

Relationship of English Language Proficiency and Employee Engagement: A Study of a Manufacturing Company in Uzbekistan

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Received 20th November 2025; Accepted 20th December 2025; Published Online 22nd February 2026

DOI: 10.63941/DIT.ADSimrj.2026.2.1.39

ABSTRACT

English proficiency is a cornerstone of success in multinational organizations, where seamless communication drives teamwork, collaboration, and operational efficiency. This study adopts a descriptive-correlational design to examine the influence of language skills on core dimensions of employee engagement, including collaboration, emotional commitment, job satisfaction, and productivity. A purposive sample of 100 employees representing various departments provided diverse perspectives on the interplay between language proficiency and engagement. In a multinational company with a multicultural workforce speaking different languages, English, widely recognized as a universal language is a necessity for an efficient communication and effective collaboration. The study highlights a significant positive correlation between English proficiency and employee engagement. Employees with strong language skills demonstrate better collaboration, deeper emotional ties to their organizations, higher job satisfaction and productivity. Demographic factors such as age, education level and job role influence both proficiency and engagement, with leaders showing the highest engagement levels. Challenges such as training gaps and cultural barriers highlight the need for targeted language development program. This research concludes that enhancing English proficiency is a strategic imperative for improving employee engagement and strengthening organizational cohesion. To address this, it advocates for the development and implementation of targeted, flexible, and job-specific language training programs designed to meet the diverse needs of the workforce. Additionally, the study calls for a collaborative approach among policymakers, educators, and HR professionals to design dynamic, inclusive learning frameworks that embrace cultural and demographic diversity. By integrating language development into broader organizational strategies, companies can cultivate a more engaged, confident, and effective workforce, driving innovation, collaboration, and long-term success in an increasingly globalized market. This research reinforces the pivotal role of language proficiency in shaping organizational culture, leadership, and sustainable growth.

Keywords: *English Proficiency, Employee Engagement, Workplace Communication, Collaboration, Leadership Effectiveness, Organizational Development*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of an increasingly globalized and interconnected economy, English has become the dominant language for international business, technology, and cross-border collaboration. Multinational organizations depend on English as a lingua franca to coordinate operations, communicate technical requirements, and align strategic objectives across culturally diverse workforces (Park & Kim, 2020; Zhao & Li, 2019). As organizations expand internationally, English language proficiency is recognized not simply as an additional skill but as a strategic asset that influences communication efficiency, teamwork, and overall organizational performance.

Within manufacturing environments, where precision, coordination, and adherence to technical standards are essential, effective communication is particularly critical. Misunderstandings in technical instructions, safety protocols, or production processes can result in operational inefficiencies or costly

errors. Research indicates that English proficiency enhances employees' ability to comprehend technical documentation, participate in collaborative problem-solving, and contribute substantively to workplace discussions (Chen & Zhang, 2023; Li et al., 2022). Therefore, language competence affects not only task execution but also broader organizational dynamics, including trust, collaboration, and engagement.

Employee engagement, defined as the emotional and cognitive commitment employees demonstrate toward their organization and its objectives, is consistently associated with increased productivity, job satisfaction, and retention (Kumar & Rao, 2020; Li & Zhang, 2020). Engaged employees exhibit higher levels of collaboration, stronger emotional attachment, and improved work quality. In multilingual workplaces, effective communication in a shared language promotes inclusion, reduces isolation, and enhances employees' sense of belonging (Singh & Gupta, 2020). When employees perceive that they are heard and understood, they are more likely to participate actively in team efforts and align with organizational goals.

Although employee engagement has been extensively studied across various industries, limited research has addressed the direct relationship between English language proficiency and employee engagement within manufacturing. Existing literature predominantly examines service-oriented sectors, education, or multinational management contexts (Duval-Couetil & Mikulecky, 2011; Gomez, 2021). Manufacturing organizations, however, encounter distinct communication challenges arising from technical complexity, multicultural workforces, and reliance on standardized operational procedures. This gap underscores the necessity of investigating how English proficiency affects engagement in technical, prouder TBM LLC, a multinational manufacturing company located in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, offers a pertinent context for examining this relationship. The organization operates with a culturally diverse workforce, utilizing English as the primary medium for technical documentation, project coordination, and interdepartmental communication. As part of its employee development strategy, EVRO TBM LLC has introduced English language lessons designed to enhance vocabulary, communication confidence, and the frequency of English usage. These initiatives demonstrate the organization's recognition of language proficiency as a key factor in operational effectiveness and workforce integration. The workforce interties study examines the relationship between English language proficiency and employee engagement at EVRO TBM LLC. English proficiency is assessed through three primary dimensions: vocabulary knowledge, confidence in using English, and frequency of English usage. Employee engagement is evaluated based on collaboration, emotional commitment, and quality of work. Furthermore, demographic variables such as age, sex, nationality, educational background, department, job role, and language training experience are analyzed to identify potential differences in engagement levels among employee groups.

Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), this study proposes that organizational investment in employees' language skills leads to reciprocal increases in employee commitment, collaboration, and performance. Effective communication strengthens trust, reduces ambiguity, and enhances mutual understanding, which are essential for fostering a positive exchange relationship between employees and the organization. By investigating this dynamic within a manufacturing context, the research aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of how communication competencies influence engagement outcomes in technical and multicultural work environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English Language Proficiency in the Workplace

English language proficiency has increasingly become a strategic competency in globalized organizations. As multinational corporations expand across borders, English functions as a shared

medium of communication that facilitates coordination, documentation, and decision-making (Park & Kim, 2020). In multilingual workplaces, proficiency in English reduces communication breakdowns and enhances clarity in technical and administrative tasks.

Chen and Zhang (2023) argue that English proficiency contributes significantly to workplace effectiveness by improving employees' understanding of technical documentation and their ability to engage in cross-functional discussions. Similarly, Li et al. (2022) found that employees with stronger English skills perform better in technical roles due to improved comprehension and problem-solving. These findings position language proficiency not merely as a linguistic skill but as an operational necessity.

However, much of the literature emphasizes performance outcomes while giving limited attention to psychological and relational dimensions such as employee engagement. While research acknowledges that language affects communication efficiency, fewer studies explicitly explore how language proficiency shapes employees' emotional and cognitive connection to the organization. This gap becomes more apparent in manufacturing contexts, where communication is often technical, structured, and hierarchical.

Vocabulary Knowledge and Workplace Communication

Vocabulary knowledge forms the foundation of language proficiency. In technical environments such as manufacturing, job-specific vocabulary enables employees to understand instructions accurately and communicate complex ideas effectively (Ahmad, 2022; Zhao & Li, 2019). Mastery of technical terminology reduces ambiguity and enhances precision in operational processes.

Li et al. (2020) found that employees with strong vocabulary knowledge participate more actively in team discussions and exhibit higher levels of collaboration. Similarly, Smith and Johnson (2022) observed that vocabulary proficiency strengthens employees' confidence, allowing them to articulate ideas more clearly in meetings and reports.

Despite these findings, previous studies often treat vocabulary as a subcomponent of general language ability without isolating its distinct contribution to engagement outcomes. Few studies examine whether vocabulary knowledge specifically influences collaboration, emotional commitment, or perceived work quality. This lack of differentiation presents an opportunity for further empirical exploration, particularly in sectors that rely heavily on technical terminology.

Confidence in Using English and Employee Engagement

Confidence in language use represents a psychological dimension of proficiency that directly influences participation and engagement. Employees who feel confident speaking and writing in English are more likely to contribute ideas, initiate discussions, and participate in collaborative tasks (Kwon & Kim, 2021). Language confidence reduces communication anxiety, enabling individuals to express themselves without fear of judgment.

Singh and Gupta (2020) suggest that confident communicators experience stronger workplace belongingness, which enhances emotional commitment to the organization. Wilson and Blake (2021) further note that employees with high communication confidence demonstrate increased job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions.

While the literature establishes a link between language confidence and engagement-related variables, it often focuses on service industries and corporate environments. There remains limited empirical evidence examining whether confidence in English influences engagement in manufacturing settings, where communication may be more task-oriented and structured. Thus, understanding how language confidence operates within technical environments is a critical research need.

Frequency of English Usage and Skill Development

Frequency of language use plays a significant role in reinforcing proficiency. According to Zhou and Li (2022), regular English usage in workplace interactions enhances fluency and strengthens communicative competence. Murphy (2019) similarly found that employees who frequently use English in professional contexts demonstrate improved collaboration and adaptability.

