

The Role of Business English in Higher Education: Enhancing Global Communication and Employability

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Abstract

This study focuses on the critical role of Business English courses in higher education. It emphasizes their effectiveness in developing students' communication skills in global and multilingual business settings. Owing to globalization, English has become the dominant language in business and academia. This has made Business English essential for both professional and educational purposes. The study sheds light on the importance of developing and improving business communication skills, including intercultural competence in diverse, multilingual settings, such as writing reports, memos, proposals, and emails. In addition, it suggests effective teaching strategies, including active learning approaches like role-playing, case studies, and group discussions with an integration of digital tools. Accordingly, it focuses on technical language skills and intercultural awareness in the context of global business and recommends curriculum improvements that align with the needs of the industry and foster practical communication skills, teamwork, and lifelong learning. It also suggests that mastering Business English in this way will improve students' academic success and employability in competitive global markets.

Keywords: Business English, Higher Education, Global Communication, Business Communication Skills, Curriculum Development

1. Introduction

English is the medium of instruction in higher education at many universities. Since colonial times, English has become a global language used for economic and social development, and it “greatly reduces the costs of conducting transactions and communications across national borders” (Etzioni, 2008, p. 155). As globalization continues to reshape industries and education, proficiency in English is a crucial skill for students entering professional careers (Charles, 2007).

Business English is widely recognized as the official language of communication in multinational corporations and universities (McKay, 2002). While debates persist over linguistic dominance, English remains the most commonly used language for international business, education, and commerce (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006). Mastery of Business English enables students to engage effectively in professional interactions, equipping them with the skills to navigate diverse and multilingual work environments.

Business English courses aim to enhance students' ability to communicate in order to achieve academic and professional success. These courses focus on essential business writing skills, such as drafting reports, emails, memos, and proposals, while also fostering intercultural competence. Effective communication in English improves employability and enables students to thrive in global business settings (Smith-Worthington & Jefferson, 2018). Therefore, integrating Business English into higher education curricula is necessary to equip students with the technical and linguistic competencies required for success in today's interconnected professional world.

2. Literature Review

This section analyzes the relevant literature and the role of English in international business. By integrating insights from previous research, the review provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding both the teaching strategies and the real-world applications of Business English education. It also highlights the dynamic nature of business communication and the need to prepare students with the linguistic and cultural skills necessary to function effectively in diverse professional environments.

2.1 English as an International Language for Business Communication

Business communication is conducted in English in many countries, making it an international language. It has acquired a global status, with a special role developed and known in every country (Crystal, 2003). As a result, English is used globally (Seidlhofer, 2004). In addition, those who use English as a medium of communication far outnumber its native speakers (Canagarajah, 2007). In those countries where it is used for educational and commercial communication, English is essential. It is dominant as a medium for international business communication.

Three features set English apart as an international language: its use in many parts of the world, the diversity of its speakers' cultures, and the various fields in which it is employed (Dewey, 2007). The main factors that explain its current status as an international language are the advances in technology and industry (Crystal, 2003).

Nickerson (2005) states that English is an essential component for communicating in multinational situations. Kankaanranta and Planken, (2010) argue that the local languages of many multinational companies have officially been replaced with English. Ellis and Johnson (2010) also indicate that meetings are conducted in English, even though it might be a foreign language to all those in attendance. Therefore, as discussed below, Intercultural communication should be given due consideration when developing or delivering Business English courses.

2.2 Intercultural Communication in Business English

Piller (2007) argues that because English is considered the lingua franca for business communication, intercultural communication should be investigated and emphasized. Moreover, through teaching and learning Business English, the language takes on new cultural significance (Risager, 2006). She maintains that every new communicative event creates a link between language and culture. Therefore, language and culture(s) are inseparable in Business English communication. Chaney and Martin (2011) also indicate that language is a representation of people's culture and values.

Cheney et al. (2004) explain that the increasing number of businesses around the world has created a need to understand the role of English in intercultural communications. Charles (2007) states that "only language can enable students and companies to communicate" (p. 261), and this makes it necessary to investigate the development of the language in the context of the linguistic and social diversity of organizations, in order to grasp how it affects public relations (Ihlen & Van Ruler, 2009).

