

Business English: the Quintessence of the Corporate World

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Abstract

The status of English in the global arena has become an irreplaceable and unparalleled one. The language has become apparent and prominent in the key aspects of trade and commerce for the last two decades or more. Though the first spread of the language was due to colonial expansion, it has attained a level of being considered a standard and common one for all official communications by and large particularly in the countries where a vast number of regional and native languages are spoken. English, indeed, is not the most widely spoken language on the earth if it is taken in terms of number of native speakers. It has become a prominent language as it is spoken by people around the world – 350 million of 6 billion people. In case of International business, it is the only language that has occupied a great space revealing the importance of the language. This paper brings to light how English as a language is used for business communication in the corporate sectors. The business at global level is conducted across borders of countries with English as a principal language. The use of language provides many benefits such as helping the concern grow and succeed, invigorating trust among colleagues and clients, strengthening the relationship with everyone in and out the concern, escalating the skill set of individuals along with commanding lucrative packages and embellishing the international relationship by means of cultural understanding.

Keywords: Business english, general english, corporate, lingua franca, cross cultural communication, communication, business jargons, personal interaction.

1. Introduction

The world of trade and commerce has been grown up gigantically with the input of English as the most widely used language. Having a commendable knowledge in the language for commercial activities brings success in the career of employees. The individuals with a sound knowledge in English are the most sought after persons to work in corporate even in English speaking countries. Thus, the Lingua Franca has become a default language in most of the countries in the world and is used in small business concerns or large corporate sectors alike. Business men, who are from different countries finding themselves handicapped with knowledge of regional language, prefer English. The language, crossing international boundaries, transcends language barriers to be at the top of the corporate world today. Proficiency of the language, being used in more than 70 countries in the forms from emails to documentation, always brings laurels in the cut throat competitive corporate world. Many aspects of corporate life from getting an employment to achieving consecutive and cohesive magnet level in the business are possible only by the glibness in written and spoken form of English. It has become a near mandatory requirement for the posts like airline pilots and naval officers. So is the case with corporate that looks for aspirants having a command over English for carrying out business tasks such as presentations, marketing and sales.

2. The need of english as a language

The British began to develop overseas colonies as early as the 12th century creating English speaking countries in the world. English

has been the unifying language in 27 member countries in the European Union and 54 countries in the Commonwealth of Nations. English, at present, is the official language in all those countries. The language is spoken by about 1.4 billion people around the world. One who has the communication skills in English will have the reach everywhere and is considered to be an added value to the organization. The fortune of any business rests upon the effective skills of communication. A good speaker always proves to be a patient listener. It is an essential factor for climbing up the corporate ladder. The ability to communicate in English is always considered an asset to the corporate. The business organizations running at the global level prefer to engage their activities with those who speak English well only thereby they can maintain a strong and lasting business relationships.

As far as internet is concerned, over 50 percent of the pages are in English indicating that much online information is available for the people. Having a close access can make an obvious difference in the professional life of every individual. Nikhlesh Mathur, the Chief advisor at Shiksha, points out, If one is good in English then it helps in communication country-wide and world-wide. That is why English is an important tool at all places which have business connectivity outside their region. Country like China where only Chinese language prevailed till sometime back has realized this quickly and the people are now themselves giving emphasis on learning English.

If one can speak English with confidence, there will be a good chance everywhere. Speaking English makes the speaker experience the English culture to some extent. This cultural understanding can be valuable for employers who wish to work in English speaking countries. One has to converse in English by

having a good package of language skills that include rich vocabulary.

Everyone is aware that the spoken and written English has become the means of business communication not only within a country but also among the countries in the world.

Ever since globalization, the organization of trade and commerce started to have a different turn where the business deals were not confined to a single region or area but starts to spread across the globe.

This widespread commercialization raised the need for a single language through which everyone has to communicate. Here comes English to fulfill the necessity as it is being spoken most widely and has become a business language now.

