



The role of English proficiency in a global organisation

To compete in the modern business space, many organisations are shifting to a more global way of working.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital transformation and globalisation across industries but, as many businesses look now to sustaining future growth, the question is: what powers a successful, global organisation?



According to Pearson's 2022 Power Skills Survey, one of the biggest factors in effective workplace globalisation is the use of English as a common language.

The report states **"adopting common language and ensuring that the entire workforce can access it has become more important than ever before."**

It points to statistics from rising economies in Southeast Asia, showcasing the strength of English use and their respective booming industries:

- ▶ In Indonesia, Southeast Asia's largest economy in terms of GDP, the service sector employs nearly half of the country's local workforce.
- ▶ In Thailand, nearly **60%** of the country's GDP is generated by tourism and export-oriented production.
- ▶ Vietnam, one of APAC's fastest growing markets and a rising manufacturing powerhouse, counts the US among its top trading partners.
- ▶ The Philippines' business process outsourcing (BPO) sector, a key pillar of the country's economy, employs **1.3 million** people.⁽¹⁾

Pearson's 2022 Power Skills Survey is a drop in the ocean of reports hailing effective communication as one of the top factors to both personal and business success.

Good communicators have been linked to higher performance in school, at work, and in their personal lives.⁽²⁾ It is no surprise then that good communicators are highly sought after by talent recruiters.

With many businesses moving to hiring outside of traditional location boundaries, more languages are inevitable in the workplace. So, can good communication transcend language barriers?

As the statistics gathered by the Power Skills Survey show, there is evidence that sharing one common language, and therefore enabling more effective communication, can improve business opportunities, workforce growth, and ultimately the economy.

In the survey report, Norlida Azmi, Group Chief People Officer at Axiata, said:



Communication is a critical skill that sets the foundation for not only leadership competencies, such as people management and coalition building but also for wider and effective stakeholder management in the ecosystem – communicating with our shareholders, customers and the communities that we operate in.



– Norlida Azmi
Group Chief People Officer at Axiata

While communication for globalisation can look different for different markets, the English language is recognised as the prevailing choice for multinational companies. The Harvard Business Review says,



The need to tightly coordinate tasks and work with customers and partners worldwide has accelerated the move toward English as the official language of business. ⁽³⁾



– The Harvard Business Review

So, with businesses now fighting to grow in a global marketplace, unlocking the power of the English language may be the key to success.

The survey shows that many organisations have work to do in this area, even if they view strong English proficiency as extremely important to their roles. It details the current state of assessing candidates' English language proficiency and the percentage of organisations which have strategies in place to upskill their employees English. Both leave room for improvement.

According to the survey, the number one way talent acquisition managers test English language skills is at the interview (**58%**), if they test English skills at all (**37%**). This can be problematic later down the line, as not all four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening), will be accurately represented in an interview. Candidates may convince the interviewer that they have language skills capable of fulfilling the role, and later struggle to do so.

Meanwhile **27%** of businesses use computer-based tests and **14%** use paper-based tests to assess English language proficiency. By getting standardized test results, talent managers can more accurately assess if candidates' English proficiency is suitable for the role, making for more confident and successful hires.

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Talent managers can also pass on these insights to learning and development managers to help them implement effective English language upskilling programs. While this investment can empower employees to perform better in their new role, it may also improve employee retention, and even lead to succession and impact business growth.

Whether organisations choose to hire in new talent with higher levels of English proficiency or invest in learning and development programs to build their employees' language skills, there are tools available to help.

Versant by Pearson is one such tool. The AI-based, unbiased testing solution enabling global brands and businesses to assess candidates' English proficiency quickly and accurately.

The fully flexible testing solution enables talent managers to fast-track and simplify their recruitment process, while giving them total confidence their candidates have the English language skills to drive their business forward.

Implementing instant, unbiased English language assessments, is just one way businesses can tap into the success that lies behind using one common language. Businesses already doing so or working with a trusted partner, such as Pearson, to better understand and improve English proficiencies in their workforce are surely setting up for success in today's modern, global market.

(1) Asia Link Business, "Indonesia's Economy." ; International Labour Organisation, "ILO Brief: COVID-19 employment and labour market impact in Thailand." ; Oxford Economics, "Vietnam | Role as a global manufacturing hub will fuel growth." ; Oxford Business Group, "How is the Philippines BPO sector faring amid global business disruption?" ; London School of Economics, "COVID-19 & the Philippines' outsourcing industry."

(2) Pearson, Partnership for 21st Century Learning, "Communication: Executive Summary for Employers"

(3) Harvard Business Review "Global Business Speaks English by Tsedal Neeley"



About Pearson

At Pearson, the world's leading learning education company, we empower individuals and organisations through transformative learning experiences. With a global presence in over 70 countries, we offer a wide range of products and services to institutions, corporations, governments, and learners worldwide.

Within our Corporate segment, Pearson Corporate Language Solutions plays a vital role, providing businesses with tailored language learning solutions to recruit, develop, and retain top talent. We understand that language proficiency is a strategic advantage in today's global marketplace, and we are committed to equipping organisations with the tools they need to succeed. Through our expertise, cutting-edge resources, and commitment to excellence, Pearson Corporate Language Solutions is the trusted partner to guide businesses towards growth, enhanced communication, and limitless opportunities.

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