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The Impact of English Language on Business Communication in Asia: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT

In the current global era, English is becoming increasingly essential not only as a global language but as a business language in native and non-native English-speaking countries. Hence, English language proficiency is mostly required and recognized amongst countries in the Asian continent. Thus, this paper examines the importance of the English language, the creative ways utilised when teaching the English language and the requirements of English language skills among business workers and students. Hence, the primary goal of this scoping review is to uncover previous research on the impact of the English language on business communication in Asia. This scoping review was reported according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines. Five databases, namely Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Semantic Scholar, ScienceDirect, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and SAGE Journals, were used for data scoping. A total of 10 studies were identified to be eligible for review after screening using the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Keywords: English Language, Business English, Business Communication, Language skills

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The major mode of communication is language. There are several forms of communication (Ne'matullah *et al.*, 2021a). Members of different language communities have had a need to communicate throughout human historical, social, and economic history, and different languages have come into touch with each other owing to the movement of people and information. Furthermore, due to changing communication, politics, and globalisation, linguistic processes are particularly reinforced in business communication. Economic, commercial, political, technological development and profitability are the primary motivators in corporate communication.

Therefore, the critical relevance of understanding for any business achievement is now widely acknowledged. According to experts, countries lose a large number of incomes each year due to language miscommunication between representatives of various organizations. As a result, it is evident that efficient communication with foreign clients is crucial for a competent worldwide company (Arnold, 2000). Corporate executives believe that improving employees' knowledge of foreign languages will considerably benefit the business. It is often highlighted that the English language is unquestionably necessary for modern global marketplaces.

In addition, several research studies undertaken in many countries have found that English improves work efficiency and enhances chances of advancement. A study by Miina (2014) shows that limited

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English language abilities decrease the flow of successful communication, cause misperception, irritation, and build obstacles for workers. For instance, the English language is used most often in the business world, and proficiency in the English language is now one of the most essential skills required.

Hence, this review emphasizes the relevance of the English language, and the dynamic of approaches that can be used when educating the English language and identifies the need for English language skills among workers and students in the business world both in English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context. Hence, the main aim of this scoping review is to identify past research on the impact of the English language on business communication in Asian.

2.0 METHODS

This scoping review was reported according to Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews (PRISMA) guidelines (Ne'matullah *et al*., 2022; Zaid *et al*., 2022). The present scoping review was carried out based on Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) methodological framework: (1) identifying research questions; (2) identifying relevant studies; (3) selecting relevant studies; (4) charting the data; (5) collating, summarizing and reporting the results. Figure 1 shows the steps in Arksey and O'Malley's methodological framework which is discussed in the following subsections.
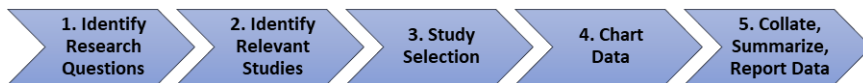

Figure 1 Methodological Framework (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005)

2.1 Identifying the Research Questions

Eventhough there are studies on the the impact of English language on business communication, little has been researched on the influence of the English language used by workers and students in the corporate sector, specifically in Asia. Hence, the scoping review will be guided by the following research question, 'What is factually established from the published studies about the impact of the English language on Business Communication?'. Table 1 shows the fundamental research questions created on the basis of the research objectives on the Population-Concept-Context (PCC) framework.

Table 1 Research questions were formed based on PCC

Research questions	Specific objectives
1. How is the distribution of English users in the Business field?	1. To explore the distribution of the research conducted within the last 5 years
2. What is the research design used by the past studies on English for Business communication?	2. To determine the research method used from past studies
3. What are the purposes of past studies on English for Business communication?	3. To analyse the reasons for studies on English for Business communication
4. What are the elements of the study found in past research on English for Business communication?	4. To investigate the elements or factors found from past studies
5. What are the findings of past studies on English for Business communication?	5. To report results of past studies on English for Business communication

2.2 Identifying Relevant Studies

The search strategy was designed to cover all relevant studies as widely as possible. This entailed using relevant keywords (refer to Table 2) concerning the impact of the English language on business communication.

