

“Dear Abu Abdullah”: Attitudes and Behaviors of CEOs and Executives Towards Using English Language as a Medium of Communication

عزيزي أبو عبد الله: مواقف وسلوكيات الرؤساء والمديرين التنفيذيين تجاه استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية كوسيلة للتواصل

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الملخص:

تستكشف هذه الدراسة مواقف وسلوكيات الرؤساء والمديرين التنفيذيين تجاه استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية كوسيلة للتواصل في الشركات التي تكون فيها اللغة العربية هي اللغة الأم، حتى عندما لا يتضمن التفاعل متحدثين عربية تكون هي لغتهم الأم. شارك ثلاثون من الرؤساء والمديرين التنفيذيين المذكور من شركات مختلفة في المملكة العربية السعودية. تم قياس مواقفهم باستخدام استبانة، وتم فحص سلوكياتهم بناءً على سيناريوهات مختلفة. يعتقد المشاركون أن اللغة الإنجليزية يمكن أن تعزز الفرص الوظيفية واعتبروا الطلاقة مهمة. لقد نظروا إلى اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة للأعمال واختاروا الوضوح على القواعد النحوية في العروض التقديمية. ومع ذلك، اختلفوا مع فكرة أن تشجيع الموظفين على استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية لتبادل الأفكار وكتابة رسائل البريد الإلكتروني وتقديم العروض يعكس كونهم ذوي خبرة أو متعلمين جيداً. لم يروا أي ارتباط بين استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية لكتابة رسائل البريد الإلكتروني أو التقديم وكونهم ذوي خبرة جيدة أو يظهرهم صورة إيجابية. كانت هناك تناقضات بين مواقف المشاركين وسلوكياتهم. وبصرف النظر عن مواقفهم المحايدة تجاه استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية، أظهر سلوكهم تفضيلاً للغة الإنجليزية في جميع السيناريوهات. يفيد هذا البحث ليس فقط اللغويين، ولكن أيضاً متعلمي اللغة والباحثين عن عمل الذين يهدفون إلى فهم كيفية إدراك قادة الأعمال للغة الإنجليزية في مكان العمل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغويات، اللغة الإنجليزية، الموقف، السلوك، اللغة الإنجليزية للأعمال كلغة مشتركة (BELF)، التواصل

Abstract:

This study explores the attitudes and behaviors of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and executives toward using English as a medium of communication in companies where Arabic is the native language, even when the interaction does not involve non-Arabic speakers. Thirty male CEOs and executives from different companies in Saudi Arabia participated. Their attitudes were measured using a questionnaire, and their behaviors were examined based on different scenarios. Participants believed that English could enhance career opportunities and viewed fluency as important. They viewed English as the language of business and chose clarity over grammar in presentations. However, they disagreed with the idea that encouraging employees to use English for exchanging ideas, writing e-mails, and giving presentations reflects being experienced or well educated. They did not see any correlation between using English for writing e-mails or presenting and being well experienced or portraying a positive image. There were contradictions between participants' attitudes and behaviors. Apart from their neutral attitudes towards the use of English, their behavior showed a preference for English language in all scenarios. This research benefits not only linguists but also language learners and job seekers aiming to understand how business leaders perceive English in the workplace.

Keywords: Linguistics, English language, Attitude, Behavior, Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF), Communication

Introduction:

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has sought to diversify its economy and reduce dependence on its oil revenues. As a part of this transformation, Saudi companies have extended their operations into international markets and partnerships, and language plays a crucial role in enabling global engagement. Accordingly, English has emerged as an important medium of communication for Saudi companies especially those who aim to operate globally.

English, as a lingua franca, has become a widely used medium of communication in many multinational companies. Even in companies where employees share a common native language, English is frequently used in internal emails, presentations, announcements, and meetings. Lehtonen [1] highlights that new employees are typically expected to have basic competence in English. Berthoud et al. [2] explain that language policies vary, and companies often adopt multilingual strategies.

While extensive research has English use in multilingual workplaces, fewer studies have focused on companies where most employees share a native language. Understanding executives' perspectives is key, as their decisions shape language use in the workplace. This study fills that gap by investigating the attitudes and behavior of Saudi CEOs and executives English communication. The findings of this research offer value to linguists, job seekers, and language learners. It also informs policymakers who shape workplace language use in the Saudi context.

Literature review:

The role of English in Saudi Arabia evolved after the Saudi 2030 Vision was announced. Almegren [3] found that political

developments influenced citizens' motivations to learn English, with more interest shown in vocabulary than grammar. Companies are a part of the 2030 Vision and are affected by such political decisions. This was not only the case in Saudi Arabia but also in other countries such as Finland and Switzerland, where English is used in companies.

Having corporations choose one language does not mean that other languages cannot be used [4]. Berthoud et al. [2] state that various languages are used by companies with international partnerships and staff from different cultures. Mäkiö [4] argues that while English promotes equality in multinational workplaces, it may also lead to inequality for less proficient speakers, as noted by Angouri [5]

Similarly, Lüdi et al. [6] found that English language skills are often expected when recruiting employees even when it is not in the job requirements. To have a clear perspective on the reasons behind English being the language of choice for communication in companies, it is important to understand English language as a lingua franca. Jenkins [7] defines English as a lingua franca used across linguistic backgrounds. Mäkiö [4] adds that this arises from the need to communicate internationally without translator or native speakers. The important position of English language in business led to the emergence of Business English as a lingua franca (BELF).