The cultural diversity in business settings can create obstacles, such as a lack of language skills, communication skills, and social communication skills, all of which make the development of intercultural communication skills essential (Kikoski, 1999). Ferraro (1990) indicates that a failure to work in multicultural settings often stems from an inability to understand other cultures and adapt to them. Therefore, there is a need to help students acquire multicultural and multilingual communicative competencies in Business English courses because there is usually a lack of awareness of linguistic and cultural differences (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999; Holden, 2002). In other words, students should be able to use their language skills in multicultural settings, at university and in their future workplace (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012).

In order for students to achieve success, both in their studies and their future careers, they need to develop competencies in intercultural communication. Business English courses should help students understand and adapt to cultural differences, so as to communicate effectively, and to avoid any misunderstandings and miscommunication. Emphasizing the relationship between language and culture in any Business English course can help students improve their multicultural and multilingual competencies.

2.3 Why Teaching Business English Courses Matters

Teaching Business English courses is crucial because it can focus on how people communicate effectively in commercial organizations and complete their tasks (Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2007). Koester (2010) states that language plays an important role in successful and effective communication, so there is a need to understand how lexical items and language structures are intertwined with a specific context.

People use English for effective communication in multicultural settings (Baker, 2015; Cogo & Dewey, 2006). This type of communication is different from what happens when native speakers communicate inside their communities (Seidlhofer, 2011). As a result, a focus on the language and culture of native speakers may not be suitable for communication in multilingual settings (Galloway & Rose, 2014). Moreover, consideration should be given to the purpose of the interaction, the business context, and the target learners when developing courses (Frendo, 2005). Such courses must furnish students with the language skills and knowledge of technical communication necessary to communicate effectively in professional, multicultural, and multilingual settings.

Teaching a course in Business English matters because it is crucial for the success of students at university and in their future workplace. Students' competencies are developed through Business English courses, particularly in multicultural and multilingual settings. It is important to consider the specific context of both the learners and the business when developing a course in order to maximize its effectiveness.

2.4 The Content of Business English Communication Courses

Brumberger and Lauer (2020) argue that technical communication programs should concentrate on problem-solving for various purposes and delivery modes rather than relying on traditional approaches. It is necessary to make decisions and take action in organizations, and Smith-Worthington and Jefferson (2018) point out that both these depend on effective communication. They add that, because most business communications are done through a variety of channels – such as emails, text messages, reports, letters, and memos – written communication is essential in the workplace, allowing readers to communicate and record information for future use. To avoid being overwhelmed by information from social, visual and printed media, people should be able to read, understand, and evaluate the content. Only then can they react rapidly and effectively. In this way, companies can compete by making critical decisions. The table below shows the key components of business communication and examples of their uses.

Table 1. Business Communication Components

Component	Uses
Memos	Internal communication, quick updates
Reports	Providing research findings, market analysis
Letters	Formal external communication, requests, introductions
Emails	Professional correspondence, concise and clear communication
Text Messages	Quick, informal communication inside and outside organizations
Proposals	Persuasive documents for business solutions
Presentations	Oral business communication, pitching ideas
Technical Descriptions	Detailed explanations of business-related materials

Table 1 shows the various forms of written technical communication which are emphasized in Business English courses, based on the researchers' experience and related literature (e.g., Smith-Worthington & Jefferson, 2018; Johnson-Sheehan, 2015). It is useful to discuss these technical communication components in Business English courses:

- **Memos:** These are internal technical documents used inside an organization for effective communication (Smith-Worthington & Jefferson, 2018). Usually brief, they are used by organizations for internal communication and serve as a quick method of sharing information or updates.
- **Reports:** These are technical documents that are used by students or employees to provide key information about their work (Smith-Worthington & Jefferson, 2018). Reports provide findings or information clearly and effectively. They are used for communicating business plans, results of research, or market analysis.
- **Letters:** These are an extension of the organization and are used for external communication (Smith-Worthington & Jefferson, 2018) to request information, make an introduction, or express gratitude. Well-written letters can present a positive image of the organization that the student or employee represents.
- **Text messages:** These are used more and more in Business English communications because they convey information quickly. However, students or employees should consider the expectations of their readers regarding formality. According to Smith-Worthington and Jefferson (2018), text messages can be used for external and internal communications. They should always provide the necessary information. They have become a key channel for many businesses, so they should be used effectively and carefully.
- **Emails:** These are considered an appropriate channel for business communications. They are a suitable medium for both professional and personal correspondence. The recipient(s) may be inside or outside the organization. Smith-Worthington and Jefferson (2018) maintain that those who use emails should only include the necessary information and keep their emails relevant, brief, and clear. Emails are a convenient and swift means of business communication.
- **Proposals:** These are persuasive documents that suggest solutions to need(s) or problem(s). They are designed to sell a product, idea, plan, or service (Smith-Worthington & Jefferson, 2018). They can be an offer of services or goods to a customer. The main purpose of proposals is to persuade the reader(s) to accept the solution offered or invest in an idea.
- **Presentations:** Professional success can be determined by a good oral report, especially when presenting proposals to the management of organizations or introducing new products or ideas. Smith-Worthington and Jefferson (2018) maintain that the audience can be internal or external, and that presentations need to be carefully prepared and rehearsed using various tools. In other words, presentations are used to convey ideas or information to various audiences. They may be used to present research findings, introduce a new product, or persuade readers to support a specific proposal or idea.
- **Technical Descriptions:** These are detailed explanations of products, patents, specifications, observations, places, or processes. They feature in most technical documents in business settings, such as reports, user manuals, marketing literature, proposals, business articles, and/or presentations (Johnson-Sheehan, 2015). Manufacturers, engineers, medical personnel, and business owners in production cycles use technical descriptions to describe their products for patents, quality control, and sales.

2.5 Grammar and Lexical Items

Business English courses should also cover the necessary lexical items or terms used, explicitly and/or implicitly, in business activities. Linguistic devices such as word choice, phrases, and grammatical features should be considered together with the context as they are closely interconnected, and each performs a specific communicative function at a textual level (Erkir & Alkhaldi, 2025; Biber et al., 2007). Therefore, linguistic features should be taken into consideration in designing Business English courses. Thornbury and Slade (2006) also indicate that teaching linguistic features in Business English courses is highly desirable. Moreover, students need to know how texts are written and organized in relation to their audience and the message they wish to convey (Macken-Horarik, 2002). In other words, grammar and lexical items need to be highlighted in Business English courses to facilitate clear and prompt understanding, decision-making, and action.

3. Method

A systematic approach to analyzing qualitative data from the relevant literature and case studies was used to identify the ideal method of teaching Business English and provide insights and recommendations for enhancing Business English education. In other words, this study incorporated the following techniques:

- Literature Review: The researchers analyzed the relevant literature thoroughly to explore the best teaching practices and the challenges in the field of Business English, as analyzed throughout the study.
- Case Studies in Business English: The study analyzed several case studies of Business English education.
- Researchers' experience: The researchers have long experience in teaching and developing Business English materials in Turkey and Jordan. Their insights shed light on Business English courses and effective teaching strategies.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the critical analysis and discussion. It highlights some important strategies that contribute to enhancing students' technical communication skills based on the researchers' experiences, critical analysis of the literature, and case studies from Jordan and Turkey.

4.1 Case Study Findings

The researchers of this study analyzed qualitative data from several related case studies, and the emerging themes based on their critical analysis and teaching experience in Turkey and Jordan are discussed below:

4.1.1 Digital Tools in Business English Learning

Al-Tamimi et al. (2018) conducted a study to investigate the impact of social media on Business English teaching in Jordan. The findings of the study revealed that the participants achieved some improvements in technical writing and communication skills, especially those who were active on social media, such as Facebook. The researchers recommended that instructors and material writers encourage the use of social media and digital tools to enhance students' learning, collaboration, and adaptability to business situations.

4.1.2 Role-Playing and Business Simulations

Sari and Havwini (2022) conducted a study in Turkey and concluded that role-playing activities can significantly enhance students' competencies in Business English courses. The participants developed their confidence and business communication skills through simulations, such as presentations, meetings, negotiations, etc. These experiential activities and tasks proved invaluable in Business English education, since they helped bridge the gap between theory and practice.

