

USE OF ENGLISH IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION A CASE STUDY OF KOSOVO

Fitnete Martinaj
International School for Social and Business Studies, Slovenia
fitnetemartinaj@hotmail.com

Abstract

Introduction and aim: Since English has an indisputable function as the lingua franca of global business, its influence in business communication is to be taken seriously. The aim of the research is: 1) to explore how the effects of using English language in business can be a bridge among Kosovo businesses and international ones. 2) to explore how the command of English language enable businesspeople in Kosovo to expand their businesses globally, and 3) to provide businesspeople with wider career choices.

Research methodology: First, the research questions will be presented. Then the background of the participants and the instruments used in the research will be introduced. This study is thought to employ the methods of qualitative and quantitative research design. By using qualitative research methods, the empirical part of the study will include five interviews and a questionnaire. Participants will be selected from Kosovo business companies. Tables and figures will be used to present data findings. In this study, most significant findings of the questionnaire will be presented with figures. The figures will illustrate the importance and frequency of the themes discussed.

Findings: findings are expected to reveal that business people in Kosovo with English language skills will have better chances for expanding their business overseas, and can have wider career choices. Communicating in English and other languages such as Turkish, Macedonian, German, etc. and cooperating with multinational corporations brings new values in the field of economy and business in Kosovo.

Keywords: English language, business communication, career choices

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Language is said to be at the core of international business (Charles 2007). The role of English cannot be neglected since “English is now the global language of business” (Neeley 2012, p.117). Therefore, using English can make it possible to share information and knowledge.

Until recent years, little research has been conducted examining the connection between language and its effects on business (Harzing & Pudelko 2013). Since international communication plays a significant role in the multicultural business environment, there is a definite need to examine the role of English language on business communication. This study will focus on the role of English language in Kosovo business companies.

No matter how good your selling techniques are, or how good your marketing proposal is, poor language skills destroy all your efforts. And also it is important as a business professional to be able to communicate effectively with overseas business partners (Sheryarali 2014, p.32). Sometimes because of export, sometimes because of outsourcing, Kosovo firms have a link with a foreign client. If you wish to be successful in international business, learning English is incredibly important. (The World Bank, Press Release no: 2018/ECA/23). English has emerged as the global language of trade and commerce in the past few decades, affecting many key aspects of business in the modern world (Samar 2014, p.27). If one’s English is poor, even though with brilliant business ideas, you may still find yourself languishing at the bottom of the management ladder. Your productivity will drop over a period of time since you will have difficulty in expressing your brilliant ideas. (Pandey, 2014, pp.20-24). Thus, the second aim of this study is to explore how the effects of using English language can expand one’s business worldwide. In the international commercial sphere English has become lingua-franca of the business world irrespective of geographical, social, political or religious differences (Pandey, 2014, p.5). In the last few years, thanks to jobs becoming global, the importance of English has increased manifold. It has over the years become an important medium of communication, both at the international and intra-national levels (Pandey, 2014, p.11). Furthermore, organizations cannot offer lifelong careers anymore and career paths have altered from traditional linear career progression towards more horizontal movements (Littleton et al. 2000). Individuals need to adapt to the changes in their working environment, regardless of their willingness to do so. Therefore, the third aim of this study is to examine how English language skills are connected to career success. Also, the attitudes of individuals towards the employer and their views about their careers and employment have changed, and are changing, dramatically, thus challenging the traditional assumption of commitment and motivation (Jones, 2005).

