

**English Proficiency as a Key to Effective Communication in Multilingual Customer Service Environments Call senter**

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Article History</b>  Received: Revised: Published:  <b>Keywords</b> Customer service, Call senter, Systematic Literature Review, English language	<i>This study investigates the role of English proficiency in enhancing communication effectiveness within multilingual customer service environments, particularly in call centers. Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, the study analyzes recent research on English language skills, communication challenges, and service performance in global customer service contexts. The findings reveal that beyond basic language knowledge, effective listening, comprehension of diverse accents, and cultural adaptability are critical for maintaining service quality and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for targeted language training that emphasizes practical communication strategies and exposure to various English varieties. These insights provide valuable recommendations for organizations seeking to improve customer service performance and develop effective language support policies for frontline employees in high-pressure, multilingual environments.</i>

**INTRODUCTION**

In multilingual customer service environments such as call centers, effective communication is essential. Call center agents often interact with customers from various countries and language backgrounds. In many of these settings, English is used as the main language to serve customers, handle complaints, provide instructions, or solve problems. The most significant English listening problems of customer service staff were not understanding the slang, idiomatic expressions or colloquialisms of foreign customers. And the most difficult situation for customer service staff when communicating with foreign customers was listening, especially, the problems with the differences of accents (Tansirisuk, 2020). These communication difficulties highlight the importance of English proficiency as a key factor in delivering effective customer service. In multilingual environments, language skills are not only necessary for basic understanding but also for building rapport, resolving issues efficiently, and ensuring customer satisfaction. Therefore, it is essential to explore how different aspects of English proficiency influence communication performance and what strategies can be applied to support staff working in such demanding settings.

Communication in call centers is fast-paced and requires agents to be clear, polite, and accurate. They need to listen carefully, respond quickly, and maintain professionalism, even in high-pressure situations (Koester, 2010, as cited in Erkir et al., 2025, p. 265). In multilingual customer service environments, this becomes even more demanding, as agents must be able to adapt to different speech

styles and cultural expectations. According to Erkir et al. (2025), mastery of Business English equips professionals with the skills to communicate effectively in diverse and multilingual settings, which is essential for handling complex customer interactions. Without sufficient language proficiency, agents are more likely to face communication breakdowns that affect service quality and customer satisfaction. This study was inspired by previous research on the role of English proficiency in international workplaces (Rajprasit, Hemchua, 2015)

To address this gap, this article presents a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) that analyzes current research related to English proficiency and communication in customer service, with a special focus on multilingual and call center contexts.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What aspects of English proficiency are most important for effective communication in multilingual customer service environments such as call centers?
2. How does English proficiency affect communication outcomes such as call efficiency, customer satisfaction, and service quality?

The goal of this review is to provide insights for both researchers and practitioners on how English proficiency supports communication in customer service roles and how organizations can improve performance through better language support. The rest of this paper outlines the review methodology, presents the findings, and discusses implications for future research and practice.

In conclusion, the increasing reliance on English as a common language in multilingual customer service environments, particularly in call centers, underscores the need to better understand the role of English proficiency in shaping communication effectiveness. Communication failures caused by limited language skills, especially in listening comprehension, understanding varied accents, and decoding informal expressions can significantly hinder service delivery, affect customer satisfaction, and reduce overall organizational performance. Despite growing recognition of these challenges, there remains a lack of comprehensive analysis on which specific English competencies are most critical for success in these high-pressure, fast-paced settings. By conducting a Systematic Literature Review, this study seeks to address that gap by identifying key aspects of English proficiency that directly impact communication outcomes in multilingual call centers, and by exploring the strategies organizations can implement to support their frontline employees. The insights generated are expected to contribute to the broader understanding of language demands in customer service and provide practical implications for training, policy, and future research in this field.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a **Systematic Literature Review (SLR)** to investigate the relationship between English proficiency and communication effectiveness in multilingual customer service

environments, particularly in call center contexts. The SLR approach was selected for its ability to provide a structured, replicable, and comprehensive overview of existing research, allowing the identification of key findings, recurring themes, and gaps in the literature. The review followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure transparency and methodological rigor throughout the process, which included four key stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies.

To collect relevant literature, a comprehensive search was conducted across major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. The search strategy involved the use of keywords such as "English proficiency," "customer service," "call center communication," "language skills," "listening comprehension," and "business English in multilingual settings." These terms were combined using Boolean operators to maximize the relevance and coverage of the search. The inclusion criteria were limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2019 and 2025, written in English, and focusing specifically on the role of English language skills in customer service or workplace communication settings. Studies that concentrated on academic language acquisition, lacked sufficient methodological details, or were opinion-based articles were excluded from the final review.

Each selected study was subjected to a quality assessment process, evaluating the clarity of its research objectives, methodological soundness, data validity, and relevance to the central research questions of this review. Only studies meeting a defined quality threshold were included in the final analysis. Data from the selected articles were extracted systematically, including information such as the authors, year of publication, research design, study context, and main findings related to English proficiency. Thematic analysis was then applied to identify patterns and categorize them under key aspects of language proficiency, such as listening comprehension, pronunciation, pragmatic language use, and understanding of accents. These themes were then examined in relation to their reported impact on communication outcomes in customer service environments, including call efficiency, service quality, and customer satisfaction.

