

The effect of English Language proficiency on Entrepreneurial success

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ABSTRACT

Globalization and technological innovations have led to the widespread usefulness of foreign languages in business. English is perceived as the main language of business across the globe and is being increasingly adopted for various business aspects. This study seeks to determine the effect of English language proficiency on entrepreneurial success. The study employs a qualitative approach in the form of literature in order to identify the recent trends and developments regarding usage of English in entrepreneurship. The study highlights the growing importance of English as the lingua franca of the business landscape. It highlights that English proficiency allows entrepreneurs to grow, expand, command multi-lingual employs and attain competitive advantages in their businesses. The study has implications particularly for entrepreneurs, policy makers as well as other stakeholders. The study revealed that in as much as English is a critical tool in entrepreneurial success, there is a growing opportunity for other languages, and mainly Mandarin as China is becoming a global force to be reckoned with. This opens doors for studies regarding multilingualism for future studies.

Introduction

Language is crucial for effective communication in any setting and particularly in business. Effective communication including writing is important in business to ensure that messages get across the board. Communication within the workplace, correspondence with relevant stakeholders and issuing instructions all necessitate the use of language. Language has an impact on the economic and social landscape (Ginsburgh and Webber, 2020). The world today has become globalized and with it, the importance of language proficiency has grown particularly foreign languages. The expansion of businesses across the borders and the advancement of technology has led to easier access to information and increased the demand for language skills.

Costa et al (2021), highlighted that language has evolved to actually become a valuable economic resource which can be exploited for maximum benefit in business. Blevins et al (2019) explained that language can affect strategic outcomes and in situations like initial public offerings, it can affect level of investors' interest. Some host countries actually align their language proficiency with those of potential investors to attract direct investment. Riznar and Puntar (2023) also pointed out that companies that did not invest in foreign languages lost business opportunities as well as an opportunity to gain a competitive advantage in the industry.

The importance of English proficiency in particular, has greatly increased over the years exacerbated by globalization and Westernization which has prompted the need for a common language. The increased digitalization has also enabled the spread of English as a language and it has become the language of the internet especially given that the biggest technology companies are English based (Ilyosovna, 2020). English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world (Ghafar and Mohamedamin, 2023) and is actually regarded as the primary language of the business world (Barat and Talukder, 2023). According to Rawat (2021), English is spoken in more than one hundred countries as an official language, a second language or being actively taught. Rao (2019) highlighted that global economies are increasingly adopting English to enhance business outcomes. Even China, with the highest number of language speakers in the world has adopted English in educational institutions to ensure that proficiency in English is increased.

It has become so important that most non-English speaking countries have incorporated English in development plans to enhance their citizens' proficiency (Li et al, 2022). English is now adopted in many higher educational institutions and those who are proficient have higher chances of employability (Hariharasudan et al, 2021). The scholars explained that this is due to the increased competitiveness of the business environment. Li et al (2022) explained that with the world becoming a global village, one cannot learn all the languages and this has necessitated there being a common language that can be used in business leading to English becoming the lingua franca of the business world (Tenzer et al, 2017; Glory and Reddy, 2020; Grenier and

Zhang, 2021). Zhao and Zhao (2019) contends that learning English in a business setting is an investment that can bring many economic benefits.

Companies now highly value English proficiency (Irawan et al, 2022). Barat and Talukder (2023) explained that with English proficiency, it was easier to market a brand internationally considering that it is a widely spoken language. It is the main negotiation language in the business world (Glory and Reddy, 2020). It is also essential especially for migrants that relocate to English speaking countries and makes things easier for entrepreneurship (Wei et al, 2019).

In entrepreneurship, success relies on factors like creativity, confidence adaptability, team-work and risk tolerance among others. Barat and Talukder (2023) contend that language enables relationship and network building across varied cultures.