Frequent exposure to English not only strengthens technical accuracy but also fosters integration within multicultural teams (Ahmed & Rahman, 2022). When English is consistently used across departments, employees experience fewer communication barriers, contributing to smoother operations and stronger team cohesion.

However, previous studies often assume that frequent usage automatically leads to engagement. There is limited evidence clarifying whether frequency of use independently predicts engagement dimensions such as emotional commitment or quality of work. The present study addresses this gap by examining frequency as a distinct variable within a manufacturing workforce.

Employee Engagement: Collaboration, Emotional Commitment, and Quality of Work

Employee engagement is commonly conceptualized as the emotional and cognitive investment individuals place in their work roles (Li & Zhang, 2020). Engaged employees demonstrate enthusiasm, dedication, and active involvement in organizational activities.

Collaboration

Effective collaboration relies heavily on clear communication. Kwon and Kim (2021) argue that language proficiency enhances teamwork by facilitating idea exchange and reducing misunderstandings. The British Council (2022) emphasizes that shared language competence fosters inclusion within multicultural teams.

Although collaboration is widely studied, limited research isolates language proficiency as a direct predictor of collaborative behavior in manufacturing environments. Most studies focus on leadership or organizational culture rather than communication competencies as foundational drivers.

Emotional Commitment

Emotional commitment reflects employees' attachment to and identification with their organization. Ramlall (2020) notes that clear communication strengthens trust and a sense of belonging, which enhances emotional bonds. Iddagoda and Jayawardena (2021) further suggest that employees who feel supported in skill development reciprocate with loyalty and dedication.

Nevertheless, empirical evidence directly linking English proficiency to emotional commitment remains scarce, particularly in non-Western industrial settings. This presents a theoretical and contextual gap that the present study addresses.

Quality of Work

Language proficiency also affects task accuracy and performance quality. Zhao and Li (2019) found that misunderstandings due to language barriers increase operational errors. Similarly, Chen and Liu (2023) observed that proficient communicators produce higher-quality outputs in technical roles.

While performance-related outcomes are documented, the mediating role of engagement in this relationship remains underexplored. The present study contributes by examining how proficiency simultaneously correlates with collaboration, emotional commitment, and perceived work quality.

Theoretical Framework: Social Exchange Theory

The study is grounded in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that relationships within organizations are built upon reciprocal exchanges. When organizations invest in employees' development, such as providing English-language training, employees are likely to reciprocate with increased commitment, collaboration, and performance.

Language proficiency functions as a resource provided by the organization. According to Social Exchange Theory, employees who perceive this investment as supportive may respond with stronger emotional commitment and engagement. This theoretical lens provides a structured explanation for how communication skills translate into relational and behavioral outcomes within the workplace.

MATERIALS & METHODS

A descriptive–correlational research design was utilized to investigate the relationship between English language proficiency and employee engagement within a multinational manufacturing company in Uzbekistan. The descriptive component identified respondents' demographic characteristics and assessed their English language proficiency and employee engagement. The correlational component analyzed the strength and direction of the relationship between English proficiency, measured by vocabulary knowledge, confidence in English use, and frequency of English use, and employee engagement, measured by collaboration, emotional commitment, and quality of work. This non-experimental design was selected to examine naturally occurring relationships among variables without manipulation or intervention.

A total of 100 employees were selected from a population of 187 at EVRO TBM LLC. Stratified purposive sampling ensured adequate representation across the departments of Administration, Finance, Human Resources, Sales, Production, Quality Control, and Engineering. Inclusion criteria required regular use of English in workplace communication to maintain relevance to the study variables.

Data collection was conducted using a structured survey questionnaire comprising three sections: demographic profile, English language proficiency, and employee engagement. English language proficiency was assessed through vocabulary knowledge, confidence in English use, and frequency of English use, while employee engagement was evaluated based on collaboration, emotional commitment, and work quality. All items utilized a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The instrument was validated by experts to ensure face and content validity. A pilot test preceded the main survey, and reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha produced coefficients of 0.923 for language proficiency and 0.920 for employee engagement, demonstrating excellent internal consistency.