4.1.3 Project-Based Learning and Industry Relevance

McCrigger and Rippens (2016) conducted a study and investigated the impact of learning projects on the development of Business English skills. They found that projects can improve students' learning process, especially technical writing, teamwork, and critical thinking. Their findings showed that students developed business communication skills effectively in this way.

4.1.4 Intercultural Competence in Business English Education

Chaney and Martin (2011) conducted a study investigating the role of intercultural training in business communication education. They found that the participants improved their intercultural competencies when they received training related to cultural awareness. Moreover, the researchers suggested that incorporating intercultural training into Business English programs equipped students to navigate multicultural business environments effectively (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2).

4.2 Findings of the Critical Analysis of the Literature

Brumberger and Lauer (2020) argue that "Instructors who engage students with appropriate readings and strategies that are parallel to technical communication duties help students' flexibility and awareness in multiple, professional contexts" (p. 332). Students need to be well-taught and trained for current academic purposes and for future employment. Allen and Benninghoff (2004) identified the standards that instructors should adhere to when addressing the professional changes in business communication: "(1) critique the design, uses, and effects of technologies as you also teach their uses, and (2) help our students develop a professional identity and recognize the theoretical expertise they bring to the workplace" (p. 180).

Hovde and Renguet (2017) have suggested "a four-level framework that can guide instruction for technical communication educators: functional, conceptual, evaluative, and critical" (p. 397). They maintain that the development of digital literacy is necessary since Business English instructors "teach students how to think about the contexts in which the tools are used, how to use and understand concepts that can be transferred to different contexts, and how to learn new tools quickly" (p. 399). This reveals that the instructors should develop Business English courses and suggest the best teaching practices to allow students to improve their knowledge and skills.

Hewett and Bourelle (2017) state that instructors should provide students with professional support to practice technical communication effectively. They also maintain that the lack of faculty support disappoints instructors, leading to difficulties in teaching, lower expectations among students, and a failure to retain experienced instructors. Furthermore, the transfer of knowledge between instructors and students is

crucial for students' professional success, so instructors who are aware of this fact can develop appropriate strategies and treat learning as a project experienced by both parties.

Moreover, when educational technology is implemented in online classes, professional competency will be developed (Zhoc et al., 2019).

4.2.1 Strategies for Teaching Business English

Teaching Business English is not only about improving language proficiency. It is also about preparing students for real-world professional communication. Effective teaching strategies should help students build confidence, adapt to workplace expectations, and develop cultural awareness. The key approaches for enhancing student learning of business communication have been analyzed thus:

1. Active learning and Learner-Centered approach

The learner-centered approach helps students develop their learning in an interactive environment (e.g., Van de Kuilen et al., 2020). Different techniques can be used, as discussed below, to assist students to practice and develop their business communication purposefully. Such learning activities are not only useful for business communication skills, but also for problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, and teamwork skills.

1.1. Role-playing and business simulations

Role-playing can help students engage in the learning process, improve their technical writing skills, and overcome communication challenges (Wu et al., 2020). This technique can help students improve their technical communication skills. The instructors should assign roles to students to allow them to act out certain business scenarios. This technique is useful for teaching students the dynamics of technical communication and helps them use their English concisely and clearly. Moreover, Sari and Havwini's study (2022) revealed that role-playing can develop students' fluency and interactive learning.

1.2. Case Studies in Business Communication: These provide real technical communication practice and help students to identify communication problems (Williams & Strother, 2004). Case studies allow students to analyze and apply their skills to real-life situations. The instructors should include business case studies in their courses and ask their students to analyze them, apply their skills and knowledge, and provide their conclusions and suggestions.

1.3 Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning helps students gain real practice for the purpose of lifelong learning. They may involve theoretical studies, experimental projects, or real-world problems (McCrigger & Rippens, 2016). This approach also aligns with industry expectations and enhances learning outcomes. Students can learn better by working on projects individually and/or in groups. Projects can help students use their Business English communication skills properly. Having projects as part of the Business English courses helps students develop their confidence and business communication skills.