Realizing the fact, most of the B-Schools have started contemplating a change in the syllabus to ensure the ability to gauge the skills of students in terms of language and expressions. The new syllabus and curriculum thus designed boost the morale of the students to perform better by not only churning out the latent talents and acquired skills with in an individual but also assuring a growth oriented career. Moreover, a strong command over the language ensures a significant and effective interaction with the fellow employees so that an unfavourable situation can also be gained control.

3. Business English (BE)

Business English is English which is used in business contexts such as trade, commerce, finance, insurance, banking, etc. It requires clarity of business jargons with grammatical structures. There should not be anything unclear that needs interpretation. Unlike literature, the language that is used in corporate counts profit in terms of money.

If it is wrongly used or interpreted, time and money are lost once for all. It is the well known and worldwide term describing the kind of English that is being widely used by people who involve in trade.

Business English, an umbrella term, aims to have the communication skills in a universal environment of business. The areas such as manufacturing, marketing, production, property, the stock exchange, (international) trade, transport, accounting, commerce, e-commerce, economics, finance, HR, insurance, IT, law, etc., are covered under Business English. This does not intend to assert that everything that is not treated to be General English is Business English.

There is a term used wider that is the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) which is not supposed to be general: This acronym encompasses all the varied areas of Business English.

Good communication in business is direct and to the point and hence the following usages should be avoided.

Clichés

Cliché means an expression that has been repeatedly used to the extent that it loses its real meaning or uniqueness. A cliché means a phrase or an opinion that is overused to the extent that it loses its meaning and novelty and thus betrayed a lack of original thought. In other words sayings or remarks which are very often made resulting in not original and not interesting. It also refers to events and actions that are presumable because of past occurrences.

Examples

Think Outside the Box - Everyone will have good luck or success at some point in their lives.

Every Dog has its Day - Everyone will have good luck or success at some point in their lives.

Proverbs

A proverb means a little, renowned meaningful pith, conveying a universal fact or piece of advice.

Examples

Absence makes the Heart Grow Fonder – Being away from someone or something for a period of time makes you appreciate that person or thing more when it or they are seen again.

Beggars can't be Choosers – If you are in a bad situation and someone offers to help you, you have to take whatever they give you and should not ask for more.

Idioms

An idiom means a collection of words formed by usage with a meaning not deductible from those of the individual words.

Examples

Ball is in your court – It is up to you to make the next decision or step.

Caught between two stools – When someone finds it difficult to choose between two alternatives.

Phrasal Verbs

A Phrasal verb means an idiomatic usage that consists of a verb along with another element, either an adverb, as in *break down*, or a preposition.

Examples

Show Up – arrive

Bring Down – make unhappy

Do Away With – discard

A good communication is made of short, direct sentences woven with most impactful words.

3.1. General English (GE) Vs Business English (BE)

Business English is supposed to be a special branch of General English and has special vocabulary and jargons. Generally, a sound knowledge in English is needed to learn business jargons which are the special forms meant for business activities. The similarities between the GE and the BE have been argued in favour of rather than the differences. Unless the basic rules of grammar and the basic amount of vocabulary are earned, the easiest form of business conversation cannot be held in both written and spoken forms. The core skills in the GE such as fluency, listening, reading and writing are required to improve the BE. The one who has a tremendous knowledge in the GE needs to have a specific knowledge in the BE to face the business environment. Focus should be paid on the special vocabulary for making or receiving phone calls, conducting negotiations and meetings, etc.

3.2. The importance of business english communication

In the beginning of 21st century, corporate in large numbers started to delineate the cost of production sizably or cut by sending their jobs overseas to get them done there. This is called as outsourcing, or offshoring. Yet, another way found for the same is hiring immigrants into the country on work visas for a given period of time. They can work there till their visas get expired. The one who masters Business English can go anywhere and chooses his employer offering good salary package. Business English which is different from General English makes a struggle free business environment. A grasp of vocabulary in the BE always enables one to communicate effectively and fluently. Also, it ensures him or her to be proficient in the use of written communication. Speaking skills in English at this level can provide an edge in the increasing job market and also makes the speaker even more potential.