BELF, according to Louhiala-Salminen et al. [8], is a practical tool used for efficiency, not perfect grammar. Even though English is used in communication, presentations, and business deals, accuracy is not the main focus. Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen [9] argue that misunderstandings are rare due to shared business contexts. Dharmajiva [10]

found that BELF has three characteristics: it is a system for communication that non-native English speakers share, it focuses on delivering the point and not the accurate use of the language, and its communication patterns are not affected by its speakers' different cultures. There are shared features between English as a lingua franca (ELF) and BELF in aspects such as the interaction, setting, and speaker [11]. Canagarajah [12] found that ELF writing used one type of writing, which is standard English. Kankaanranta [13] found that BELF writing tended to have features of spoken discourse and was not totally grammatical.

In linguistic research, it is important to briefly present what attitude and behavior are. Attitude is defined as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” [14]. It is concerned with how someone thinks and feels towards something. According to Mensah et al. [15], attitudes are not only affected by psychological construct and experience but can also be formed by negative or positive experiences [16]. Behavior in linguistic research focuses on how the speaker behaves towards something. It is the action that someone takes in a situation. Taneja [17] defines behavior as what a person does to respond to external stimulus.

Related research by Turunen [18] investigated the kinds of attitudes that 98 business majors in the universities of Jyväskylä and Turku in Finland have towards BELF and their beliefs towards its use in their future professions. Data were collected using an online questionnaire and analyzed. The results revealed that students held mostly positive and neutral views about BELF. Moreover, the

less competent the participant was in BELF, the more negative his/her attitude was towards it. The data also revealed that participants believed that English language is of significant importance in Finland business and will play a role in their future profession.

Dharmajiva [10] found that Thai employees supported using English in business. Mäkiö [4] interviewed Finnish CEOs and found that high English proficiency was not required as long as communication was clear. Similarly, Rajprasit and Hemchua [19] found that oral communication was prioritized over written accuracy among Thai engineers.

Bilingualism and language policy have a crucial role in forming communication within contexts that are multilingual and globalized business. A lot of companies choose English as the official working language, even when employees share a native language, reflecting the position of English language as the global lingua franca such as the case of Danish consultancy company presented in the study of Lønsmann and Mortensen [20]. Organizations should aim in language policies for a balance between the shared language productivity and including the native language of the employees. It has been shown that “policies prioritizing successful communication, not specific languages, facilitate inclusion and help employees develop job-related language and intercultural communicative competence” [21]. Language policy is considered an evolving and practical response to the needs of actual communication.

Few studies have examined the use of English as a medium of communication in companies whose employees are native Arabic speakers, even if the interaction does not involve non-Arabic speakers. This study differs

by examining Saudi executives who share a native language and still choose to use English internally. Specifically, it aims to address the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** What are the attitudes of CEOs and executives towards using English language as a medium of communication with employees with a shared native language?
- **RQ2:** What is the behavior of CEOs and executives towards using English language as a medium of communication with employees with a shared native language?

Methodology:

Participants

The participants were 30 male CEOs and executives from various Saudi private-sector companies. All were native Arabic speakers and also spoke English. Most of them had higher educational qualifications and spoke English fluently. Background information on education, English exposure, and learning contexts was collected in the demographics part of the instrument.

Instrument

This research adopted mixed-methods approach. A quantitative questionnaire was used to measure participants' attitudes; a qualitative scenario-based section was used to explore behavior. This was to provide a comprehensive understanding of both what executives believe and how they act in practice. The quantitative approach aimed to gather data concerning the participants attitudes. The qualitative approach was created to investigate the participants' behavior.

A questionnaire accessible via a Google Forms link was used to gather data because of the type and number of participants sampled. The use of a questionnaire is the most con-

venient for collecting data from participants with a busy schedule and heavy workload as they can accomplish it anytime. Each participant received the survey link along with an explanation of the study's purpose and an informed consent statement clarifying that participation was voluntary and responses would remain confidential. Participants were encouraged to respond by explaining how their answers will help linguists, language learners, and jobseekers to better understand the attitudes and behaviors of company leaders towards English as a medium of communication.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first included questions that measured the trends observed with regards to the attitudes of CEOs and executives towards using English as a medium of communication with employees with a shared native language. A 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree; disagree; neutral; agree; strongly agree) was used due to its low random error variance. The scale helps quantify the degree of agreement or disagreement with various statements related to the use of English in the workplace. The questionnaire included 25 Likert-scale items assessing attitudes, followed by an open-ended item. The behavior section included 7 scenarios, with follow-up questions on language choice and reasoning. This method was used by Lee [22] to measure attitude. Moreover, Cargile et al. [23] states that questionnaires are the most common instrument used for data collection when measuring attitudes. This questionnaire presented statements like; *I write work e-mails in English language because it is the language of business*, and *I write work e-mails in English language because I don't have to translate*

some of the terms to Arabic.

The second section examined the behavior of CEOs and executives towards using English as a medium of communication, seven different scenarios were given. After each scenario participants were asked to choose between using English or Arabic in this scenario. Then it was followed by a question that asked the participants to indicate the reason behind their language of choice. There was a total of 14 questions. Examples on the scenarios used were; *You have an important announcement to make concerning the company's finances. You started writing a new e-mail message. What language did you start writing in?* and *You have a presentation to deliver in front of the company's board. What is your choice of the language of your presentation?*

A pilot study was conducted with 10 participants to check clarity and relevance. The pilot study revealed that the questionnaire was long and the instructions were unclear. The questionnaire was thus revised and unnecessary questions were omitted. The instructions were modified to include more details.

Ethical procedures

In the beginning of the questionnaire, participants gave informed consent, and participation was anonymous and voluntary. They were also informed that by participating in this research, they agree for their answers to be used only for the purpose of the research. The research instrument was approved by Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Data analysis

This study primarily involves quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques to assess

the attitudes and behaviors of CEOs and executives towards using English as a medium of communication. The following were the key methodologies employed.

