

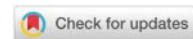
# ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS ONE OF THE KEY ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCES

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**Abstract:** Today, entrepreneurship is considered an imperative driver of economic development, productivity, innovation and employment. In the world we live in, which imposes increasingly difficult and demanding tasks on future generations, young entrepreneurs are required to possess various skills necessary for a successful career. One of those skills is good knowledge of the English language, as a prerequisite for successful business in an international level. It is a well-known fact that today the English language as a lingua franca opens up many opportunities in the business world, especially for people who possess appropriate language competences. It helps to overcome borders and therefore all those who are interested in bringing their visions to the world business scene must have a good command of the English language. Knowledge of the English language is a prerequisite for achieving business goals and successful entrepreneurship. This paper explores key aspects of educating young entrepreneurs, with an emphasis on the importance of the English language as a crucial entrepreneurial skill. Its aim is to highlight the significance of the English language in entrepreneurial activities and its importance for business success.

It focuses on language skills specific to the entrepreneurial profession, necessary for successful communication in English in the field of entrepreneurship, both in written and oral form. In line with that, key language competencies that a successful entrepreneur must possess in order to achieve communication at an international level have been defined. The significance of the English language in the field of entrepreneurship surpasses mere necessity for performing specific tasks. It pertains to the overall reputation of the company and the ability of its employees to operate independently and confidently in the market. This particularly includes a greater willingness to take risks, significantly enhanced through strong language skills, contributing to the creation of a positive business environment. Language competency in a business environment encompasses the development of appropriate entrepreneurial and social skills, such as leading and participating in business meetings, negotiating, writing business letters (in electronic or written form), communicating with foreign partners and clients, and similar activities. All of these skills need to be practiced within the context of the English language, which is a necessary element in the education of entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur who is proficient in English, both in oral and written communication, avoids potential cultural and business barriers. It is essential to emphasize that language proficiency is acquired only through a continuous learning process that must be well-structured so that its application in entrepreneurship could be meaningful.

**Keywords:** English language, language competencies, entrepreneurship, business, education

**Field:** Education

## 1. ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS FOR THE 21st CENTURY

Innovation, creativity, perseverance, and self-confidence are features of a successful entrepreneur. The 9F Concept of Successful Entrepreneurship (Bygrave, 1997:23-24) is a concept known for encompassing nine important elements of entrepreneurship, named so because all the terms covered by this concept begin with the letter F (in English language). Those are: Founders - the importance of entrepreneurship founders (wise and reputable); Focused - focus on selected and specific segments of the market; Fast - quick decision-making and their rapid implementation; Flexible - ability to adapt to changes; Forever-innovating - continuous search for novelty; Flat - reducing the number of management levels; Frugal - constant pursuit of cost reduction; Friendship - maintaining good relationships with all stakeholders; Fun - the ability to make collaboration with entrepreneurial companies enjoyable.

In addition to the aforementioned, it is also important to emphasize the significance of developing skills and abilities related to successful communication within the company (Denić & Petković, 2023). Among other things, this includes managerial skills necessary for motivating employees to work and perform business tasks essential for entrepreneurial success; operational capabilities as a condition for successful and efficient operations with the implementation of appropriate actions and measures; communication skills encompassing both oral and written expression of ideas, thoughts, and projects,

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in both native and foreign (English) languages (Milicevic et al., 2021). All of these skills intersect and complement each other. For example, negotiation skills are crucial for understanding the overall business situation and identifying potential outcomes for parties involved in the negotiation process, which requires good communication ability—the manner in which negotiations unfold.

A modern entrepreneur is expected that his/her actions and deeds meet certain standards to achieve higher goals and successful business operations. Key features of the modern entrepreneurial profession include (Pokrajac & Tomić, 2009):

- the modern entrepreneur is a leader and a teacher worthy of respect, possessing understanding, encouragement, motivation, and fostering the creative energy of his/her team towards achieving common business goals;

- the modern entrepreneur boosts morale and enhances business ethics within his/her company. He/she understands the importance of business reputation and status, where business ethics plays a significant role;

- the modern entrepreneur continuously stimulates the innovation and creativity of his/her team. He/she does not wait for changes to happen and then react; rather, he/she is capable of predicting them and adequately preparing for potential changes. In this context, changes are not seen as threats but as challenges and opportunities for new achievements and successes;

- the modern entrepreneur is increasingly oriented towards the global business scene. Consequently, he/she must be familiar with international relations, various cultures and economies, as well as the connections that exist between countries and peoples worldwide. Additionally, he/she must possess skills related to developing goals and strategies for his/her company in a broader context that encompasses international business and increasingly rigid competition.