Literature gap

Many studies have investigated the importance of languages in entrepreneurship but targeting the local languages and multilingualism (Riznar and Rybnicek, 2017, Johnstone et al, 2018), Presbitero et al, 2023; Varma et al, 2023). Wei et al (2018) found that gaining proficiency in the local languages removed language barriers, made it easier to start businesses. Johnstone et al (2018) contends that in a globalized environment, language can be exploited to gain a competitive advantage. Very few studies have investigated the impact of English language proficiency in business and as far as the authors know, none in particular for entrepreneurial success. This study therefore seeks to bridge that gap and add to the contribution in literature. The contributions of this study can be useful to entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs, education policy makers as well as linguistic researchers. The study also contributes to the literature regarding usefulness of linguistics in business particularly in entrepreneurship.

Objectives

The study's main objective is to determine the effect of English proficiency on entrepreneurial success. It aims to discover new trends and literature regarding English proficiency in a business setting. This prompts questions like:

- Does English proficiency play a role in entrepreneurship success?
- In what ways is English proficiency useful to entrepreneurial success?
- What are some of the recent and current trends and developments regarding English proficiency in entrepreneurship?

Entrepreneurial success

Duong (2022) highlighted that entrepreneurial success is a complex phenomenon which has varied definitions and perspectives from different scholars and thus can be measured from an objective or subjective perspective. Stanewski and Awruk (2019) pointed out that initially entrepreneurial success was perceived only from the financial perspective and this has evolved to encompass other aspects. According to Abe and Abe (2021), entrepreneurial success relates to the entrepreneur's achievement of own standards. Daley et al (2022) simply refer to entrepreneurship success as the goal of the entrepreneur. Zhang et al (2019) define entrepreneurial success as the attainment of the high level in the industry represented by continuous growth. Entrepreneurship success can be seen financially, psychologically and social influence (Hu et al, 2022). Dale et al (2022) explained that entrepreneurs' motives will determine how they view entrepreneurial success differently and Singh et al (2022) highlight that entrepreneurship orientation can affect entrepreneurial success.

Angel et al (2018) explained that entrepreneurial success can either be on an individual level or the firm level. On an individual level this can be satisfaction, wealth creation and varies from one individual to the other. Glosenburger et al (2022) explained that at an individual level, entrepreneurial success strongly reflects the ability of the entrepreneur to carry out their tasks and roles. At firm level an example can be growth, profit or increased sales. In addition, this can be monetary or non-monetary. Chaves-Maza and Fedriani (2022) highlighted some variables that can be indicators of success. These included profitability, turnover, business survival, productivity, competitive position and stakeholder satisfaction. Elsamah et al (2022) on the other hand explains that entrepreneurial success entails efficiency be it in terms of workload, procedures or processes and it is dependent on the

entrepreneur personal traits, organizational characteristics and the external environment.

The Economics of Language Theory

The economics of language theory is a theory that has been developed over the years recognizing language as a resource. This was developed in 1965 by Jacob Marschack and expounded over the years. The theory holds that language has economic value, human capital and results in costs and benefit among other things. The theory alludes that language can produce network effects and increase productivity, but was also affected by law and supply dynamics (Zhao and Zhao, 2019). Grenier and Zhang (2021) highlighted that acquisition of language can come at certain costs as it requires time and resources. In business, things like stakeholder language and technology can impact the demand of the language. The scholars also highlighted that the prospect of high financial returns can prompt learning a new language.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach. The study uses secondary data from peer reviewed journals sourced from reputable sources like Springer, Elsevier and Science Direct. The study mainly focused on studies that reflected the effect or significance of English language proficiency in a business certain particularly entrepreneurship. Due to the scarcity of literature, some not so recent articles were used. However, most of the studies were from 2018 to 2024 to ensure that recent developments in English proficiency were observed.

