

English and work

What we do

At the British Council, English language teaching, learning and assessment are at the heart of what we do. For nearly 90 years, we've championed the power of English to break down barriers and helped millions of learners grow their skills, build international connections, and access life-changing opportunities.

Now we're collaborating with partners, thought leaders, teachers and learners around the world to open up new conversations and share global perspectives about the future of English.

Change is happening at work. The modern workplace is dynamic and complex linguistically, socially and culturally.

Employability is a main driver for learning English. Many businesses use English as their official language of communication internally as well as with international customers and suppliers.

English is considered as the language of opportunities in Saudi Arabia. It is the lingua franca of almost all businesses and the language of tertiary education.

Mansoor S Almalki – Saudi Arabia

Opportunities in the context of English at work

- Industry is leading a gradual shift towards acceptance that different types of language proficiency are needed in different contexts.
- Language skills are valued by employers, and many provide English language lessons for employees.
- Industry is increasingly demanding different assessment practices and learning resources to support different English needs, such as speaking skills over writing.

Challenges in the context of English at work

- Plurilinguistic competence could be increasingly demanded by employers, resulting in the need for more personalised forms of learning.
- More local non-native standardised models of English are likely to develop.
- Employers have the power to influence which languages should be learned, regardless of education policies.

The British Council's position

The notion of English language proficiency for the workplace is changing and differs from context to context. This coupled with changing learning patterns suggests a fluidity of requirements, expectations and proficiency of skills and languages.

The big questions

To what extent is employment driving the future of English?	Significant trends are impacting on learning and education systems due to employers' needs.
Does learning English have a positive impact on employability?	Yes, 92% said English was important to secure a job in their country.
What are employers looking for?	Increasingly specific English skills for different work roles and contexts (from professional roles to lower-skilled jobs in retail and tourism).
What is the impact of globalisation on English education?	Children learning at a younger age and growth in English as a medium of education, where the whole school curriculum is taught in English.
What does assessment need to deliver to meet employers' changing needs?	Test content must be relevant for today's study, work and social interactions.

Further resources

- [Future of English: Global Perspectives](#) | Explore the full eight key trends shaping the future of the English language and its role in our world. Read the research summary or access the new landmark book for free.
- [English and the digital economy](#) | Read our research into how English language teaching is providing opportunities in the digital economy for learners in the Middle East and North Africa. This includes an investigation into how to design an English course for digital freelancers in Palestine and approaches to teaching and learning in Jordan.
- [English education and empowerment of girls](#) | Learn more about our 11 scoping studies conducted in 2021 to inform English and digital skills' programmes for adolescent girls in remote or socio-economically marginalised communities.
- [Corporate English Solutions](#) | Find out about how the British Council works with businesses, governments and higher education institutions to empower workforces through English language training and assessment.