Mean value analysis. The mean values of responses were calculated to determine the general attitude towards each statement. These values help categorize the responses into different levels of agreement or disagreement: strong disagreement (1–1.80), disagreement to some extent (1.81–2.60), moderate agreement (2.61–3.40), high level of agreement (3.41–4.20), and extremely high level of agreement (4.21–5).

Table 1: The mechanism for measuring trends relying on the mean value

| Attitudes | Mean | |
|-------------------|------|------|
| | From | To |
| Strongly disagree | 1.00 | 1.80 |
| Disagree | 1.81 | 2.60 |
| Neutral | 2.61 | 3.40 |
| Agree | 3.41 | 4.20 |
| Strongly agree | 4.21 | 5.00 |

- **Frequency analysis.** Frequency analysis was conducted for the responses to further understand how many individuals fall into each category of the Likert scale. This helps identify the trends and distribution of opinions in the sample.
- **Scenario-based analysis.** Scenario-based analysis was performed to assess participants' behaviors towards using English. This method helps in understanding practical language preferences in different business situations.
- **Qualitative comments.** Alongside quantitative data, qualitative comments were also collected from participants. These comments provide deeper insights into the reasons behind their preferences for using

English or Arabic in different scenarios, adding a layer of depth to the understanding of their attitudes and behaviors.

Results:

To measure the CEOs' and executives' attitudes toward using English with employees who share their native language, we analyzed the mean of the participants' responses on the attitude survey. The following table shows the frequencies and means of the sample individuals' responses on the scale of trends.

Table 2: Frequencies and means of the sample individuals' responses on the scale of trends

| S R | Statement | N/ F | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Deviation | importance |
|-----|---|------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|------|----------------|------------|
| 1 | I am a confident English speaker. | N | 1 | 1 | 1 | 14 | 14 | 4.26 | 0.930 | 1 |
| | | F | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 45.2 | 45.2 | | | |
| 2 | Being a fluent speaker in English gives me better career opportunities | N | 1 | 1 | 3 | 12 | 14 | 4.19 | 0.980 | 2 |
| | | F | 3.2 | 3.2 | 9.7 | 38.7 | 45.2 | | | |
| 3 | It is important that all of my employees speak English fluently. | N | 0 | 3 | 8 | 17 | 3 | 3.65 | 0.798 | 5 |
| | | F | 0.0 | 9.7 | 25.8 | 54.8 | 9.7 | | | |
| 4 | I write work e-mails in English language because it is the language of business. | N | 1 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 3.45 | 1.234 | 6 |
| | | F | 3.2 | 25.8 | 19.4 | 25.8 | 25.8 | | | |
| 5 | I write work e-mails in English language because I don't have to translate the some of the terms into Arabic. | N | 3 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 3.10 | 1.221 | 11 |
| | | F | 9.7 | 25.8 | 22.6 | 29.0 | 12.9 | | | |
| 6 | I write work e-mails in English because it is the language of professionals. | N | 3 | 10 | 6 | 11 | 1 | 2.90 | 1.106 | 14 |
| | | F | 9.7 | 32.3 | 19.4 | 35.5 | 3.2 | | | |
| 7 | I write work e-mails in English because it shows that I am well educated. | N | 8 | 15 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2.26 | 1.182 | 24 |
| | | F | 25.8 | 48.4 | 6.5 | 12.9 | 6.5 | | | |
| 8 | I write work e-mails in English because it shows that I am well experienced. | N | 7 | 12 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 2.42 | 1.148 | 18 |
| | | F | 22.6 | 38.7 | 16.1 | 19.4 | 3.2 | | | |
| 9 | I write work e-mails in English because it portrays a good image for myself. | N | 8 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 2.42 | 1.177 | 19 |
| | | F | 25.8 | 32.3 | 19.4 | 19.4 | 3.2 | | | |

| S R | Statement | N/ F | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Deviation | importance |
|-----|---|------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|------|----------------|------------|
| 10 | I write work e-mails in English because it is easier to write an e-mail in English than Arabic. | N | 3 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 3 | 3.13 | 1.147 | 10 |
| | | F | 9.7 | 19.4 | 29.0 | 32.3 | 9.7 | | | |
| 11 | I encourage my employees to respond to my e-mails in English. | N | 9 | 9 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 2.26 | 1.064 | 25 |
| | | F | 29.0 | 29.0 | 32.3 | 6.5 | 3.2 | | | |
| 12 | I encourage my employees to exchange e-mails in English. | N | 9 | 5 | 15 | 1 | 1 | 2.35 | 1.050 | 21 |
| | | F | 29.0 | 16.1 | 48.4 | 3.2 | 3.2 | | | |
| 13 | It is important to have a grammatical well written e-mail. | N | 3 | 2 | 2 | 15 | 9 | 3.81 | 1.223 | 4 |
| | | F | 9.7 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 48.4 | 29.0 | | | |
| 14 | It is more important for the e-mail to be understandable than to be grammatically correct and well written. | N | 3 | 5 | 4 | 15 | 4 | 3.39 | 1.202 | 8 |
| | | F | 9.7 | 16.1 | 12.9 | 48.4 | 12.9 | | | |
| 15 | I deliver my presentations at work in English language because it is the language of business. | N | 2 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 4 | 3.26 | 1.125 | 9 |
| | | F | 6.5 | 19.4 | 29.0 | 32.3 | 12.9 | | | |
| 16 | I deliver my presentations at work in English language because I don't have to translate the some of the terms into Arabic. | N | 4 | 7 | 10 | 7 | 3 | 2.94 | 1.181 | 13 |
| | | F | 12.9 | 22.6 | 32.3 | 22.6 | 9.7 | | | |
| 17 | I deliver my presentations at work in English because it is the language of professionals. | N | 3 | 13 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 2.68 | 1.045 | 15 |
| | | F | 9.7 | 41.9 | 22.6 | 22.6 | 3.2 | | | |
| 18 | I deliver my presentations at work in English because it shows that I am well educated. | N | 10 | 8 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 2.29 | 1.160 | 23 |
| | | F | 32.3 | 25.8 | 25.8 | 12.9 | 3.2 | | | |
| 19 | I deliver my presentations at work in English because it shows that I am well experienced. | N | 9 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 2.39 | 1.202 | 20 |
| | | F | 29.0 | 29.0 | 19.4 | 19.4 | 3.2 | | | |
| 20 | I deliver my presentations at work in English because it portrays a good image for myself. | N | 8 | 11 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 2.35 | 1.142 | 22 |
| | | F | 25.8 | 35.5 | 19.4 | 16.1 | 3.2 | | | |
| 21 | I deliver my presentations at work in English | N | 7 | 6 | 3 | 10 | 5 | 3.00 | 1.461 | 12 |

