

Africa: An Emerging Market, A Growing Need for Business English

To gauge the impact that language has in the workplace, GlobalEnglish conducted a study on the use of English in African business.*

This growth and expansion creates a new challenge: With an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 African languages spoken, Africa is a continent with exceptional linguistic diversity.

As a key emerging market, more and more multinational companies are expanding their presence in Africa:

- In 2010 alone, Microsoft announced it would invest almost half-a-billion rand¹ in South Africa's local software industry
- Russian-based investment bank Renaissance Capital entered the South African market with the acquisition of BJM Securities
- GM South Africa said it will spend R900 million² updating its Port Elizabeth production facilities and introducing new products

* The survey was conducted in conjunction with GlobalEnglish's exclusive distribution partner for the continent, the LR Management Group (LRMG).

¹ Half-a-billion rand was equal to \$73.2 million, or €56.5 million, on January 10, 2011.

² 900 million rand was equal to \$131.7 million, or €101.8 million, on January 10, 2011.

Introduction

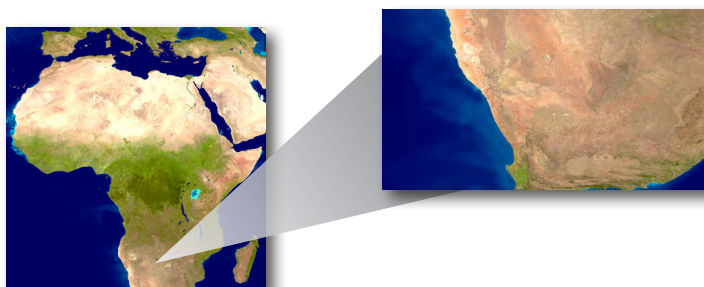
South Africa alone has 11 official languages, and while English—the language of business, politics, and the media—is generally understood throughout the country, it ranks only fifth as a native language.

GlobalEnglish conducted a survey in late 2010 with its partner LRMG designed to measure the increasing use of English as the business language of African companies, and examine the difficulties those companies are facing with multilingual workforces.

As the market leader in “people effectiveness solutions”—management consulting, learning, talent, and people management systems—in Africa, LRMG has unique access to nearly every major company in the region.

144 people responded, 60% of whom represented companies with more than 1,000 employees. Touching the manufacturing, financial services, IT, education, government, and mining industries, among others, their responses covered a wide range of industries and segments of the workforce.

SOUTH AFRICA IS HOME TO 11 OFFICIAL LANGUAGES; ENGLISH RANKS ONLY FIFTH AS A NATIVE LANGUAGE.



The Findings

70% of respondents indicated that less than 50% of their employees **speak English** as their **first language**.

85% of respondents recognized that **English communication skills** are important for **enabling companies** to meet business objectives.

95% of respondents indicated that English is the preferred business language for their company. The remaining 5% indicated that locally, in South Africa, Afrikaans is spoken.

63% indicated there is a formal policy dictating English as their official business language

And yet only **22%** of respondents indicated that they measure the English communication competency of their managers, executives or employees

66% indicated that English is exclusively used for written communication in their business.

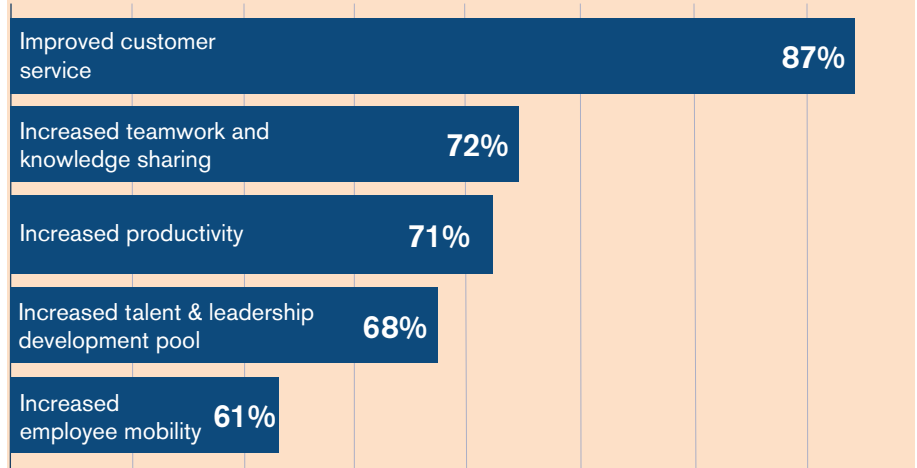
28% of respondents indicated that they regularly translate documents.

- Translation is mostly done to satisfy foreign visitors, business colleagues, and compliance requirements in South Africa
- Some respondents indicated up to R100,000 a year on translation costs
- Others use internal employees to provide free translation service



94% of respondents indicated that they believe that their employees could be more effective in the workplace with improved English communication skills.

SPECIFICALLY, THEY BELIEVED STRONGER ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS WOULD LEAD TO:



Among the significant business challenges these companies face owing to the lack of English communication skills:

- Misunderstanding of instructions, business rules, and business objectives is a severe impediment
- There is a massive negative impact on customer satisfaction levels, the ability to understand customer needs, and placement of correct orders
- Respondents indicated that their business professionalism and overall performance would be increased by improved English communication levels
- Training success is also significantly hindered in that the majority of the learning content is only available in English
- The recruitment of suitably skilled people, with the correct level business communication skills, becomes a challenge

Only **34%** of respondents indicated that their companies currently have **training programs to develop English** communication skills.

When asked if their employees were able to increase their productivity by an average of one hour per week, would they be interested in investing in a program to improve the business English communication skills of their employees, 75% of respondents said yes.



The GlobalEnglish Solution

The use of English as a primary means of communication in African business is widespread and growing, and African companies recognize that to stay competitive in the regional and global market, there is a critical need to improve business English communication skills.

However, courses being utilized by forward-thinking, leading African companies for this critical area fail to sufficiently address their long-term business English communication needs. General English language skills are entirely different from business English communication skills: The former help you book a hotel; the latter embraces the professional world of presentations, meetings, and conference calls, and distinguishes topics related to business functions—like marketing and finance—and business sectors—such as banking and pharmaceuticals.

The GlobalEnglish solution caters to these companies by providing a solution that is:

- **Award-winning:** A comprehensive, on-demand software solution in 15 languages for instant, on-the-job support of business tasks in English—such as writing emails—and programs for building lasting Business English proficiency.
- **Scalable:** Our web-based solution can be deployed quickly to 100 or 100,000 employees across the globe, and managed centrally or locally.
- **Measurable:** A complete suite of reporting and administrative tools makes it easy to manage, measure, and track performance across the organization.
- **Supported:** Experienced teams provide clients with strategic and local expertise to over 30 countries, and are focused on delivering maximum ROI throughout the lifetime of a relationship with GlobalEnglish.
- **Cost-effective:** GlobalEnglish is dramatically less expensive than traditional language learning methods; most companies report a 25% to 50% reduction in costs when compared to classroom training.
- **Proven:** More than 500 of the world's largest global companies have partnered with GlobalEnglish to enable their workforce to effectively conduct business in English, including Cisco, Deloitte, Hewlett-Packard, John Deere, MTN Group and Procter & Gamble.

Best of all, the business impact is immediate: On average, organizations using GlobalEnglish gain two or more hours per week in productivity per employee, and 92% of GlobalEnglish users report being able to use their new skills on the job immediately.