Formal approval from company management was secured prior to data collection. Participants received information regarding the study's purpose and provided informed consent before participation. The survey was administered both in person and electronically via email to accommodate varying employee schedules. Respondents were allotted sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, and follow-up reminders were issued to maximize response rates. Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained throughout the research process.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, summarized demographic variables and determined levels of English proficiency and employee engagement. Normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests, which indicated that the data were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$), supporting the use of parametric tests. Independent-samples t-tests and

one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed significant differences in employee engagement across demographic groups. Pearson product–moment correlation analysis examined the relationship between English language proficiency and employee engagement variables. All statistical tests were conducted at a 0.05 significance level. One was voluntary, and respondents were informed that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. All data were treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 100)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–39	78	78%
	40–59	22	22%
Sex	Male	93	93%
	Female	7	7%
Education	Vocational/Bachelor’s	100	100%
Job Role	Worker	75	75%
	Supervisor	22	22%
	Manager/Technician	3	3%
English Training	None	48	48%
	Basic	38	38%
	Intermediate	14	14%

The workforce is predominantly young (78%) and male (93%), reflecting demographic characteristics common in manufacturing industries. The dominance of operational workers (75%) indicates a structure focused on production functions. Nearly half of the respondents reported no formal English language training, suggesting a significant gap in structured language development.

The youthful workforce may explain the generally positive engagement levels observed later in the study, as younger employees often demonstrate adaptability and openness to skill development (Lee & Carter, 2021). However, limited formal training in English raises concerns about potential communication barriers in technically demanding environments (Chen & Zhang, 2023).

2. English Language Proficiency

Table 2
English Language Proficiency Levels

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Vocabulary Knowledge	2.92	0.63	High
Confidence in English	2.80	0.78	High
Frequency of English Usage	2.55	0.58	High
Overall Mean	2.76	—	High

Legend: 1.00–1.75 = Very Low; 1.76–2.50 = Low; 2.51–3.25 = High; 3.26–4.00 = Very High

The results indicate that respondents generally perceive their English proficiency to be high. Vocabulary knowledge achieved the highest mean score (2.92), which suggests that employees are comfortable with job-specific terminology. This finding aligns with Zhao and Li (2019), who emphasize that mastery of technical vocabulary enhances workplace precision and task execution.

Confidence in English also received a high mean score (2.80), although it was slightly lower than vocabulary knowledge. This result suggests that, despite understanding technical terms, some employees may hesitate to participate in verbal communication. Kwon and Kim (2021) similarly found that language confidence significantly influences engagement behaviors in multilingual workplaces.

The frequency of English usage recorded the lowest mean score (2.55), indicating that English is not consistently used across all work tasks. Limited daily use may impede fluency development, as frequent exposure is necessary to strengthen communicative competence (Zhou & Li, 2022).

3. Employee Engagement

Table 3
Employee Engagement Levels

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Collaboration	2.96	0.70	High
Emotional Commitment	2.89	0.63	High
Quality of Work	2.67	0.53	High
Overall Mean	2.84	—	High

Employee engagement levels were consistently high across all measured dimensions. Collaboration exhibited the highest mean score (2.96), suggesting that English proficiency significantly facilitates teamwork and the exchange of ideas. These results align with the British Council (2022), which found that shared language competence enhances cross-functional collaboration.

Emotional commitment also demonstrated a high mean score (2.89), reflecting employees' sense of belonging and attachment to the organization. Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) offers a theoretical basis for this finding, as employees may reciprocate organizational support, such as language training, with increased commitment.

Quality of work had the lowest engagement score (2.67), though it is still considered high. This suggests that while language proficiency supports performance, other factors like technical skills and organizational systems may also affect work quality (Chen & Liu, 2023).

4. Differences in Employee Engagement by Profile

Table 4
ANOVA and t-test Results for Differences in Employee Engagement

Variable	Test Value	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	t = -0.081	>0.05	Not Significant
Age	t = 0.194	>0.05	Not Significant
Nationality	F = 3.267	0.009	Significant
Education	t = 0.487	>0.05	Not Significant
Department	F = 1.295	0.267	Not Significant
Job Role	F = 4.070	0.020	Significant
English Training	F = 0.631	0.534	Not Significant

No significant differences were identified based on sex, age, education, department, or language training. These findings suggest that engagement levels remain consistent across demographic groups, which may reflect inclusive organizational practices.

In contrast, significant differences were observed by nationality ($p = 0.009$) and job role ($p = 0.020$). Managers demonstrated higher engagement than workers. These results align with Brown et al. (2020), who found that leadership roles typically provide greater autonomy and recognition, thereby enhancing engagement.