| S R | Statement | NU F | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Deviation | importance |
|--|--|------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|------|----------------|------------|
| | because it is easier to present my business ideas in English than Arabic. | F | 22.6 | 19.4 | 9.7 | 32.3 | 16.1 | | | |
| 22 | I encourage my employees to discuss my presentations in English. | N | 8 | 8 | 10 | 3 | 2 | 2.45 | 1.179 | 17 |
| | | F | 25.8 | 25.8 | 32.3 | 9.7 | 6.5 | | | |
| 23 | I encourage my employees to exchange ideas in English. | N | 7 | 6 | 13 | 3 | 2 | 2.58 | 1.148 | 16 |
| | | F | 22.6 | 19.4 | 41.9 | 9.7 | 6.5 | | | |
| 24 | It is important to present a grammatically well created e-presentation. | N | 0 | 4 | 4 | 15 | 8 | 3.87 | 0.957 | 3 |
| | | F | 0 | 12.9 | 12.9 | 48.4 | 25.8 | | | |
| 25 | It is more important for the presentation to be understandable than to be grammatically correct and accurately written and presented | N | 0 | 6 | 8 | 15 | 2 | 3.42 | 0.886 | 7 |
| | | F | 0 | 19.4 | 25.8 | 48.4 | 6.5 | | | |
| The overall mean of sample individuals' responses on the scale of trends | | | | | | | | 2.99 | 0.679 | |

The mean value of the overall sample responses on the scale of trends was (2.99 out of 5), indicating a neutral tendency. This indicates that the attitudes of chief executives and senior managers towards utilizing English as a communication tool with employees sharing a common native language were neither negative nor positive.

The results show that there are three levels of satisfaction among the sample individuals regarding the scale statements. The first level is the high satisfaction level, comprising (7) statements. The second level is the moderate satisfaction level, comprising (8) statements. The third level is the dissatisfaction level, comprising (10) statements. Below is a brief overview of the three levels:

First level (Strongly agree and agree):

Upon reviewing the results provided in the previous table, we find that (7) statements

achieved high means ranging from (4.26 to 3.45) strong absolute positive trend (strongly agree) to positive trend (agree). The following is a brief overview of those statements.

1. Upon examining the scale statements, it is observed that statement (I am a confident English speaker) achieved the highest arithmetic mean, with a mean value of (4.26 out of 5). This high value indicates a positive trend (strongly agree), suggesting that chief executives and senior managers are confident in English. Approximately (45.2%) expressed absolute agreement with this statement, while another (45.2%) expressed partial agreement.
2. In the second rank of importance, the statement "Being a confident speaker in English gives me better career opportunities" came with a mean of (4.19 out of 5). This value indicates a positive trend (agree), with approximately (45.2%) strongly agreeing with this statement and (38.7%) agreeing to some extent. This statement illustrates the correlation between English language proficiency and career advancement.
3. In the third rank of importance, the statement "It is more important for the presentation to be understandable than to be grammatically correct and accurately written and presented" came with a mean of (3.87 out of 5). This value indicates a positive trend (agree), with approximately (48.4%) of the sample individuals expressing agreement with this statement.
4. The statement "It is important that all of my employees speak English fluently" ranked fourth in importance with a mean of (3.65 out of 5). This result indicates a positive trend (agree), highlighting the im-

portance of the English language for employees from the perspective of executive managers. (%54.8) of the sample individuals indicated their agreement with this statement.

5. In the fifth rank of importance, the statement 'It is important that all of my employees speak English fluently' scored an arithmetic mean of 3.65 out of 5, indicating a high level of satisfaction.
6. In the sixth rank, the statement 'I write work emails in English language because it is the language of business' scored a mean of (3.45 out of 5). This value indicates a positive trend (agree), suggesting that executive managers and senior managers often rely on English language when writing emails. The results in the previous table show that more than half of the sample individuals either strongly agree or agree to some extent with this statement.
7. In the seventh rank of importance, the statement 'It is more important for the presentation to be understandable than to be grammatically correct and accurately written and presented' scored a mean of (3.42 out of 5). This value indicates a positive trend (agree), suggesting that executive managers prioritize clarity in presentations more than they do with language accuracy. Approximately (48.4%) of them agreed with this statement.

Second level (Neutral):

The results also show that there are (8) statements with means ranging from (3.39 to 2.68), falling within the range of the middle trend (Neutral). Below is the ranking of statements that obtained a descending level of average satisfaction according to the mean value:

1. It is more important for the e-mail to be understandable than to be grammatically correct and well written.
2. I deliver my presentations at work in English language because it is the language of business.
3. I write work e-mails in English because it is easier to write an e-mail in English than Arabic.
4. I write work e-mails in English language because I don't have to translate some of the terms into Arabic.
5. I deliver my presentations at work in English because it is easier to deliver my business ideas in English than Arabic.
6. I deliver my presentations at work in English language because I don't have to translate some of the terms into Arabic.
7. I write work e-mails in English because it is the language of professionals.
8. I deliver my presentations at work in English because it is the language of professionals.