Effect of English Language proficiency on Entrepreneurial success Global expansion

English has become very important in the expansion of business. Entrepreneurs can utilize English language proficiency in order to venture into markets (Rawat, 2021). As the language has become the dominant business language, being proficient in it means that one can easily navigate the international stage. Imranur and Talukder (2023), explained that English proficiency makes it easier for those in developing

countries to penetrate foreign markets for example those in the European Union, where English is widely used as a business language. This is a notion shared by Ufier (2015) in their study which revealed that English language proficiency had a positive impact on exports. It allows domestic markets to penetrate foreign markets because of better information access and low communication costs. At the same time those with employees proficient in the language were able to identify lucrative export markets.

McCormick (2017) highlighted that business leaders can utilize English proficiency levels in determining investment decisions as this can highlight the global market positioning. Countries that increasingly place importance on the adoption and increased proficiency of English language display that they are ready for business. They can determine whether lack of the language proficiency locally can negatively affect growth and whether relocation for employees would be smooth, which all gives the business a competitive advantage (Rawat, 2021). Countries with high English proficiency are often associated with high income levels and high gross domestic product.

Financial Development

According to Maharana and Chaudhury (2019), there is a positive and significant relationship between entrepreneur language proficiency and business performance. Zhao and Zhao (2019), English proficiency is beneficial for international trade. This is also a notion that was shared by Shaharuddin et al (2022) whose study revealed that English proficiency improves financial development through facilitation of trade. Their study in Malaysia showed a positive and significant correlation between English proficiency and financial development and English proficiency increased with increase in the financial development. With increase in economic development, entrepreneurial opportunities also increase with things like increase in capital being more accessible. Letha and Kanthimathi (2021) actually contend that in some countries, economic growth is a result of English proficiency.

Likewise, a study by Li et al (2022) in Asia highlighted that English proficiency led to improved financial development which provides a conducive environment for

entrepreneurial development and success. Martinej (2023) also found that English language proficiency enabled growth in export companies as they transcend the communication barriers and penetrate overseas markets. However, Li et al (2022) revealed that this relationship was mediated by the prevailing economic policies. This was also echoed by Johnstone et al (2018) who highlighted even though language helped immensely in export business, language alone may not translate to a competitive advantage and worked in tandem with other factors.

However, Rawat (2021) pointed out that it was not just sufficient to speak English, but to speak it correctly so that it contributes to the success of the business. Ayres-Bennett and Hefner (2022) on the other hand, highlighted that there are currently other global superpowers like China coming up and overreliance on English alone may not continue to be beneficial especially for countries like the UK which is predominantly English (McQuillan, 2021).

Communication and Networking

Effective communication is essential for business sustainability (Maharana and Chaudhury, 2017). According to Rao, (2019), the English language is spoke in all the countries in the world and its success as a language has led to it being adopted as a business language. The scholar pointed out that 56% of the websites were designed in English and the spread of internet has also led to the spread of English and its dominance on the internet, and this also facilitates ecommerce businesses. Irawan et al (2022), English is an international language and is thus quite beneficial in international relations. Letha and Kanthimathi (2021) explained that English provides a competitive edge to prospective employees as the industry has a high demand for those that speak English well. They further explained that with the increased global interaction, English continues to become a valuable communication tool. Setiawan and Wahyuningsih (2019), in their study on English proficiency benefit for entrepreneurs Indonesia, found that English was the main language of business for the furniture entrepreneurs and it allowed them to effectively communicate and sell their products to other countries.

Grier and Zhang (2021) explained that a common language facilitates communication between buyers and sellers and a language barrier in contrast can slow down activity. Rifah et al (2021) also agreed with this notion and stated that English proficiency is a 21st century skill that can be used to position an enterprise to attain a competitive advantage. Prior studies by Tenzer et al (2017) highlighted that lack of a shared language resulted in communication barriers as well as acted as a barrier to business. Song et al (2018) explained that English proficiency can be utilized for better negotiation especially of international contracts. This was also echoed in a prior study by Shehu and Shittu (2015). Their study highlighted that in developing nations, English negotiating and marketing skills were crucial and their necessity means those possessing them are at an advantage when it comes to enterprise opportunities. Isphording (2015) also highlighted that English proficiency enhanced migrant entrepreneurs' integration.