2. Developing Intercultural Competence

The textbooks on business writing do not meet the intercultural communication needs of all students (Yu, 2011). Therefore, preparing materials for intercultural communication can provide students with practical experience in an intercultural setting for future employment purposes. The instructors should incorporate related cultural activities into Business English courses, which is very helpful for effective business communication in multilingual and multicultural settings. As a result, students will be able to improve their intercultural business communication skills.

3. Interactive Group Discussions

Interactive group discussions can improve the learning environment, develop students' confidence, and improve their business writing skills (Rister & Bourdeau, 2021). Group discussions are useful since they give students an opportunity to discuss and share their ideas in real-life situations. The instructors should provide them with tasks and get them to discuss these tasks in groups. The students will be able to recognize and practice the skills and business concepts they have learnt. Moreover, this technique is useful to help students improve their critical thinking and technical communication skills because they have to analyze, evaluate, and present the tasks, and include different students' views.

4. Incorporating Technological Tools

Digital and technological tools can improve students' technical writing skills by providing explicit instruction in a systematic way based on technical writing strategies and stages (Alorani, et al., 2025; Collins & Warschauer, 2019). Incorporating technology into Business English courses is important in developing students' business communication skills in this rapidly-changing technological world. Technological tools, such as language learning apps and online collaboration tools, help students enhance their learning experiences, and they should take full advantage of these tools, as new communication and media technologies are changing businesses at a remarkable rate.

5. Collaboration and Teamwork in Business Communication

Integrating teamwork into business writing enhances students' business writing skills and prepares them for future career environments (Wu et al., 2022). Students can work together in large or small teams and develop their teamwork skills. Encouraging teamwork in the

teaching of business communication can help students develop their confidence and improve their collaboration, problem-solving, and technical communication skills in an interactive environment.

6. Self-reflection

Instructors and students can utilize self-reflection because they will be engaged in the education process (Cole et al., 2022). The instructors should motivate their students to reflect on their performance and learning experiences in the classroom. This technique helps students improve their critical thinking and communication skills, such as self-evaluation of their activities or presentations.

4.2.2 Innovative Contributions to Business English Education

This study makes several contributions to the field of Business English education, offering insights and practical advancements that align with the evolving demands of global business communication. The table below summarizes the innovative contributions:

Table 2. The innovative contributions

Contribution	Insights	Implications
1- Integration of Digital Tools	Utilizes social media and online collaboration platforms to enhance business communication and technical writing skills.	Aligns Business English instruction with modern digital communication practices.
2- Intercultural Competence Development	Emphasizes cultural awareness as a fundamental skill in global business communication.	Helps students navigate diverse workplaces and minimize miscommunication.
3- Enhancing Learning through Business Simulations	Encourages role-playing, business simulations, and case studies to bridge theoretical learning and practical application.	Develops students' confidence and real-world communication skills.
4- Project-Based Learning and Industry Relevance	Uses real-world business projects to enhance teamwork, technical writing, and problem-solving abilities.	Strengthens connections between academia and industry by integrating practical experience.
5- Comprehensive Business Communication Framework	Establishes a structured approach to teaching business writing skills, including memos, reports, and presentations.	Provides instructors with clear guidelines for developing Business English curricula.

Table 2 provides a summary of the key contributions and insights of this study of the Business English education process to help students achieve academic success and gain future employment. These contributions are:

1. Integrating Digital Tools for Business English Learning

Technology has a significant role in business communication, so it should be integrated into Business English education (e.g., Al-Tamimi et al., 2018). In other words, there is a need to prepare students for technology-interactive environments. Technological tools can help students engage in learning and develop their Business English skills.

2. Advancing Intercultural Competence in Business English

The aim of learning Business English is not only to improve English skills, but also to raise awareness about intercultural communication and its usefulness. Some studies provide insights regarding language and culture and how they are connected in order to enhance successful business communication (e.g., Chaney & Martin, 2011; Risager, 2006). The integration of culture and language in Business English courses helps students improve the skills needed for future business interactions.