Third level (Disagree):

The results indicate that there are (10) statements with arithmetic means ranging from (2.58 to 2.26), falling within the range of the negative trend (disagree). This means that those statements were not accepted by the sample individuals.

1. I encourage my employees to exchange ideas in English.
2. I encourage my employees to discuss my presentations in English.
3. I write work e-mails in English because it shows that I am well experienced.
4. I write work e-mails in English because it portrays a good image for myself.
5. I deliver my presentations at work in Eng-

lish because it shows that I am well experienced.

6. I encourage my employees to exchange e-mails in English.
7. I deliver my presentations at work in English because it portrays a good image for myself.
8. I deliver my presentations at work in English because it shows that I am well educated.
9. I write work e-mails in English because it shows that I am well educated.
10. I encourage my employees to respond to my e-mails in English.

Sample individuals had different comments according to their attitudes towards the scale statements, and below is a review of the most prominent comments based on the sample individuals:

First level (Strongly agree and agree):

1. We use L2 as L1 is the common business language, but it doesn't mean that we are pros or not.
2. In general, personally 2 is easier for me in general communication

Second level (Neutral):

1. I use 2 when one of the receiver is 2 speaker.
2. I prefer we as Saudis use 1 language
3. The company culture play huge rule on the used language
4. 1 is important, but we need to bilingual
5. I prefer to follow the company culture in using the preferred language
6. Choice of language depends on the audience as well
7. I think what makes more of us relies on 2 while speaking or presenting business ideas or practices is the origins of these busi-

ness ideas. If they are coming from an 2 source then so all subsequent and later discussions about shall be the same.

8. The most important argument is business / business terms, etc is easier to elaborate in 2

Third level (Disagree):

1. We use 1a most of the time in our business
2. I always encourage myself and my employees to write in 1 as it our own language and it always easier to use it for emails and presentations
3. I tend to write email in 1 if I know all recipients speak 1
4. To me choice of language is irrelevant, as long it illustrates well thoughts, logic and rational.

RQ2: What is the behavior of the CEOs and Executives towards using English language as a medium of communication with employees with shared native language?

To answer this question, several scenarios were prepared to see whether the sample individuals will choose to express themselves in English or Arabic.

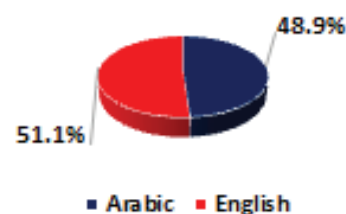


Figure.1 Sample individuals' choices in general

The previous figure illustrates the behavior of CEOs and senior managers towards using English as a means of communication with employees who share a common native language. There is a significant convergence between the use of English and Arabic when

communicating with employees. While the percentage of using English reached (51.1%), the percentage of using Arabic reached (48.9%).

For further analysis, the scenarios have been arranged according to the most frequently chosen English language, with the scenarios presented as follows:

1. Scenario (5): You have a presentation to deliver in front of the company’s board. What language will you choose for your presentation?

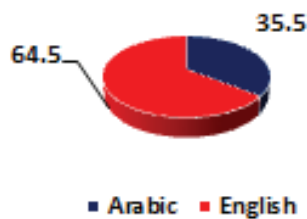


Figure. 2 Sample individuals’ choices in Scenario5

From the previous figure, it is evident that the majority of the sample individuals (64.5%) will deliver their presentations in front of the company’s board in English, while (35.5%) of them chose Arabic to do so.

Here are some reasons mentioned by the sample individuals for using the English language in this scenario:

1. Professional
2. They expect it in English
3. Could be mix
4. Easier
5. English is my preferred language for communication
6. Easy to translate the ideas , some terminology need to be in English
7. I am always presenting in English unless decdaded other wise
8. Because it is the official language used internally

9. Depends on the audience and the narrative of the presentation but usually i would go for English as its better at illustrating business thoughts.
10. Professional
11. It is Business driven
12. Language of business
13. This is the protocol
14. Business language and based on attendees
15. No preference
16. The audience and the content
17. As they expect the presentation in English but speak in Arabic is okay

These are the comments of those who chose to use Arabic language in this scenario:

1. Arabic is the main language
2. My mother toung
3. Easier for discussion
4. The audience are Arabic speakers
5. Because most of them speak Arabic
6. الجميع يتحدثون اللغة العربية (Everyone speaks Arabic)
7. Because it easier to deliver common thoughts
8. They are Arabic speakers
9. The audience are Arabic speakers

2- Scenario (1): You have an important announcement to make concerning the company’s finances. You started writing a new e-mail message. What language did you start writing in?

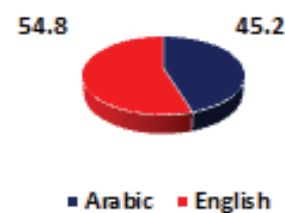


Figure. 3 Sample individuals’ choices in Scenario1

Figure 3 shows that more than half of the

sample individuals (54.8%) use English language in the announcement related to the company's finances. In contrast, (45.2%) of the sample individuals use Arabic language.

Here are some reasons mentioned by the sample individuals for using English language in this scenario:

2. Easier and more professional.
3. Corporate language is English.
4. All the Finance treatment and terms are in 2 in our organization, it is easier to make it straightforward
5. English is my primary language for business communication
6. Non-Arabic Audience
7. Announcement should be in English
8. Better wording and easier not to translate
9. Because it is the official language used for emails internally
10. For a simple reason if we want to communicate the message with consulting firms or external non-Arabic firms then it will be from the start in English. The second is the team are English fluent
11. English is the main Business language
12. It is easier to use
13. It is the business language
14. The nature of business
15. It is easier to explain and present giving the nature of the situation
16. Because the language of the company is English, otherwise will write it in Arabic.