1.2. Scope of the problem

The influence of English in business communication is to be taken seriously by Kosovo enterprises. Using English has become unavoidable for companies trying to compete in international markets, therefore individuals and/or business people in Kosovo need to adapt to the economic, technological, scientific and cultural changes, regardless their willingness to do so. There are businesspeople in Kosovo who run their sole businesses and would like to broaden their business. There are the ones who need to develop their career, and the ones who need to get higher qualification but they cannot achieve it not only because of other business barriers but also because of lack of business communication respectively communication using a foreign language. Considering the recent researches conducted on SMEs in Kosovo, a low percentage of them are interested in cooperating with strategic foreign partners and one of the barriers is inability to communicate in English. There is a very small proportion of SMEs which in addition to the operation in Kosovo, operate abroad. A number of studies concerning Kosovo business activities have been conducted on the overall level of business but without considering the role of languages and the role of English language in particular. Therefore, the aim of my research is to explore how the effects of using English language in business could be a bridge among Kosovo business companies and international ones; to explore how English language could ease their communication and enable them to expand their

businesses worldwide. Furthermore, to find out how the individual's English language skill enhance their career development because using English can make it possible to share information and knowledge.

1.3. Research Questions

In order to examine the effects of English in Kosovo business companies, the research questions will be:

1. What is the role of English language in Kosovo business companies?
2. How the use of English language can expand one's business worldwide?
3. How English language skills are connected to career choices?

The research questions will provide responses for understanding the role of English language skills in business and they will also mirror the effects of English language skills on career success.

1.4. Structure of the Research

Here is the table covering the structure of the research. In the course of study other items will be added whereas something may be changed.

| Chapter | Content |
|--|--|
| 1. Introduction | 1.1 Background of the study 1.2 Research problem 1.3 Research questions and objectives 1.4 Definitions 1.5 Structure of the paper |
| 2. Literature review | 2.1 Business communication 2.2 English as lingua franca 2.3 Business English and career choices |
| 3. English language in Kosovo businesses | 3.1 Kosovo culture and business communication 3.2 English language and Business English 3.3 Role of language in intercultural communication 3.4 Language skills and career choices 3.5 Psychological, ethnical and cultural barriers of Kosovo businesspeople in acquiring English 3.6 Implementation of a language strategy 3.7 Theoretical framework |
| 4. Research methodology | 4.1 Data collection methods 4.2 Interviews 4.3 Questionnaire 4.4 Selection of the participants |
| 5. Data analysis | 5.1. Analysis of empirical data 5.1.a Interviews 5.1.b. Questionnaire 5.2. Summary of the result 5.3. Comparison with theory |
| 6. Discussion | 6.1. Conclusion 6.2. Evaluation of the study 6.3. Limitations 6.3. Suggestions for future research |
| <i>References</i> | |

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous literature will be reviewed regarding:

- a) English language effects on business communication,
- b) The use of English as lingua franca, and
- c) The role of English on career choices.

Namely, the theoretical background for the study will be presented.

2.1 Business communication

English is still considered the international language of business and the western industrialized countries generally favor English (Maurais & Moris, 2003). However, the widely held view in the native English speaking business world about the unimportance of foreign languages has come under considerable criticism (Enderwick & Akoorie 1994).

Learning foreign languages disrupts knowledge of students' native language. In the 1960s it was thought that only a single part of the human brain is dedicated to language and if people were to learn more than one language they would, in effect, be dividing this potential. We now know that there is an overwhelming number of benefits to bilingualism and that this myth has no grounding. (Igor Riznar, 2011).

It can be vital for the company to also take into account local languages as that can have a major impact on relations with local stakeholders and customers (Van der Born and Peltokorpi, 2010).

Despite the importance of English in business communication, foreign language competence facilitates especially relationship and network building when conducting international business. Foreign language competence influences the international buyer and seller relationships, establishes trust, signals commitment and respect for the customer, and has a major effect on the atmosphere that characterizes the relationship (Turnbull & Welham 1985). Also, Swift (1991) argues that cultural aspects are important in communication and local language knowledge helps understand local business practices.

2.2. English as lingua franca

The role of English as an international business lingua franca is now beyond dispute (Knapp and Meierkord 2002; Mair 2003; Ammon 2006; Rogerson-Revell 2007). The English language has in fact such a strong position in multinational companies that it can be adopted as common language in a company where no one actually speaks English as their mother tongue, or without the official policy that English would be the official language (Vaara et al. 2005). Furthermore, needs for effective communication is not limited to external communication with clients or suppliers. A company must have effective means to communicate internally, thus language is a key issue also in internal communication (Welch & Welch, 1999).