Table 2 Search String

Search Directory	Search String
ERIC & Semantic Scholar	(impact OR influence OR effect OR results OR consequence) AND (English OR Language) AND (business OR corporate OR commerce) AND (communication OR conversation)
ScienceDirect	'impact OR effect' AND 'English OR Language' AND 'business OR corporate OR commerce' AND 'communication '
DOAJ	The Impact of English on Business Communication
SAGE Journals	(impact OR influence OR effect) AND ("English language") AND (business OR corporate) AND (communication)

2.3 Study Selection

The study selection criteria are provided in Table 3. A title and abstract screening were conducted based on the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Table 3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criterion

Inclusion criterion	Exclusion criterion
1. Articles published from 2018-2022	1. Articles published before 2018
2. Related to Business Communication or Corporate Communication	2. Not related to Business Communication or Corporate Communication
3. English or Business English	3. Other languages
4. Full text	4. Without the full text
5. Asia only	5. Other continents

2.4 Charting the Data

The elements of the articles to be extracted was decided with the purpose of identifying the differences and similarities of the selected articles based on the topic. The completed data charting structure was designed to retrieve the following study elements: author, year of publication, country of origin, source of the study, the purpose of the study, research design, elements of the study, and findings.

2.5 Collating, Summarizing, and Reporting the Results

The authors summarized and reported the findings that could be identified through the charting process. Then, the author organized the findings by applying codes and keywords to minimize and narrow down all the data into close related content. After that, the authors conducted a revision to the codes and keywords to ensure the data collected are relevant to the study and collated into predefined categories.

3.0 RESULTS

The search identified 212 articles through the five selected databases: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Semantic Scholar, ScienceDirect, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and SAGE Journals (refer to Figure 2). By using the search strings, six titles were found from the ERIC database, 40 titles were found from the Semantic Scholar database, two titles were identified from the ScienceDirect database, 10 titles were identified from DOAJ, and 154 titles were found from the SAGE Journals database. One duplicate was removed from 212 articles, leaving 211 articles that were then screened by title and abstract. At the screening stage, 193 articles were excluded, 18 articles were assessed for eligibility by data extraction from the full text reviewed.

From the 18 articles, eight articles were excluded as they did not meet the research criteria of articles conducted only in Asia. Four articles were removed as there was no specific location being stated. Of the 18 articles, four articles were recorded from the European continent. Four articles conducted in Asian countries were excluded due to other reasons. In addition, another four articles were included through manuals search as there was an insufficient number of articles needed. Hence, ten studies were identified to be included in this review.
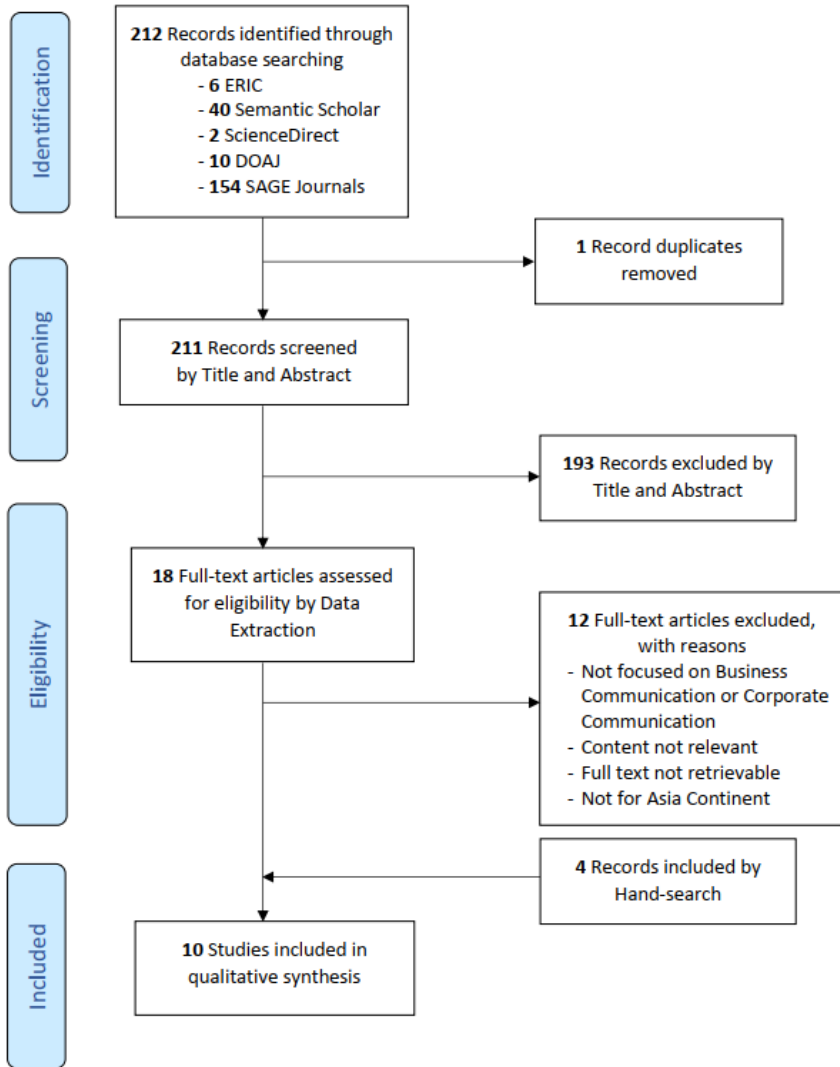
Figure 2 Flow Diagram of the Scoping Review