Ketngam (2019), explored different foreign languages in a few companies in Thailand. The study was based on the importance of German, Korean, Chinese, English and Japanese, their usage and adoption in the Thai foreign owned firms. The study revealed that English was the most dominant foreign language that was perceived as more important because it was more international. The foreign language had an impact on the staffing decisions, with those proficient in the foreign languages being highly sought after. They in fact earned much higher than those who were not proficient.

Martinaj (2023), examined the use of foreign languages, particularly the capability of English language in communication between entrepreneurs in Kosovo. The study revealed that consultants are used to establish relationships with clients and companies. Most export related businesses utilized English for communication purposes and English proficiency enabled them to cut out the need for consultants as they can engage directly with their clients. English language proficiency was found indispensable in communication with overseas prospects and it eliminated communication barriers.

Attracting Investors

Abbas et al (2021) explained that English proficiency is utilized as a resource for social prestige. It is used to portray a positive image. Good English proficiency elevates the status of the entrepreneur in the society particularly if one studied in countries where English is a native language and also if they develop an English accent. They pointed out that the language also fostered international acceptance in certain spaces on the global landscape.

Shettu and Shehu (2015) highlighted that great English proficiency actually attracted investors and led to increased foreign direct investment. They pointed out that the highest foreign direct investment flows to countries that have English as the main language. This notion was also shared by Kim et al (2015) who highlighted that those that were in countries that spoke the language of the investors reduced the transaction costs for the investors thereby making them more attractive to investors (Wilson et al, 2016). Konara and Wei (2019), however, explained that there were conflicting results in literature regarding the role of English proficiency on foreign direct investment which necessitated more research into that area.

Feng et al (2019), in their study revealed that this was high in countries that shared English as the common language compared to non-English speaking countries that shared another native language. Liao and Zhang (2024) in their study in China also found that English proficiency enhanced outward foreign direct investment between China and developing countries. The study also revealed that English proficiency led to removal of language barriers but the relationship was more significant between non-English speaking countries and with those of high income.

Resource accessibility

Bonder, (2017), in their study on Latino entrepreneurs, found that the use of English language in their business was determined by the type of work they were in. However, those that had proficiency were better positioned to exploit emerging opportunities and those that were not proficient found ways to classify themselves as speakers so as to exploit the said opportunities. Alhendi (2019), explained that

English proficiency led to increased cultural capital value when invested in. It led to access to resources that would otherwise have not been accessed.

Lee and Black (2017), highlighted that lack of English proficiency acted as a barrier to loan access for immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States of America. They also missed out on certain promotions because they lacked English proficiency. This shows that English proficiency can play a great role in accessibility of resources. Cheng et al (2020), in their study in Australia and New Zealand also explained that English proficiency also explained that English proficiency led to better labour outcomes.

Business opportunities and competitive advantage

Maharana and Chaudhury (2017) pointed out that language breeds customers. Rao (2019) explained that English proficiency results in creation of opportunities. Tourism is on the rise and this necessitates a common language. English has become that language and travel agencies that have high proficiency in the language have an edge over their rivals and there is a high demand for those proficient in the language to converse with international tourists. English also plays a great role in the entertainment industry as it is the most widely used. There is a great demand for English material from learners of the language globally which creates massive opportunities in that area from books, films, media, online teachers and so forth. Adawiyah and Gumartifa (2022) highlight that English proficiency enables the entrepreneur to be creative as they navigate new opportunities and explore new markets.

Likewise, Ku Sulong et al (2023) also highlighted the importance of English proficiency in tourism entrepreneurship in Malaysia. Their study reflected the challenges that entrepreneurs were having as a result of lack of English proficiency. Limited vocabulary, challenges in understanding accents and lack of confidence were some of the challenges. These challenges actually affected business efficiency (Haiwani and Bennui (2023).