English may be the mode of communication for the international elite, and thus, also the language of choice for those who aspire to that status, but languages are not merely tools for communication. They are also the carriers of entire worldviews, the "repositories of culture and identity" (The Economist, "World Empire;" and Deepak Lal. The Independent Review 5 (2000:3).

Certification of English proficiency has become a big business for those involved in the test administering industry, but test-takers claim it is an even bigger business for them. (Described as a "passport to better-paid employment," the "entrance ticket to the working world," "the dominant staple in a progressive education," and "a necessary qualification for many respectable jobs," the multitude of English fluency exams available fill an important niche in a country where "for many people, proficiency in English is synonymous with the promise of well-being." (Anne Johnson, 2009: 80-84).

2.3. English language and career choices

Before the times of industrialization careers were formed on the basis of occupational inheritance rather than choice of occupation, meaning that the father passed on his profession to his son, whereas women were mostly bound by domestic duties (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). Since then, researchers have had different opinions; whether careers are shaped from the viewpoint of individual agency or social determinism theories.

It is certain that the nature of careers is changing and globalization provides unlimited possibilities for career success. Careers have become more boundaryless in terms of career mobility on a lateral scale within or between organizations (Briscoe et al. 2006)

Much of the recent attention to the spread of English deals precisely with this point: that English is not only helpful but is becoming increasingly necessary for success in the working world, leaving those who do not speak it behind. (Anne Johnson, Short et al. 2001, p.3) Thus, more and more language education providers are reorienting their courses to the specific needs of their students, popularizing courses in business English, English for taxi drivers, legal English, or phone manners in English. (Carla Power, 2005).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is thought to use the methods of qualitative and quantitative research design.

The study will contain:

- a) the theoretical part, and
- b) the empirical part

3.1 Theoretical part

The theoretical part of the research is planned to be based on previous research including books, articles in academic journals and internet sources. Theoretical findings will be combined to form a theoretical framework in order to analyze empirical findings. Three issues will be regarded: 1.The use of English in business communication; 2.The role of language in intercultural communication, and 3.The effects of English on career choices.

3.2. Empirical part

The empirical part will cover interviews and questionnaires. The interviews and the questionnaires will be used as the source of primary data.

The purpose of qualitative research is more descriptive than predictive. The goal is to understand, in depth, the viewpoint of a research participant. Realizing that all understanding is constructed, different research participants are going to have different interpretations of their own experience and the social systems within which they interact (Vanderstoep and Johnston 2009).

According to Rawland B, 2005, qualitative methods are increasingly accepted in social science and business research as this branch of enquiry differentiates itself from a scientific positivist paradigm. Daymon and Holloway (2011:6) argue that qualitative research method is particularly suitable for research examining communication, since communication is related to people's experience and social context, and is therefore complex and human. In this study, qualitative research is chosen to provide a deeper understanding of the effects of using English while doing business.

3.3. Interviews

The interviews will be *focused*, meaning that the questions will be prepared before the interviews. There is thought to be conducted five semi-structured interviews in two Kosovo business companies. In semi-constructed interviews, it is important that the interview remains conversational and natural. This way of conducting interviews gives both the interviewer and the respondent ample freedom, while at the same

time ensuring that all the relevant themes are dealt with and all the necessary information collected (Corbetta 2003, p.270).

Interview questions will be open - ended, single-issue, and should avoid “why?” Open- ended questions require more than a dichotomous yes - or - no or one - word response. (Vanderstoep and Johnston 2009:228). It is argued that both open-ended and multiple choice questions can be beneficial depending on the situation (Foddy 1995, p.128). Therefore, it is thought to be taken into consideration that using multiple choice questions would be beneficial, as they are simpler and less time-consuming for the participants to answer. The interviews will be conducted in English as it is intended to be interviewed participants who use English in their business, and likewise to prove the importance of English speaking in business communication. Interview questions will be related to the advantages of using English in business, challenges and barriers of using it, initiatives and trainings taken in improving and using English intranationally and internationally, etc.