Table 4 Characteristics of Included Studies

References	Study Design	Topics	Setting	Theoretical Model
Huang & Huang, 2019 Taiwan	Questionnaire Interview	This study examined the learning experience of second and third-year students who studied Business English as an elective course in a project-based simulated business setting at a private institution in Taiwan.	Project-based learning Business English Simulation Technique	The questionnaire responses and interview data suggested that the participants thought the course was more inspiring, participatory, and practical than a standard business course. This simulated business initiative may also give students opportunities for social connection and a psychologically secure team.
Xu, 2020 China	Questionnaire Reflective journals Interviews Pre- and post-study proficiency test	Using action research technique, this study examined the educational process of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) during an English as a foreign language (EFL) listening and speaking program at a Chinese university.	EFL Students' attitudes Mobile-assisted Learning	The findings of two action research cycles demonstrated that following specific changes to the intervention in Cycle 2, students' attitudes regarding MALL listening and speaking skills improved.
Thavabalan *et al.*, 2020 India	Questionnaire	The study examined the demands of BELF in terms of LSRW among printing industry managers in Sivakasi, India's southernmost city.	Need Analysis BELF Printing Industries	According to the study, speaking is more significant than listening, writing, and reading. The study also revealed that BELF is required for Sivakasi's printing businesses for external communication.
Suningsih *et al.*, 2021 Indonesia	Quantitative Descriptive Qualitative Questionnaire	This study examined how English is utilised in the workplace in Indonesia.	ESP Materials Workers' Perceptions	The results showed that majority of the 17 participants thought that reading and speaking skills was most useful in the workplace, while there were 5 participants opt for writing. On the contrary, there were only 5 participants who chose listening skills which shows that listening is rarely applied by the participants.

References	Study Design	Topics	Setting	Theoretical Model
Nawaz *et al*., 2020 China	Online Questionnaire	This study looked at the impacts of English language as a moderator on the feasibility of social media metrics, as well as to experimentally assess electronic client involvement in terms of likes and comments, which indicate devotion and commitment.	Business Market Social Media Marketing Electronic Customer Involvement	The resulting function demonstrates that all variables are not equally acceptable and are greatly diverse in the context of China for increasing electronic consumer participation.
Xie, 2022 China	Survey Teacher's Observation Quantitative & Qualitative data analysis	An investigational study of English-major undergraduates using surveys and teacher participant observation about the use of problem-based methods under an active learning framework in business English teaching, learning goals, and suggestions for the teaching and learning process to nurture professional soft skills.	Problem-based Approach Business English Communication Development Personal Gains in Soft Skills	According to the findings, the problem-based approach should emphasise the development of business English communication skills and the participants favoured tasks involving recruitment and marketing, according to the research.
Xie & Chen, 2019 China	Two-stage Surveys	This study examined MBA business English students' communication and learning needs and their perspectives on good curriculum design.	MBA Students Communication & Learning Needs Curriculum Effectiveness	According to the findings, English is not widely utilised in the workplaces of MBA business English students, and the majority of them speak Chinese. The majority of English is used in overseas enterprises. Oral communication and listening comprehension are determined to be the most difficult skills for MBA business English learners. Nonetheless, there is still a significant need for development in English communication.
Clement & Murugave, 2018 India	Survey	This study determined the value of English in the workplace through a questionnaire of employees from various organisations in India.	English Language Skills English in Workplace Corporate Employees	The findings showed that the importance of English language abilities in the workplace has not altered, and respondents have restated the function of English as an influencing element during interviews and at work.