3. Enhancing Learning Through Business Simulations

This study suggests using the learner-centered approach – such as projects, business simulations, and case studies – to enhance students' learning and interactions. Business simulations help students to develop their language, critical thinking, and teamwork skills. Simulations are important for increasing students' confidence and engagement.

4. Project-Based Learning and Industry Relevance

Project-based learning is practical and useful for Business English education since it helps students improve their business writing, teamwork, and communication skills (e.g., McCrigler & Rippens, 2016). Students engage in learning through business projects, and they are equipped with practical experience for future employment purposes.

5. A Structured Framework for Business Communication Skills

This research provides a structured framework for Business English education. This involves key elements of the technical documents, such as reports, emails, proposals, etc. It also provides recommendations for developing and teaching Business English courses in higher education.

To sum up, students acquire Business English skills best when the learning is purposeful and meaningful, and when they are actively engaged and aware of their learning. In this way, they have opportunities to apply their knowledge and understanding to authentic tasks

and feel more productive. They can evaluate their learning and act on constructive feedback. Therefore, they will be aware of employers' expectations and develop the broader skill set required by employers (Bransford et al., 2000; Crebert et al., 2004; Merriam, 2001).

The suggested teaching methods can help students improve their technical communication skills in Business English courses. Using a combination of the suggested methods will lead to success. As a result, students will be well-prepared for personal and professional business communications in multicultural settings.

5. Conclusion

Mastering Business English is crucial for success in this globalized economic world. Effective Business English courses can help students to communicate in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Such courses enable students to master the language skills needed and increase their knowledge of the kind of technical communication practiced in the classroom as well as in the workplace.

Based on the findings of this study, the authors suggest some useful strategies to teach Business English courses in higher education, with a focus on developing business communication skills and the language skills needed for multilingual and multicultural business communication in today's rapidly expanding world economy. The following teaching methods are very useful for Business English courses: interactive learning, role-playing, simulations, group discussions, business projects, teamwork, and self-reflection. Such teaching techniques will give students an opportunity to apply language and technical communication skills, and improve their intercultural communications in real-life situations. As a result, students will become engaged in developing their technical communication skills and technical knowledge for lifelong learning.

5.1 Recommendations

Instructors and researchers should consider the following recommendations to improve Business English education in higher education:

1. **Business Materials Development:** Instructors and researchers are advised to evaluate and develop Business English courses based on the universities' requirements and workplace needs, including different types of technical documents.
2. **Intercultural Competence:** Instructors and researchers should take intercultural competencies into account when they develop Business English courses.
3. **Active Learning Approaches:** Instructors should use active learning approaches. Real-life experiences based on the learner-centered approach – such as projects, role-play, and simulations – can help students to engage in business communication and achieve effective learning.
4. **Technology Integration:** Students' technical writing skills can be improved by the incorporation of digital communication tools into these courses. These tools provide practical experience in using authentic material in business and make the students more proficient in their future employment endeavors.
5. **Focus on Teamwork and Collaboration:** Students' teamwork and group communication skills can be improved by encouraging teamwork and collaborative projects. This allows them to practice working in teams and to develop problem-solving and communication skills.

5.1.1 Implications

With the implementation of these recommendations, students will be able to handle the challenges of global business settings. They will be more competent in the intercultural communications and digital tools of the modern world, and equipped with the capacity to engage in global business interactions. With these diverse skills, they will become effective candidates in the technology-heavy, multilingual, and multicultural job market. In business-related academic disciplines, they will perform better and miscommunicate less. They will be able to express themselves more clearly and improve their academic performance. Project-based assignments, intertwined with self-reflection and active learning, foster lifelong learning habits. This leads to more self-awareness, speedier adaptation to new situations, and the mastery of essential business communication skills. All in all, the recommendations – and the implications mentioned above – emphasize that an effective integration of business communication skills into higher education courses can improve student success in a competitive business world.

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Authors' contributions

Dr. Sarp Erkir was responsible for the study design and discussion. Dr. Ulas Kayapinar was responsible for data collection and literature review. Dr. Ali Ata Alkhaldi was responsible for data analysis and drafting the manuscript.

All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and have contributed equally to this study.

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