These are the comments of those who chose to use Arabic language in this scenario:

1. Most of my coworkers speak Arabic
2. We use Arabic more often
3. The language of audience!
4. Our language in which we should proud

5. Because the audiences are Arabic
6. It depends on the company's policy and the targeted employees.
7. Because we used Arabic a language
8. بحيث يكون اكثر وضوح وفهم (so it becomes more clear and understandable)
9. Because first language is your identity.
10. Because it delivers the common thoughts easier
11. Because most of the employee is Saudi

3- Scenario (2): You want to remind your team of a meeting that is to be conducted today. You started writing an e-mail message. What language did you start writing in?

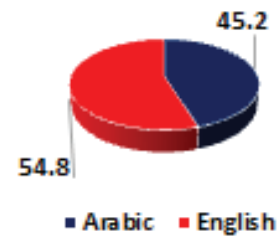


Figure. 4 Sample individuals' choices in Scenario2

The previous figure shows that (54.8%) of the CEOs and senior managers will use English language when writing an email to remind the work teams of the meeting scheduled for today, while (45.2%) of them will use Arabic.

Here are some reasons mentioned by the sample individuals for using English language in this scenario:

1. Easier
2. Sound professional
3. Because I will log it in the calendar, and it is easier in English
4. Working in international firm
5. I wrote my emails in English, unless it's related to government or to reply for Arabic email

6. English is my preferred business communication language
7. Non Arabic Audience
8. Easier to communicate
9. I am always writing in English
10. Because it is the official email language used internally
11. The platforms we are using to schedule the invites are in an English settings which is encouraging to continue in English
12. Professional
13. Educated in business in English
14. Most of them are English speakers
15. We used to it
16. Nature of industry

These are the comments of those who chose to use Arabic language in this scenario:

1. I use their language
2. Our language in which we should proud
3. Because the audience are Arabic
4. All of them are Arabic speakers
5. Because most of them speak Arabic a only
6. الفريق يتحدث اللغة العربية (the team speaks Arabic)
7. Because all of them are Arabic speakers.
8. Because it easier to deliver common thoughts
9. the team are Arabic speakers
10. Because easier and faster
11. It is easier
12. To touch their feeling and take different attention
13. The team are Arabic speakers

4- Scenario (6): During one of your English language delivered presentation, you are asked questions for more information or clarifications. Which language did you choose to answer them with?

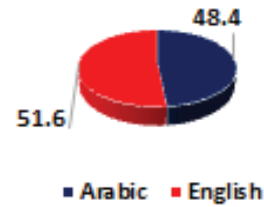


Figure. 5 Sample individuals' choices in Scenario 6

Figure 5 indicates that (51.6%) of CEOs and senior managers will use English language to answer questions asked after presentations, while (48.4%) of them stated that they will use Arabic.

Here are some reasons mentioned by the sample individuals for using the English language in this scenario

1. English is my preferred language for communication
2. Non Arabic Audience
3. Easier
4. Nature of habit
5. With the same language being used.
6. Cause it is an English presentation and would be more professional to clarify in English
7. لان العرض باللغة الإنجليزية (Because the presentation is in English)
8. Again depends on the audience and context, if the audience are 1 speakers i would answer in mixed language, as the context requires.
9. It is easier and faster
10. Because the presentation was in English
11. It is Business driven
12. Because it was presented in English

These are the comments of those who chose to use Arabic language in this scenario:

1. More easier
2. If the question is in 1, I answer in Arabic

- some English. I answer English.
3. If I am asked in English I will speak English, if I am asked in 1 I will speak in Arabic
 4. Arabic is better in clarification
 5. If the question in Arabic I might reply in the same language
 6. If the audiences Arabic it will be in Arabic if not English
 7. Because most of them speak 1a
 8. Because it easier to deliver common thoughts
 9. Because easier and faster
 10. Easier and following the norm
 11. No preference depends on the person and question
 12. To be better understood
 13. To clarify it

5- Scenario (4): You want to meet with one of your employees to discuss issues concerning his/her performance. You started writing an e-mail message to him/her. What language did you start writing in?

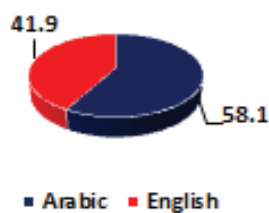


Figure. 6 Sample individuals' choices in Scenario4

According to the previous figure, the majority of CEOs and senior managers (58.1%) will use Arabic language in writing an email to discuss employees' performance-related issues, while we find that (41.9%) of them will use English language.

Here are some reasons mentioned by the sample individuals for using the English language in this scenario:

1. Used to do it

2. English by email and 1 verbally
3. English is my preferred language for communication
4. Easier
5. I am always writing in English
6. Because it is the official email language used internally
7. it is the company's way
8. Professional
9. Because it is business driven
10. Doesn't matter
11. To be professional and assure not misunderstood

These are the comments of those who chose to use Arabic language in this scenario:

1. They speak, Arabic
2. No reason to speak in English
3. Again same reason. I use audience language unless there is non Arabic speakers i shift to English
4. We are Arab
5. Because he is Arabic
6. Non Arabic Audience
7. All employees are Arabic speakers why would write in English
8. Because most of them speak 1a
9. لانهم يتحدثون اللغة العربية (Because they speak Arabic)
10. Because they are Arabic speakers.
11. Because it easier to deliver common thoughts
12. Because easier and faster
13. Based on his nationality
14. Legislation requirements
15. To clarify the situation

6- Scenario (3): You want to hold a holiday celebration in the company and you want to send an invitation to your team. You started writing an e-mail message.