In accordance with this, it is necessary for the modern entrepreneur to know and apply the rules of effective communication in both native and foreign (English) languages. The importance of communication skills must be recognized in the curricula for entrepreneurial education, where future young entrepreneurs will be informed about the significance of the English language for their profession.

Entrepreneurship education in Serbia is focused on the development of entrepreneurial and business knowledge, skills, behaviours, and values (Vujovic et al., 2020). Additionally, education encompasses the knowledge and skills necessary for professional development, job seeking, and private business (Bourgeois et al., 2016). On the other hand, the English language, as an essential element of the profession, is not given much importance.

Therefore, the education and training of future entrepreneurs, that is, the development of entrepreneurial skills, are of crucial importance for successful business operation and survival in the conditions of numerous and often ruthless competition, but they also are equally important for the organization and management of the company and the entrepreneur. In addition to the education obtained during formal schooling, it is essential for future entrepreneurs to constantly work on improving their skills and knowledge, broaden their horizons, familiarize themselves with global business opportunities, attend seminars, and continuously enhance their English language skills.

## 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN CONTEMPORARY BUSINESS

As it is well known, the job description of an entrepreneur includes communication with numerous individuals encountered throughout the business process - with company personnel, clients, bankers, fellow entrepreneurs, representatives of various institutions, and business partners. Generally speaking, the success of a company depends on both direct and indirect contacts. That is, for establishing and achieving the company's goals, developing and implementing plans, managing changes and human and other resources, good communication skills of a successful entrepreneur are more than necessary (Čerović, 2013:34-35). Survival in the business world characterized by strong and often ruthless competition largely depends on, among other business skills, proficiency in the English language. For young entrepreneurs facing a long journey full of challenges and obstacles, aiming to succeed in the global economy, English language proficiency is simply a must.

Major global companies increasingly prioritize the use of technology in business, the implementation of which is inconceivable without the English language. Therefore, understanding and mastering the English language is a priority for entrepreneurs who want their company to have a strong position in the international market. Successful communication in business negotiations, discussions, professional presentations, and electronic correspondence are skills expected from successful entrepreneurs - if they want to be part of and prosper in the global business scene.

The English language is now an integral part of the business world. A good entrepreneur will

influence their employees to professionally develop and learn foreign languages, which can only benefit the company and overall business outcomes. The English language as the primary means of international business communication has been the subject of interest for linguists since the 1960s. The English language has taken precedence over all other languages and has become the lingua franca of international communication (Lukač-Zoranić, 2013). The status of the English language is also conditioned by the fact that the majority of technological innovations have originated, and continue to originate, from English-speaking countries. This has led to an increase in interest among business and other individuals to learn and improve their English skills (Rajović, et al., 2021).

Skills and knowledge expected from a good entrepreneur today, besides starting and managing businesses, entrepreneurial skills, finance and investment, etc., also include personal skills such as negotiation, leadership, decision-making, as well as the use of information technology and the English language in the business environment (Brkanlić et al., 2012).

According to the European Business Forum for Multilingualism (European Commission, 2008), in a large part of Europe, as well as in the world, the English language represents a widely accepted medium of communication. The research "Effects on the European Union economy of shortages of foreign language skills in enterprise" conducted by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Union (European Commission, 2006) aimed to collect data on approaches to language skills usage, intercultural competence, familiarity with language strategies, job loss due to lack of appropriate language skills, future business plans, as well as future language needs. The research covered 2000 small and medium-sized enterprises from 29 European countries engaged in exporting. The results showed that in thirteen out of twenty-nine European countries, more than 50% of respondents believe that they will need further English language training in the next three years. 48% of companies stated that they offered language training courses to their employees, while in fifteen countries, the figure exceeds 50%. Additionally, according to the majority of respondents, the English language is considered the corporate language, even in countries where international languages are native languages, as is the case with France. Interestingly, 11% of European exporting companies lose the battle in the global market precisely because of communication barriers.

A good entrepreneur, in addition to social responsibility and ethics, must strive for continuous improvement of knowledge and enhancement of business communication skills (Grandić, & Bosanac, 2022), considering the fact that the demands of the global market and competition are intensifying almost on a daily basis. Today, the business world and the English language are in an inseparable relationship, which indicates that if the entrepreneurs want to be successful in what they do, they must nurture and improve their communication skills, because business communication is often accompanied by unpredictable circumstances and processes. The emergence of the internet and social media has accelerated the communication process, making negative business practices more accessible to the public much faster than before, which can threaten even the long-standing reputation of the company (Skoko & Mihovilović, 2014).