By synthesizing the findings from diverse studies across international contexts, this SLR aimed to provide a deeper understanding of how English proficiency supports effective communication in multilingual call centers and to offer evidence-based recommendations for future research, training programs, and workplace language policy.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

No	Journal title	Summary
1.	<b>The Role of English Language Proficiency in the Global Economy and Business Communication</b>	This study examines English as a lingua franca in international business, focusing on its impact on operations, communication, and cross-cultural interactions. Through semi-structured interviews with 10 informants from multinational and small global businesses, findings show that English proficiency improves business outcomes, while cultural barriers hinder transactions. The study recommends language training to enhance competitiveness and reduce communication challenges.
2.	<b>ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS FOR PROFESSIONAL DOMAINS: STRATEGIES FOR CLEAR AND CONCISE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION</b>	This thesis explores the role of English for professional purposes, focusing on required skills, communication strategies, and challenges in global contexts. It also examines technology's role in enhancing English proficiency and highlights emerging trends in professional communication. The findings aim to benefit educators, professionals, and organizations seeking to improve English skills for career success.
3.	<b>The English Language &amp; Communication in the International Workplace: An Examination of Thai Computer Engineering Professionals</b>	This study explores English use among Thai engineers in international workplaces, focusing on their self-reported proficiency, task performance, and views on language use. Using a mixed-methods approach with engineers in Bangkok, the study found that English skills especially oral communication are vital for career growth. While reading was their strongest skill, intelligibility mattered more than perfect grammar. The findings suggest the need for practical language courses and exposure to various English accents to boost confidence in global communication.
4.	<b>Exploring the Impact of English Language Proficiency on Business Communication Effectiveness: A</b>	In today's global market, English is vital as the primary language of international business. For Bangladesh, mastering English is key to seizing opportunities in global trade, especially within SAARC, BIMSTEC, and the EU.

	<b>Comprehensive Research Analysis</b>	English enables smooth communication among business partners, supporting cooperation and strengthening global connections essential for entrepreneurial success.
5.	<b>Professional Communication in a Global Business Context: The Notion of Global Communicative Competence</b>	Based on a survey of global business professionals, this study highlights communicative competence in international contexts. Findings show it involves three key areas: multicultural competence, BELF (Business English as a Lingua Franca) skills, and business know-how. The study proposes a Global Communicative Competence (GCC) model, emphasizing the role of English and the need for a multidisciplinary approach that values interactional skills and clarification strategies in global communication.

The findings from the reviewed studies consistently emphasize the crucial role of English proficiency in diverse professional contexts, including business, engineering, and international workplaces. Across all studies, English emerges as a key factor influencing communication success, operational efficiency, and global cooperation.

The first study highlights how English proficiency directly supports business outcomes and how language barriers often hinder international transactions. This supports the idea that in call centers, agents' English proficiency can significantly affect communication clarity and service quality. Similar to business settings, call center agents must manage cross-cultural expectations while maintaining effective communication under pressure.

The second study underlines the importance of communication strategies and the need for continuous English skill development, particularly through technology. This is relevant for call centers, where agents rely on both linguistic competence and real-time communication tools to handle diverse customer inquiries. Training programs in this context must focus on practical communication skills, not just language knowledge.

The third study points out that oral communication and intelligibility are more critical than grammatical perfection, particularly for Thai engineers in global work environments. This resonates strongly with customer service settings, where accent comprehension, listening skills, and the ability to convey clear messages matter more than flawless language use. Call center agents benefit from exposure to various English accents and should prioritize clarity over formal correctness.

The fourth study, focused on Bangladesh's international business context, reinforces that English proficiency enables smooth collaboration and strengthens global networks. In multilingual customer service, this translates to the need for agents who can confidently manage communication with clients from diverse linguistic backgrounds to maintain customer satisfaction and trust.

The fifth study introduces the concept of Global Communicative Competence (GCC), highlighting multicultural competence, BELF skills, and business know-how as essential components. For call center agents, this implies that beyond language skills, cultural sensitivity and situational adaptability are vital. Agents must not only understand English but also know how to use it appropriately in various customer service interactions.

In conclusion, these studies support the idea that English proficiency in multilingual customer service settings extends beyond basic language ability. Effective listening, accent comprehension, cultural awareness, and the ability to adapt communication styles are crucial for maintaining service quality. Therefore, companies should prioritize comprehensive language training that includes practical communication exercises, exposure to different English varieties, and strategies for handling communication breakdowns in high-pressure environments like call centers.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study highlights the vital role of English proficiency in ensuring effective communication within multilingual customer service environments, particularly in call centers. The systematic literature review confirms that communication success in such settings depends not only on basic language skills but also on the ability to comprehend accents, understand idiomatic expressions, and adapt to diverse cultural communication styles. Listening skills, clarity, and cultural awareness emerge as key factors influencing customer satisfaction and service quality.

The findings also emphasize the importance of targeted language training that goes beyond grammar, focusing instead on practical communication strategies, exposure to various English accents, and real-world conversational skills. Organizations are encouraged to invest in continuous language development for their customer service agents to reduce communication breakdowns and enhance overall performance in a fast-paced, high-pressure environment. Ultimately, mastering English for professional use in multilingual customer service is essential for maintaining service excellence, fostering positive customer relationships, and supporting organizational success in the global market.

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