References	Study Design	Topics	Setting	Theoretical Model
Krishna, 2019 India	Questionnaire	This study aimed to demonstrate that English is currently mostly used at work and for specialised reasons such as emails, business letters, memos, and so on.	Business Communication Business English	The study's findings revealed that English is growing and accepted in several aspects of public life in India in recent years.
Sukkrong *et al.*, 2022 Thailand	Quasi-experimental method	The goals of this study were to: 1. examine the English speaking for communication skills required of business English students; 2. develop and analyze the efficacy of a business English speaking for communication program; and 3. compare and contrast the speaking skills of business English students before and after deployment.	Course development and implementation Survey of Needs for Business English Business English Speaking for Communication Course	The findings revealed that: 1. Students are required to be able to speak about important business topics, speak the correct language functions in business topics, and speak with correct pronunciation and enunciation, use various vocabulary, use correct grammatical structure, and use appropriate gestures; 2. The course was designed using the Backward design theory, the teaching process used the scaffolding technique, and the assessment used the notion of numerous assessments. and 3. According to the results of the post-test scores, the business English students' speaking abilities were statistically and substantially greater than the pre-test scores at the level .05.

3.1   The Distribution of English Users in the Business Field

The studies that were included in this review were published between 2018 and 2022 as in Figure 3.. In 2018, one article (Clement & Murugavel, 2018) examined English language use among corporate employees. In addition, three articles were found from 2019 (Huang & Huang, 2019; Xie & Chen, 2019; Krishna, 2019) and 2020 (Xu, 2020; Nawaz *et al*., 2020; Thavabalan *et al*., 2020), respectively from the five databases. One relevant article (Suningsih *et al*., 2021) published in 2021 was identified, while two

articles (Xie, 2022; Sukkrong *et al*., 2022) were found in 2022 respectively that examined English language in business communication.
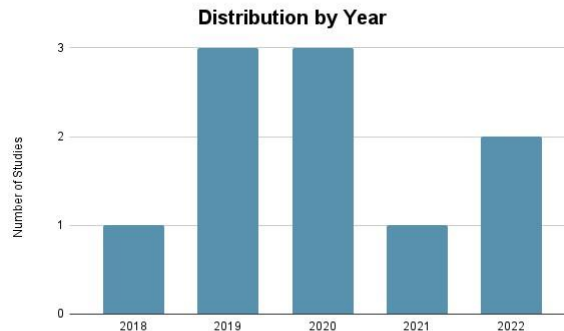
Distribution by Year

Figure 3 Distribution by Year

As for the distribution by country, the highest number of studies were conducted in China with four (n=4) (Xie & Chen, 2019; Xu, 2020; Nawaz *et al*., 2020; Xie, 2022) and India with three (n=3) (Clement & Murugave, 2018; Krishna, 2019; Thavabalan *et al*., 2020), respectively. Meanwhile, three countries, namely Taiwan (Huang & Huang., 2019), Indonesia (Suningsih *et al*., 2021), and Thailand (Sukkrong *et al*., 2022) were recorded with one study each, as shown in Figure 4.
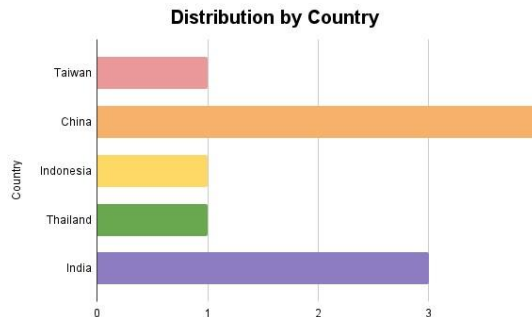
Distribution by Country

Figure 4 Distribution by Country

3.2 The Research Design Used by the Past Studies

From the accumulated 10 studies, six (n=6) studies (Clement & Murugave, 2018; Krishna, 2019; Xie & Chen, 2019; Thavabalan *et al*., 2020; Nawaz *et al*., 2020; Suningsih *et al*., 2021) were quantitative research, followed by two (n=2) (Huang & Huang., 2019; Xu, 2020) studies which employed a qualitative research design. Meanwhile, only one (n=1) study (Sukkrong *et al*., 2022) used quasi-experimental research method and only one (n=1) study (Xie, 2022) utilised a mixed-method research design.