Differences associated with nationality may be attributed to cultural influences on workplace attachment and communication styles (Perez & Huang, 2021). These findings underscore the importance of implementing culturally adaptive engagement strategies in multinational environments.

5. Relationship Between English Proficiency and Employee Engagement

Table 5
Pearson Correlation Between English Proficiency and Engagement

Proficiency Dimension	Collaboration (r)	Emotional Commitment (r)	Quality of Work (r)
Vocabulary Knowledge	.569	.564	.439
Confidence in English	.568	.436	.127
Frequency of Usage	.739	.196	.210

Vocabulary knowledge demonstrated significant positive correlations with all engagement dimensions, particularly collaboration ($r = .569$) and emotional commitment ($r = .564$). These results indicate that mastery of technical language enhances both teamwork and psychological attachment. The findings are consistent with Li et al. (2020), who emphasize the central role of vocabulary in effective collaboration.

Confidence in English was significantly associated with collaboration and emotional commitment, but not with quality of work. These results suggest that psychological comfort in communication contributes more to relational engagement than to technical performance.

Frequency of English usage exhibited the strongest relationship with collaboration ($r = .739$), suggesting that regular use of English promotes active participation and teamwork. However, the weaker correlation with emotional commitment indicates that frequent usage alone may not lead to increased emotional attachment. Overall, the results demonstrate a significant relationship between English language proficiency and employee engagement, thereby supporting the study's theoretical foundation in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964).

Summary of Key Findings

The findings indicate that English language proficiency, especially vocabulary knowledge and frequency of use, significantly fosters collaboration and emotional commitment within a multinational manufacturing environment. Although overall engagement levels are high, observed disparities by nationality and job role indicate that structural and cultural factors also shape workplace attachment.

These results expand the existing literature by offering empirical evidence from a manufacturing context in Uzbekistan, a setting that is seldom addressed in language-engagement research. The study highlights that language proficiency functions not only as a means of communication but also as a strategic resource that shapes organizational cohesion, performance, and employee commitment.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between English language proficiency and employee engagement within a multinational manufacturing company in Uzbekistan. The results indicate that English proficiency, particularly vocabulary knowledge and frequency of use, significantly enhances collaboration, emotional commitment, and perceived work quality. Employees with stronger technical vocabulary and frequent use of English in workplace communication demonstrate higher engagement, especially in collaborative activities and team discussions. These findings confirm that language proficiency functions as a strategic resource, influencing both relational and performance outcomes within organizations.

The lack of significant differences in engagement across sex, age, educational attainment, department, and language training level suggests that the organization maintains inclusive engagement practices. In contrast, significant variations by nationality and job role indicate that cultural background and hierarchical position shape engagement experiences. Managers reported higher engagement than operational workers, emphasizing the influence of autonomy, decision-making authority, and access to organizational resources on employee commitment. Nationality-based differences further highlight the need for culturally responsive engagement strategies in multinational contexts.

This study adds to the literature connecting communication competence with organizational outcomes by offering empirical evidence from a manufacturing context, an area with limited prior research. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory, the findings support the idea that organizational investment in employees' communication skills leads to increased collaboration and emotional attachment. English proficiency should thus be regarded as an organizational asset that promotes inclusion, reduces communication barriers, and enhances workplace cohesion.

Although high levels of proficiency and engagement were reported, several challenges persist. Nearly half of the respondents lacked formal English-language training, and qualitative feedback identified time constraints, limited practical application, and varying proficiency levels as barriers to effective training. These results indicate that while language ability is positively associated with engagement, the success of language programs depends on their relevance, accessibility, and alignment with job-specific requirements.

Based on these findings, organizations operating in multilingual and technical environments are advised to implement structured, job-specific English language training programs that focus on technical vocabulary, verbal assertiveness, and real-world communication scenarios. Training should be flexible to accommodate work schedules and tailored to varying proficiency levels to promote inclusivity. Linking language development to career advancement opportunities may further enhance employee motivation and long-term commitment. For policymakers and educators, incorporating industry-specific communication modules into workforce development programs can improve employability and organizational effectiveness in global markets.

Future research may expand this study. Future research could extend this study by using longitudinal designs to examine changes in proficiency and engagement over time or by incorporating qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into employees' experiences with workplace language use. Comparative studies across industries or geographic regions would further clarify how contextual factors influence the relationship between language competence and engagement.

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