Mantra (2020) in their prior study had highlighted that poor English proficiency especially industry resulted in poor communication and inefficient service. The scholars in their study in Bali, Indonesia, pointed out that English proficiency could

lead to increased patronage as it is a popular global tourist destination. Besides satisfaction of customers, English proficiency would also mean those that are highly proficient are also highly employable and possess the relevant skills to meet the business needs.

Hanafi et al (2023), explored the benefits of English proficiency for Moroccan women entrepreneurs. Their study revealed that when it came to international businesses, the Moroccan women were failing to exploit presented opportunities because of their lack of proficiency. Their study revealed that 89% of the interviewed women agreed that English proficiency was a tool that could result in their businesses thriving and attracting more customers.

In addition, given the increased digitalization English proficiency would improve their innovativeness to and help position them for better opportunities and navigate a turbulent environment. This was also echoed in a prior study by Shehu and Shittu (2015) who stated that English proficiency was a bridge to entrepreneurship. Al-Ahdal and Al-Awaid (2018) also highlighted the importance of English proficiency in creating opportunities. The scholars highlighted that English proficiency could be exploited to create entrepreneurial opportunities for Saudi Arabia, particularly as it has been linked to improved standard of life.

Gow (2021) explored the reasons behind businesses using English for slogans in places like restaurants in Indonesia. The study revealed that English proficiency created a certain image in the mind of customers and the language was used as a form of conveying an overseas concept. In addition, customers highlighted that use of English made the businesses 'cooler' and more modern which shows that the language was also used to create a certain image and attract more customers especially the millenials. The business owners explained that English proficiency enabled them to meet the expectations of their customers and deliver a more tailored product and service.

Conclusion

The study focused on exploring the effect of English proficiency on entrepreneurial success. The study revealed that English proficiency was an asset to entrepreneurs. It enables entrepreneurs to gain a competitive advantage in business as well as strategically position themselves to exploit new opportunities and markets. The study also revealed that the growth of digitalization has encouraged the widespread adoption of the English language in business setting. However, whilst some studies highlight that the future outlook for English proficiency looks great, there are certain schools of thought that allude to the growing importance of other foreign studies. There are also concerns that adoption of English language may have a negative effect on the local languages. Despite this, the study's implications show that entrepreneurs need to incorporate the importance of English language proficiency in their strategy to drive business performance. In addition, policy makers should also ensure that they continue having policies on adoption of English to ensure a crop of high quality and competitive labour force.

Limitations and recommendations

The study employed a qualitative approach in examining the effect of the English proficiency on entrepreneurial success. Future studies can also incorporate a quantitative approach particularly focusing on specific aspects of entrepreneurial success.

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کاریگه‌ری توانای زمانی ئینگلیزی له سهر سه‌رکه‌وتنی کارگێری