What language did you start writing in?

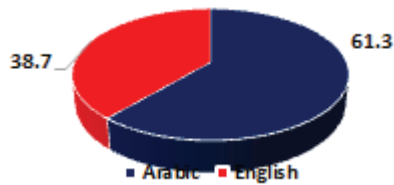


Figure. 7 Sample individuals choices in Scenario3

Figure 7 shows that the majority of CEOs and senior managers (61.3%) will use the Arabic language in writing an email to invite work teams to celebrate the holiday in the company, while (38.7%) of them will use English language.

Here are some reasons mentioned by the sample individuals for using English language in this scenario:

1. It is a common language
2. English is my preferred language for communication
3. Because some of the audiences don't know Arabic
4. Non Arabic Audience
5. Easier
6. I am always writing in English
7. Because it is the official email language used internally
8. it is what we use in the company
9. That is the norm in the company
10. Business language
11. Nature of business with multicultural employees

These are the comments of those who chose to use the Arabic language in this scenario:

1. Actually both are the same
2. Most of the team speak Arabic
3. I use there language
4. Our language in which we should proud
5. Good to start with Arabic if this is a local

- holiday
6. Both language will be used
7. All of them are Arabic speakers and no expats
8. Because most of them speak Arabic
9. الجميع يتحدثون اللغة العربية (Because everyone speaks Arabic)
10. Because all of them are Arabic speakers.
11. Audience
12. Holidays are not business driven and it is more culturally respectful to do in the native Arabic language
13. Because it easier to deliver common thoughts
14. it is a holiday not business
15. Because easier and faster
16. Based on the context
17. To be close to their heart
18. it is not work

You received an e-mail from one of your employees. The e-mail had a lot of spelling and grammar mistakes but you could understand the message. What would you do?

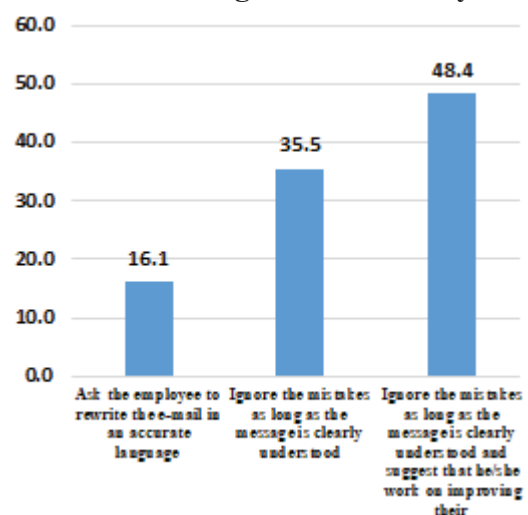


Figure. 8 Sample individuals' behavior when receiving an email from one of the employees containing many spelling and grammatical mistakes.

The previous figure illustrates that the majority of the sample individuals (48.4%) will

ignore the mistakes as long as the message is clearly understood, and they will advise that the employees to work on improving them.

The reasons for choosing this behavior were as follows:

1. To save the time
2. Language is a tool not a goal
3. Practicality
4. To keep going and not be demotivated
5. The goal was met

While (35.5%) of them will ignore the message without suggesting to the employees to improve it. The reasons for choosing this behavior were as follows:

1. It's not an English test. And this is his ability
2. The message is the key
3. Because it easier to deliver common thoughts
4. They do what they know best

On the other hand, (16.1%) of them will request the employees to rewrite the message in correct language. The reasons for choosing this behavior were as follows:

1. I want my employees to be professional
2. To be more professional
3. To improve employees comm. skills
4. Because if you wanna do something, do it perfectly

Discussion:

This section addresses the research questions through the analysis of attitudes and behaviors. Regarding RQ1 (which asks about the executives' attitudes toward using English with their employees), the results indicated that CEOs showed a neutral-to-positive attitude toward using English in the workplace. They agreed it enhanced career prospects and valued fluency, especially for employees.

However, they disagreed that using English conveyed prestige, education, or experience. This collocates with the findings of Rajprasisit and Hemchua [19] that English plays an important role in career development. Employees' fluency in English was important for the participants, which contradicts the findings of Mäkiö [4] that English language proficiency was not necessary as long as there is understandable communication.

Interestingly, they prioritized clarity over grammar in presentations and accepted minor language errors, echoing BELF principles. Despite valuing English fluency, they didn't necessarily enforce its use among staff. The participants verified their answers in saying that they use English because it is the language of business and is easier to use in general communication.

The participants neither agreed nor disagreed with (neutral) the following: giving presentations in English because it is the language of business, writing work e-mails in English because it is easier to write an e-mail in English than Arabic and to avoid translating some of the terms into Arabic, giving presentations in English because it is easier to present business ideas in English than Arabic and to avoid translating some of the terms into Arabic, and writing work e-mails and giving presentations in English because it is the language of professionals. Moreover, the participants neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that it was more important for the e-mail to be understandable than to be grammatically correct and well-written (in which they strongly agreed with for presentations). Participants verified their answers by stating that they only use English when speaking to an English-speaking person (or audience de-

pendent) and that they prefer communicating in Arabic as they are Saudis. They also added that even though they believe that Arabic is important, speaking two languages is necessary. They use English in the workplace to conform to the company's culture. This collocates with the findings of Björkman et al. [24] who explained that "... English has been widely adopted as a corporate language". The participants also mentioned that it was easier to elaborate in English as they use plenty of business terms in their arguments. Interestingly, they reasoned that they use English when speaking, discussing, or presenting business ideas, which were originally conveyed in English.

