policy and every day buspractices. English is an important tool for communication in Japanese-based multinational corporations. To summarize, there are two main findings in this study. Firstly, it was found out that there is a strong connection between language skills and career development in Indian-based MNCs.