The BE communication comes forth to convey the message that English is a dominant one in a way that no language has ever been before in the world. The globe has shrunk with a great impact on the spheres of human endeavours in education such as science and technology, engineering and business besides the cultural, political

and economic developments. These factors make English a dominant world language. It is not wrong to say that the effective BE makes everyone communicate with the world. Thus, the BE has become a global language of business and trade making it a corporate icon. Enhancing the knowledge of the BE has become the most important thing to survive and succeed in the business world. As most of the people associate with commercial activities in a way or the other, leveraging language by using technical terms appropriately to get a desired result is the ultimate thing to be achieved. It is possible only by improving the language with the quality of maintaining good communication in the work place. In order to shine in the business world, knowledge of business jargons is needed.

3.3. Business jargon

A language specially used in the corporate and field of bureaucracy is business jargon. It is also known as corporate jargon. Business jargon typically includes buzzwords, vogue words and euphemisms.

It is in contrast with general English and it is a basic need when it comes to business activities or transactions. Cash is a common term in commercial outfits but **cash cow** means not an animal but a term referring to a product or investment that provides a steady income and that exceeds the amount of investment. The opposite of the term is **belly up** which means failure to generate profit resulting in bankruptcy.

Then a help is needed from one with **deep pockets** referring to a help from an investor or group of investors. Sometimes even the business giants have to operate their business on **ashoestring** meaning very tight financial position. Those who involve in the business seriously have to **take a haircut** if things go against a plan designed to make a profit. Taking a haircut means a loss. If the loss exceeds the bearable limit; the employees of concern have to **tighten their belt** which refers to reducing the money being spent. In the event of getting good profit, the workers may be asked to have a **slice of the pie** that refers to share the profit or wealth. Some people may have to put or receive **the lion's share** meaning bulk or most of it.

3.4. Ways and means to acquire business english

3.4.1. Be a passive listener

Before speaking, one has to listen to others speaking the BE just like a child listening to the parents. Listening to the phrases again and again makes the mind register the words and phrases that will haunt forever. There are some TV shows telecasting business themed series like the HBO telecasts "**Silicon Valley**". This type of series and shows pave a way to have a combined form of entertainment and learning. "**Fluent U**" is yet another show that takes a real world video providing news, instructional and inspiring talks with interactive subtitles which make the learners easy to get the meanings of any phrases or expressions. Speaking becomes tough without proper listening.

3.4.2. Unconcern about grammar a lot

The language of the BE is expected to be spontaneous with the flow of words and sounds almost like natives. Human beings start speaking the words and sentences before knowing if they are grammatically correct. Thinking of grammar rules and structures of sentences before speaking makes the speakers confuse like which foot is to be taken while trying to walk. The situation, taking much brainpower, makes the learners hesitate and there is a breakup of the natural flow of words. Frank and plain speech in the business world can be easily understood by all.

3.4.3. Use phrases and not words

Children, while learning initially, get the words and reproduce them. Words, if used alone, are hard to remember and they cannot be used alone. Combinations of words giving different meanings are phrases. Proper understanding of phrases as to when and why they are used will make the speakers easy. Though common words are used in business phrases, they mean entirely different when they are spoken.

3.4.5. Speak it aloud

If the words are not spoken loudly, it will be considered murmuring and whispering to the mind. Speech becomes natural when phrases are spoken louder. Saying something louder for the first time in front of others sounds strange not only to others but to the speaker also. The more the speaker does it before others, the more easily he or she will be able to express him or herself. Standing in front of mirror and speaking to oneself is a good practice to be exercised. Though it seems weird, proper and repeated practice gives an amazing result. Recording speech and playing it back is yet another practice which helps the speaker improve the speech.

3.4.6. Say again and again

Good learning occurs when matters of speech are repeated. Practice is more vital than learning. Business English can be learnt easily but cannot be maintained without practice as it is just like playing an instrument and riding a bicycle. Practice means repetition of an action that is not boring. Good companion is the one with whom the interaction can be had as it is better than listening to the recorded version of the speech. Speaking to someone really makes a difference because it is a natural way of expression. Practice makes a man perfect.