The participants disagreed with the statements that indicate that they encourage their employees to exchange ideas, write and respond to e-mails, as well as discuss presentations in English; and write work e-mails and give presentations in English because it shows that they are well-experienced, educated, and present them well. The participants reasoned that they often use Arabic at work and encourage employees to use it in e-mails and presentations as it is their native language. They also use Arabic when they know that all recipients of the e-mail are Arabic speakers. This attitude does not align with their behavior when creating presentations and sending e-mails, as the findings reveal are mostly done in English. This attitude was also observed in a study by Frederiksen [25], where participants preferred to use Swedish because they thought it aligned with the company's culture and felt more integrated when using it. Additionally, similar findings emerged from the national survey in Finland, in which respondents mostly answered "never" and "less

frequently" when asked about how often they use English in the workplace (Leppänen et al. [26]). The participants of this study also mentioned that any language is acceptable as long as it is logical, rational, and conveys thoughts well.

Regarding RQ2, which investigated the behavior of CEOs and executives, the findings reveal that English was chosen in all seven scenarios, especially for formal communication (e.g., announcements, board meetings). This reflects a pragmatic positioning: English was preferred when the context was formal or required clarity across diverse audiences. This indicates that the participants' attitudes differed from their behaviors. Scenario (5) showed that, when having to give a presentation in front of the board, English was preferred by 64.5% of the participants because it is more professional and easier for idea delivery and when using terminology. Moreover, it is the official language used internally, is better at conveying business thoughts, is considered the language of business, is used for business reasons, and is used depending on the audience. This finding supports that of Turunen (2021), which found that English is considered a tool that drives competitive advantage through business communication and interaction. While participants' behavior ultimately reveals English to be their preferred language, they held a neutral attitude towards presenting in English because it is the language of business and of professionals and is easier to use when presenting business ideas and translating terminologies.

- Scenario (1) reveals that English was also the language of choice of most participants (54.8%) when making important announcements concerning the company's

finances. This reveals that participants' attitudes towards English being the language of business matched their reasoning for their behavior in this scenario. However, it does not pair with their neutral attitude towards the ease of communicating ideas in English, not having to translate some terms into Arabic, and English being the language of professionals. Crystal [28] explained that English language, due to its global status, gives people all over the world easier access to resources.

- In Scenario (2), English remained the choice of language for the majority of the participants (54.8%) in e-mails reminding the team about a meeting. This supports Roshid et al. [11], which found that English is considered the dominant language used in e-mails by native and non-native speakers.

In one of the questions about attitude, most participants disagreed with English use as being indicative of the type and level of education attained. However, in the behavior scenario, participants related their preference for English to being educated in business English, which shows the difference between their attitude and behavior towards English use. The same difference was observed in participants' neutral attitude towards English being the language of professionals, whereas with regards to behavior, it was their language of choice because it is considered more professional.

In Scenario (6), when being asked to clarify their use of English in giving presentations, English was preferred by the majority (51.6%) for the following reasons: English is the language of communication; it is easier to use, faster, and more professional; speaking

English has become a habit; presentations are given in English; and due to the context in which business being. In this scenario, the participants reasoned that English is easier to use, more professional, and is the language of business. However, when investigating their attitudes, they held neutral views towards English being easier to use and more professional, and being recognized as the language of business. It is noteworthy that the participants disagreed about encouraging employees to give presentations in English but their behavior reveals that English was still their language of choice in this scenario. This inconsistency between attitude and behavior echoes Festinger and Carlsmith's [27] theory of cognitive dissonance. Participants may believe Arabic is important but still behave otherwise due to workplace norms, efficiency, or international business influence.

Notably, Arabic was preferred in sensitive or personal contexts such as discussing employee performance or sending holiday invitations. They also chose to use their L1 in critical situations such as when discussing personal work-related issues in order to avoid any misunderstanding regarding the issues being addressed. In a study by Waris [29], code switching is considered a strategy for preventing misunderstanding. This shows how cultural norms and topic sensitivity influence language choice.

When receiving emails with grammatical errors, most CEOs ignored the mistakes if the message was clear—again emphasizing communication over perfection. They would suggest that the senders improve their writing. They reasoned that doing so saves time, emphasizes language as a tool not a goal, is practical, and prevents the person from being de-

motivated. Additionally, they decided to ignore the errors when the purpose of the e-mail was met. This finding aligns with that of Mäkiö [4], which states that the main goal is not to focus on the accuracy of grammar or pronunciation, but to get the message across.

Conclusion:

This study aimed to explore the attitudes and behaviors of Saudi CEOs and executives toward using English as a medium of communication in the workplace. The findings indicate that participants generally viewed English positively, especially in relation to career advancement. They considered fluency in English important for employees and regarded the language as a practical tool for conducting business. In particular, they emphasized the value of comprehensibility over grammatical precision in presentations and emails. However, the executives did not associate English use with being better educated or more experienced. They also disagreed with statements suggesting that they encourage employees to exchange ideas, write, or respond to emails in English. Overall, their attitudes were moderate to neutral, reflecting a preference for clarity and efficiency over strict language standards.

Despite these measured attitudes, the participants' actual behaviors revealed a strong preference for English in professional contexts. English was consistently used in formal workplace scenarios such as presentations, announcements, and written communications. This behavioral choice highlights a contrast between what executives believe and what they practice. While they may not explicitly promote English use among staff, their own communication habits suggest that English serves as the actual language for efficiency

and professionalism in Saudi corporate settings.

The findings of this research emphasize the need for future research to investigate the private and government sectors in order to provide more detailed data. Future research could explore how language policy, company size, sector, or age influences executive decisions. Interviews and longitudinal studies could deepen the findings.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no competing interests.

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Data Availability Statement

All data supporting the findings of this study are available in the manuscript.

Ethical Approval:

This research was approved by IRB in Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University. Participants were informed that participating in this research is voluntary and anonymous. They were also informed that their answers will be used only for the benefit of this research.

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