In the table below the main components of the interview are presented.

| |
|---|
| 1. Cases when English is used |
| 2. Reasons for using English |
| 3. Advantages of using English |
| 4. Barriers of using English |
| 5. Trainings/strategies taken for improving English |
| 6. Encouragement to use English |
| 7. Comment |

3.4 Questionnaire

In order to get a wider picture of the situation, information will then be collected through a questionnaire from other companies. In this way it is possible to discover different kinds of perspectives about the topic and to contribute to a better reliability of the study. The questionnaire is thought to contain up to twenty questions. The same questions will be made to all participants. In a questionnaire, it is important that the design of the questions is neutral and that the questions are related to the participant’s experience.

Some of the questions will be related to participant’s own experience, some of them related to their company, and some of them related to Kosovo companies in general. If many of the participants describe a similar phenomenon, the information can be considered reliable.

In case the company names might not be mentioned in the study for confidentiality or anonymity reasons, then the secondary data of the companies will be collected in order to contribute to answering the research questions. Secondary data might have been collected by other researchers, perhaps in the process of academic studies, or by institutions whose job is to collect data. (Greener, 2008, p.73)

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

When using interviews as a research method, there will be a need to transcribe the recording of that interview before analysis (Corbetta, 2003, p.83). In this research, literal transcription will be used as the basis for analyzing the results of the interviews. Bryman, A. and E. Bell (2003) present three phases of data analysis including descriptive analysis, categorization, and linking the results together. Therefore, in this study data will be described taking contextual factors into account. This phase helps the researcher understand the phenomenon. Next phase will cover development of themes, categories and ideas from

the literature which may then be used to offer a hypothesis for testing in the data – deductive approach or from the data itself – inductive approach. Finally, the data results will be combined together in order to check how the data meanings fit the categories or themes. The goal of the final phase is to view the situation from different perspectives in order to examine the situation using theoretical models.

When analyzing results of a questionnaire, it will be analyzed how different answers are linked to one another within or between groups of participants.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis can support each other in a qualitative research. For example, tables and figures can be used to present data findings in a simple form in qualitative research. In this study, most significant findings of the questionnaire will be presented with figures, as the figures illustrate the importance and frequency of the specific themes discussed.

5. FINDINGS

Here are some of the findings expected from this study:

- ❖ Business people in Kosovo with English language skills seem to have better chances for expanding their business overseas, and can have wider career choices.
- ❖ Using English can make business communication easier.
- ❖ It can be expected that by supporting communication in English, not only can the company choose the right language policy, but it can offer its employees opportunities to use and practice English language skills.
- ❖ Communicating in English and cooperating with international corporations brings new values in the field of economy and business in Kosovo.