### 3. LANGUAGE COMPETENCIES OF SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS

In addition to professional abilities and skills, knowledge of the English language represents the foundation for successful communication and idea exchange in the challenging business world, especially for young entrepreneurs. To thrive in the global business scene, young entrepreneurs must continuously improve their language competencies: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Learning English language within the entrepreneurial domain is not just about acquiring business vocabulary; it involves a more complex process. Language competency in a business environment entails developing appropriate entrepreneurial and social skills, the ability to lead and participate in business meetings, negotiating skills, the art of writing business letters (in electronic or written form), the ability to communicate with foreign partners and clients, and so on. All of the above relates to skills that need to be improved from the perspective of the English language as an integral element of entrepreneurial education.

Business English is implemented through two main aspects of communication: external communication, which relates to dealings with public/external stakeholders, and internal communication, which involves using English as a working language among employees within the company (Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009).

The characteristics of Business English can be defined based on five concepts (Ellis & Johnson, 1994): entrepreneurial language needs are transactional; social contacts are often subject to established patterns; clear information must be conveyed in a short timeframe; the language used in the business environment is not characterized by rich vocabulary and expression, nor is it based on culture (as in the

language used by native speakers), but it is based on the most useful and basic language structures and vocabulary. Teaching Business English differs from teaching English used in everyday life in terms of needs analysis, assessment of proficiency level, curriculum, teaching objectives, etc. In other words, the language is used to achieve goals, and its successful use is reflected in the successful outcome of business operations (ibid).

Additionally, Business English can be defined based on the following perspectives (Lin, 2004): From the perspective of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), it can be defined as the language used in international business communication; English is an international language and as such differs from native or standard English; teaching Business English involves elements of English for Specific Purposes; teaching Business English should take into account the needs of the learners.

As a corporate language, the use of business English may be associated with the industry and/or may depend on factors such as the company's status at the international level. Specifically, there exists a distinction between the English language used in international companies and the English language used in transnational firms (Du-Babcock, 2014). In the former case, native languages are typically used as the working languages of business, while the use of the English language is limited to international business activities. In contrast, within transnational organizations, the English language serves as the sole working language regardless of the linguistic context in which the organization operates (ibid).

Therefore, business communication in English equally entails both oral and written forms. This implies that future entrepreneurs are expected to possess the following English language competencies (Luo & Shenkar, 2006): the ability to communicate effectively with staff, colleagues, and representatives of other foreign companies; proficiency in oral and written communication in business English; the capability to present the company when appearing abroad; confidence in public speaking.

Young entrepreneurs may feel insecure in cases where their English language skills are not as good as those of their colleagues or partners. However, to progress in the global economy, young entrepreneurs, as well as those aspiring to successful careers in entrepreneurship, must overcome language barriers, considering that English is the primary medium of communication in the international business world.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

English is a vital component of business worldwide. For a business to prosper and expand globally, it is imperative for entrepreneurs to possess communication skills in English as the universal language of business. Consequently, individuals who are capable of actively understanding and utilizing English in both written and spoken forms are essential for the success of any venture. Entrepreneurs are among these individuals, and they are expected to possess advanced English language skills. Recognizing the significance of the English language in the business world, entrepreneurs should take initiative, motivate themselves, and explore various ways to enhance their English language proficiency. In doing so, they can remain competitive in the global market and expand their business on an international scale.

The importance of the English language in the field of entrepreneurship goes beyond the mere necessity of performing specific tasks. It refers to the overall reputation of the company and the ability of its employees to operate independently and confidently in the market. Namely, this relates to an increased readiness to take risks, significantly mitigated by good language competencies, thus leading to the creation of a positive business environment.

An entrepreneur who possesses a good command of the English language, including both oral and written communication, avoids potential cultural and business barriers. It's important to emphasize that language proficiency is achieved exclusively through continuous learning, which must be well-structured to ensure meaningful language use in the entrepreneurial sphere.

Furthermore, the issue of growing youth unemployment has encouraged entrepreneurship education to increasingly focus on acquiring the skills and knowledge that will enable young people to readily engage in corporate settings. Accordingly, proficiency in the English language, as an internationally recognized language of the business world, will further strengthen the chances of future entrepreneurs to launch their own businesses and cooperate with international companies.

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