In order to be a master in Business English, the level of confidence has to be increased by having a sound knowledge in English. The following are some of the key points by which English can be improved.

1. Reach the Objectives - Learning English as a language must be the responsibility of the learner and not the teacher. Vocabulary has to be earned by vigorous practice.
2. Have a Teacher - The presence of a teacher is needed if the language is to be learned in a disciplined and organized way. Language cannot be learned alone.
3. Attend Classes - Activities inside the classroom must be carried out, so that conversation with others can be continued even outside classrooms. Reading and earning vocabulary are to be done at home also as assigned by the teacher so that confidence can be instilled.
4. Practice Regularly - Rushing up matters to learn and resting for a long time do not help in learning. Sufficient time should be allotted for practice and it has to be regular.
5. Make Speaking English a Hobby - The habit of speaking English as a language must be cultivated and it has to go on without any hindrance. It may help one to get rid of apprehension about the expression in the language.

English is a language that has to be spoken as far as business is concerned. It needs to be listened, understood and expressed in a finer way. For that, the language should be taken control of. It means English should be owned and developed as if it is a mother tongue. Increasing vocabulary and building lexicon are essential apart from learning idiomatic expressions. Words and expressions that are interesting and useful are to be learned. They are supposed to be a part of the environment. These matters can be acquired by listening to radio programmes and others who speak about that. They are found in reading materials as well. The unfamiliar words

and expressions need to be referred to a good dictionary like Oxford Advance Learners' Dictionary or Cambridge Dictionary or Webster's Dictionary or Chambers Dictionary. Dictionaries provide not only meaning but also the context they are used.

4. Use of business english in cross and inter-cultural communication

Thanks to the modern technology, the cross-cultural communication has been made a part of everyday life. Cross-cultural interaction is influenced by various languages and different non verbal communications. The culture of people leads the use of language and communication styles. Comprehending the impacts of cultural differences is a prime factor in trade contexts. When it comes to international business, the difference is not only in the languages but also in the negotiation styles and business etiquettes as the ways are varied in perceiving the world, expressing feelings, giving motivations and interests.

In most of the MNCs, the language issues concern everyone from top to bottom in the hierarchy. According to Charles (2007:261) "only language can enable individuals and companies ... to communicate". The language skills, the core of international business organizations, are the personal skills which have a great influence on the business dealings on a larger scale. The poor performance of a single man may lead to a disaster of the entire business unit. The BE helps to transfer the knowledge from one person to another, from head quarters to subordinates apart from the basic functions of the business concerns like controlling, coordinating and integrating the members of staff. It is certain that communication skills add to have a cultural awareness and individual development.

The advantage of the BE is that it connects a man in native land with overseas and cross-cultural experience which are considered a pivotal aspect as they help the employees in the MNCs to enhance their career promotions and the ways to gain new skills. The people working in modern corporate are with various background and hence the knowledge of the BE becomes invaluable to make them become a global leader. Some people who are not able to converse fluently may feel that their professional skill is affected adversely leading them to lose their promotional chances. The MNCs always look for people with highest language skills. Hence, a sound knowledge in the BE can be considered an asset by which positions and earnings can be achieved besides providing a sense of security in the field of international business.

5. Conclusion

Development of modern business and corporate reveal that the BE is being used widely to enable those who involve in business to communicate effectively. As the GE was not found to be the best way of improving the communication in business, the language, in the beginning of the 20th century, emerged as a branch to be sophisticated for the business communication that was later given a term 'Business English'. The main purpose of writers, who dedicated themselves with their scholarly works by providing certain rules and patterns during the first two decades of the 20th century, was to make the language with readymade formulas for every businessman to understand the business communication. Cultural differences give different perceptions of the business at the global level. The BE has already been started to flourish in the name of English for Specific Purpose (ESP) and many institutions have evidently started to offer special courses to young aspirants to improve their abilities and skills. Globalization, indeed, will add fuel to the fire of new demands of the BE and enhance the new visions by creating new vistas towards the same to cope with the highly competitive market oriented business.

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