پوخته

جیهانگیری و داهینانه ته‌کنه‌لۆژییه‌کان بوو ته‌هۆی ئه‌وه‌ی که زمانه‌ بیا‌نییه‌کان له‌ بواری بازرگانیدا سوودی به‌رفراوانیان هه‌بێت. زمانی ئینگلیزی وه‌ک زمانی سه‌ره‌کی بازرگانی له‌ سه‌رانسه‌ری جیهاندا هه‌ست پێده‌کری‌ت و زیاتر بۆ لایه‌نه‌ جیاوازه‌کانی بازرگانی وه‌رگیراوه‌. ئه‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه‌ هه‌ولده‌دات کاریگه‌ری توانای زمانی ئینگلیزی له‌ سهر سه‌رکه‌وتنی کارگێری دیاری بکات. توێژینه‌وه‌که‌ رێبازیکی چۆنایه‌تی له‌ شیوه‌ی ئه‌ده‌دا به‌کارده‌هێنێت به‌ مه‌به‌ستی ده‌ستنی‌شانکردنی ره‌وت و پێش‌هاته‌کانی ئه‌م دوا‌ییه‌ سه‌باره‌ت به‌ به‌کارهێنانی زمانی ئینگلیزی له‌ کارگێریدا. توێژینه‌وه‌که‌ تیشک ده‌خاته‌ سه‌ر په‌ره‌سه‌ندنی گرنگی زمانی ئینگلیزی وه‌ک زمانی ئینگلیزی له‌ دیمه‌نی بازرگانیدا. تیشک ده‌خاته‌ سه‌ر ئه‌وه‌ی که‌ شار‌ه‌زایی زمانی ئینگلیزی رێگه‌ به‌ خاوه‌نکاره‌کان ده‌دات گه‌شه‌ بکه‌ن، فراوانتر بکه‌ن، فه‌رمان به‌ دامه‌زراندنی فره‌ زمانه‌ بکه‌ن و سوودی کێبڕکێ له‌ کاره‌کانیاندا به‌ده‌ست به‌ی‌نن. توێژینه‌وه‌که‌ کاریگه‌رییه‌کی تایبه‌تی له‌ سه‌ر خاوه‌نکاران، دا‌پۆ‌ژه‌رانی سیاسه‌ت و هه‌روه‌ها لایه‌نه‌ په‌یوه‌ندیده‌ره‌کانی دیکه‌ هه‌یه‌. توێژینه‌وه‌که‌ ئاشکرایکردوه‌، ئه‌وه‌نده‌ی ئینگلیزی ئامرا‌زیکی گرنگه‌ له‌ سه‌رکه‌وتنی کارگێریدا، ده‌رفه‌تێکی گه‌شه‌سه‌ندوو بۆ زمانه‌کانی دیکه‌ هه‌یه‌، به‌ شیوه‌یه‌کی سه‌ره‌کی زمانی ماندا‌رین چونکه‌ چین ده‌بێته‌ هێ‌زیکی جیهانی که‌ ده‌بێت حسابی بۆ بک‌ری‌ت. ئه‌مه‌ش ده‌رگا‌کان ده‌کاته‌وه‌ بۆ توێژینه‌وه‌کان سه‌باره‌ت به‌ فره‌ زمانه‌وانی بۆ لێکۆ‌لینه‌وه‌کانی داهاتوو.

تأثير إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية على النجاح في ريادة الأعمال

ملخص:

لقد أدت العولمة والابتكارات التكنولوجية إلى انتشار استخدام اللغات الأجنبية في مجال الأعمال. ويُنظر إلى اللغة الإنجليزية باعتبارها اللغة الرئيسية للأعمال في جميع أنحاء العالم، ويتم اعتمادها بشكل متزايد في جوانب الأعمال المختلفة. تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد تأثير إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية على نجاح ريادة الأعمال. وتستخدم الدراسة نهجاً نوعياً في شكل أدبيات من أجل تحديد الاتجاهات والتطورات الأخيرة فيما يتعلق باستخدام اللغة الإنجليزية في ريادة الأعمال. وتسلط الدراسة الضوء على الأهمية المتزايدة للغة الإنجليزية باعتبارها اللغة المشتركة في مجال الأعمال. وتسلط الضوء على أن إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية يسمح لرجال الأعمال بالنمو والتوسع وإدارة الموظفين متعددي اللغات وتحقيق المزايا التنافسية في أعمالهم. وللدراسة آثار خاصة على رجال الأعمال وصناع السياسات وكذلك أصحاب المصلحة الآخرين. وكشفت الدراسة أنه بقدر ما تعد اللغة الإنجليزية أداة حاسمة في نجاح ريادة الأعمال، فهناك فرصة متزايدة للغات أخرى، وخاصة لغة الماندرين حيث أصبحت الصين قوة عالمية يجب حسابها. وهذا يفتح الأبواب للدراسات المتعلقة بالتعدد اللغوي للدراسات المستقبلية.