3.3   The Purposes of Past Studies on English for Business Communication

Based on Table 4, there were various reasons for conducting this study. The main purpose can be seen in most of the articles, with seven (n=7) articles (Clement & Murugave, 2018; Krishna, 2019; Xie & Chen, 2019; Nawaz *et al*., 2020; Thavabalan *et al*., 2020; Suningsih *et al*., 2021; Sukkrong *et al*., 2022) mainly focused on the impact and needs of the English language in business communication. Besides that, three (n=3) studies (Huang & Huang., 2019; Xu, 2020; Xie, 2022) were conducted to examine English language learning experiences through various methods such as project-based, mobile-assisted language learning and project-based method.

3.4   The Elements of the Study Found in Past Research

As seen in Table 4, elements of business English were divided into the learning needs or demands of the English language and approaches used in the learning process, which were discussed in past research. A total of seven (n=7) studies (Clement & Murugave, 2018; Krishna, 2019; Xie & Chen, 2019; Nawaz *et al*., 2020; Thavabalan *et al*., 2020; Suningsih *et al*., 2021; Sukkrong *et al*., 2022) involved the learning needs as well as the impact of the English language in the business field. Meanwhile, three (n=3) articles ((Huang & Huang., 2019; Xu, 2020; Xie, 2022) were related to students' experiences and perceptions of the different approaches applied during their learning process.

3.5   The Findings of Past Studies on English for Business Communication

Based on the scoping review conducted, significant findings were identified from the 10 articles reviewed. The first findings were related to students' learning experiences and English language improvement via the different approaches applied which involved three (n=3) studies (Huang & Huang., 2019; Xu, 2020; Xie, 2022). In addition, results from two studies (Xie & Chen, 2019; Sukkrong *et al*., 2022) indicated that speaking skills in English are important for business English learners. Meanwhile, the findings from four (n=4) studies (Clement & Murugave, 2018; Krishna, 2019; Thavabalan *et al*., 2020; Suningsih *et al*., 2021) highlighted the importance of English language skills in the workplace. In particular, speaking skills were stated to be the most used for external communication. Lastly, one (n=1) study (Nawaz *et al*., 2020) indicated the significance and practicality of using English language on social media and when engaging with online customers.

4.0   DISCUSSION

Presently, English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF) (Roshid *et al*., 2018) plays an important role in the business sector in the current global era. People from non-English speaking countries utilise English in their daily business correspondence (Hariharasudan *et al*., 2017). Hence, being proficient and competent in English is essential for many types of occupations in Asia as many businesses are conducted in English. The capacity to articulate and understand ideas clearly is both required for successful business

engagement. Business professionals may come from differing business sectors; however, using the appropriate term at the correct time can enhance communication (Pek *et al*, 2019).

In addition, speaking skills are the most important and essential for both business students and workers (Ne'matullah *et al*., 2021b). The ability to speak good English among workers is essential when dealing with international clients or during external business communication. According to one article (Clement & Murugavel, 2018), because of the globalized marketplace, workers must conduct day-to-day commercial transactions and communicate with executives worldwide. Emails, online chat, and corporate presentations all demand 'above average' language abilities to provide an efficient and straightforward conveyance of information to all parties.

Therefore, it is evident that business English focuses on the language abilities required for standard business communication such as presentations, negotiations, meetings, report writing, and many more areas. English language training could be provided to both students taking business courses and trainees entering the employment market. It should be noted that it is necessary that effective teaching or learning method are used in order for both business students and employees to achieve the goals of every organization in the corporate field.

5.0   CONCLUSION

This scoping review was done to identify and understand the impact of English language skills on business communication for both students and workers within the ESP context. This scoping review helps to recognize that utilising English language leads to the enhancement of business communication and to identify the skills most required for obtaining a job in the business industry. In conclusion, there were limited studies on the need for the English language in the business field in the Asian context, which may widen the scope and opportunity for future research on this topic.

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