REFERENCE LIST

1. Ammon, U. (2006) Language conflicts in the European union: On finding a politically acceptable and practicable solution for EU institutions that satisfied diverging interests. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 16: 319–38.
2. Briscoe, J., Hall, D. and Frautschy DeMuth, R. (2006). Protean and boundaryless career: An empirical exploration. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 69, 30-47.
3. Bryman, A. and E. Bell (2003) *Business Research Methods* Oxford, Oxford University Press, p.302
4. Carla Power, "Not the Queen's English," *Newsweek* (7 March 2005).
5. Corbetta, P. 2003, "Social Research, Theory, Methods and Techniques" SAGE Publications London • Thousand Oaks • New Delhi, p.270
6. Charles, M. (2007). Language matters in global communication. *Journal of Business Communication* 44(3), 260–282.
7. Daymon, C. & Holloway, I. (2011). *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications* (2nd edition). Oxford: Routledge.
8. Enderwick, P. and Akoorie, M.E.M. (1994). Pilot Study Research Note. The employment of foreign language specialists and export success. The case of New Zealand, *International Marketing Review*, 11(4): 4.
9. Foddy, W. (1995). *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires. Theory and Practice in Social Research* (3rd edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
10. Greener Sue, (2008) *Business Research Methods*, Ventus Publishing ApS ISBN p.73)
11. Gunz H., and Peiperl M. (2007). *Handbook of Career Studies*. Sage publications, Inc.
12. Harzing, A. & Pudelko, M. (2013). Language competencies, policies and practices in multinational corporations: A comprehensive review and comparison of Anglophone, Asian, Continental European and Nordic MNCs. *Journal of World Business* 48(1), 87–97.
13. Igor Riznar, 'The Learning Brain' Article · January 2011, 07/07/16 Retrieved from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304988906>
14. Jones, T. O. (2005). Managerial Attitudes to Work, Employment & Career. *Edamba journal:3rd thesis competition 2005 summaries /editor Soumitra Sharma*, pp. 94- 104
15. Knapp, K. and C. Meierkord (2002) (eds) *Lingua Franca Communication*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang
16. Littleton, S.B., Arthur, M.B. and Rousseau, D.M. (2000). The future of boundaryless careers. In: Collin, A. & Young, R.A. (eds.). *The Future of Career*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
17. Sullivan S., and Baruch, Y. (2009), *Advances in Career Theory and Research: A Critical Review and Agenda for Future Exploration*, *Journal of Management*, pp.1542-1571
17. Mair, C. (2003) *The Politics of English as a World Language*. Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi.
18. Marschan-Piekkari, R., Welch, D. & Welch, L. (1999b). Adopting a common corporate language: IHRM implications. *International Journal of Human*
19. Maurais J. and Morris, M.A. (2003). Introduction. In Maurais J. (ed.) *Languages in a globalizing world*. West Nyack, NY, Cambridge University Press. pp1-13. *Resource Management* 10(3), 377–390.
20. Neeley, T. (2012). Global business speaks English. *Harvard business review* 90(5), 116–124.
21. Pandey, 2014:20-24, Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264788119_Better_English_for_Better_Employment_pportunities
22. Rawland B, 2005 "Grounded in Practice: Using Interpretive Research to Build Theory" *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methodology* 3 (1): 81-92.
23. Rogerson-Revell, P. (2007) Using English for international business: A European case study. *English for Specific Purposes*, 26: 103–20.
24. Samar (2014) "The importance of English in modern business" published December 7, 2014, pp.27. Retrieved from: <https://www.slideshare.net/sheryarali90/the-importance-of-english>
25. Sheryarali (2014) "The importance of English in modern business" published December 7, 2014, pp.32. Retrieved from: <https://www.slideshare.net/sheryarali90/the-importance-of-english>
26. Scott W. VanderStoep, Deirdre D. Johnston (2009) *Research methods for everyday life: blending qualitative and quantitative approaches/ Copyright © 2009*

27. Swift J.S. (1991) Foreign language ability and international marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 25(12):36-49.
28. 'The World Bank' Press release, October 31, 2017, "Doing Business 2018: Kosovo among ten top reformers in the world" www.doingbusiness.org
29. The Economist, "World Empire;" and Deepak Lal, "Does Modernization Require Westernization?," *The Independent Review* 5 (2000):3)
30. Turnbull P.W and Welham G.F. (1985). The characteristics of European export marketing staff. *European Journal of Marketing*, 19(2):31-41.
31. Vaara E., Tienari J., Piekkari R. and Sääntti R. (2005). Language and the circuits of power in a merging multinational corporation. *Journal of Management Studies* 42 (3) 595- 623
32. Van der Born, F. and Peltokorpi, V. (2010). Language policies and communication in multinational companies. *Communication journal of business*, 47(2), 97-118.
33. Volume 22 The Macalester/Maastricht Essays, Winter 2009 'The Rise of English', by Anne Johnson Macalester College. Pang, Zhou, Fu, p. 203. 25 November 2007, Guo and Huang, p. 218.
34. Volume 22 The Macalester/Maastricht Essays, Winter 2009 'The Rise of English', by Anne Johnson Macalester College. Short et al. 2001, p. 3.