

English Proficiency and Career Advancement in the Garments Sector of Bangladesh

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Abstract

In today's environment, English serves as a bridge between people's personal lives and their jobs. In academia, having a good command of the English language makes it easier to understand study materials including books, journals, class lectures, and the internet. Once again, a better knowledge of study materials leads to improved performance on both formative and summative examinations. Ultimately, the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) increases as a result of the better outcomes. Anyone who has graduated from his university with an honorable grade will be given the chance to take advantage of high-paying job prospects if he is interested in entering the workforce. Additionally, if he wishes to continue his education, he may be able to get a scholarship to study in another country. Similarly, being able to speak English raises the chances of being hired by a company that pays well. This research examines the significance of English language ability for people who work in the garment industry in Bangladesh in the twenty-first century. According to a survey and a review of literature, it has been concluded that English proficiency is necessary for retaining employment with dignity and success in the garment business in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: English proficiency, career advancement, garments industry, communication

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1. Introduction

The English language is extremely important in our lives. Being proficient in English is important in many areas of life, including career advancement, scholarships, education, and both creative and analytical research writing. According to Locker and Kaczmarek (2009), it is crucial to have strong English communication skills in today's competitive global economy and business world. People who finish their undergraduate and graduate studies in any subject at any university around the world must be fluent in English; if they are not, it will be difficult for them to succeed. In today's world, the importance and need for the English language are increasing all across the world. The current generation of countries where English is not the primary language is highly motivated to learn English in order to obtain well-paying jobs or to achieve their dreams and goals. The English language has been acknowledged as a global lingua franca over the years, and many countries have adopted it as an official or semi-official language. The English language is given top priority by the people who arrange international contests, sports, conferences, and other events. The garment industry is a "multibillion-dollar global enterprise dedicated to the labor of producing and selling clothing" (Britannica.com), which means that being proficient in English is crucial for efficient business communication both in the United States and around the world. As a result, everyone who wants to work in the apparel industry must be able to speak English well. In the related field, it is essential to be proficient in the English language in order to succeed professionally.

1.1 Importance of English in the business world

In the fields of national and international business, it is crucial to be proficient in both written and spoken English. According to Conrad and Newberry (2011), speaking and writing skills are considered "soft skills," which are necessary for every job. According to Crosling and Ward (2002), not having these qualities is a "workplace disadvantage." It shows that those who are good at English are more successful at getting jobs and doing well in their current jobs, whereas people who do not have English communication skills have a hard time

in the business world.

In the clothing sector, English is used for commercial communication in many nations. According to Somui and Mead (2000), researchers discovered that merchants who sell textiles and garments in Hong Kong use English in their work. In addition, Ehrenreich (2010) claims that English serves as a common language in a multinational organization. In addition, Erling and Walton (2007) claim that English is used in the workplace in Berlin. As a result, it is reasonable to say that English is a common language in the commercial world, including the textile industry, both in the United States and around the world.

The importance of English in the clothing business

According to Britannica.com, the garment industry is a global business that includes the design, production, distribution, marketing, sale, advertising, and promotion of all kinds of clothing. The Readymade Garments Industry is the largest industry in Bangladesh. It is also an important export-oriented sector in the global supply chain. In this industry, English is the primary language used for daily communication (Roshid, 2014). Hassan (2010) states that Bangladesh's RMG sector employs about 40 million workers. The RMG sector has made a significant contribution to Bangladesh as a whole. It employs a large number of workers in Bangladesh and is an important factor in women's liberation. This sector helps to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in this way (Islam, 2010).

Roshid (2014) states that Bangladesh is the third largest exporter of clothes in the world. He claims that Bangladesh distributes clothing to almost fifty countries, including the United States, Canada, the European Union, and other countries in Asia. Undoubtedly, Bangladesh's RMG industry is considerable, and this extensive sector demands major engagement with the populations of those countries. As a result, English has become an important "communication tool" for the RMG business.

1.2 RMG sectors that need communication in English

Roshid (2014) did a comprehensive study on "English Communication Skills in the Ready-Made Garments Industry in Bangladesh." The outcomes of this study demonstrate that English is considered "the most powerful language" in global commerce. The researcher notes that people in the RMG sector who are active in marketing, merchandising, and commercial operations use English to communicate with stakeholders who are involved in exports, imports, recruitment, and a number of other functions. The researcher expressed his opinion on the importance of English after conducting a study among people who work in various areas of the RMG industry. He claims that English is the most important part of this business. RMG companies must be proficient in English in order to keep their place in the global market; in today's world, it is considered "unthinkable" if they are not (Roshid, 2014).

The researcher investigates the functions of the English language inside this sector. He claims that the marketing industry looks for products in many countries and interacts with customers or their representatives through spoken or written communication. So-mui and Mead (2000) state that the majority of people who use English in the RMG sector are merchandisers. They communicate with customers and suppliers of accessories. According to Kothari (2013), communication is essential to marketing. Merchandisers must interact with current and potential customers, as well as related departments such as production, quality control, accounting, and suppliers of textiles and accessories. As a result, he argues that those who sell products should be skilled in communicating effectively. There is no question that this message is written in English. The logistics of item delivery and financial transactions are handled by commercial workers. They also maintain connection with associated organizations and agents, such as BGMEA and BKMEA, to encourage business. Most communication is done in English (Roshid, 2014). In order to have a successful career in the RMG industry, it is necessary to be proficient in English.

1.3 Significance of the research

It is widely known that the country's garment industry is suffering from a serious shortage of competent workers. According to Mizan (2013), a significant number of garment manufacturers rely on "middle management," which is mostly made up of foreign workers, to communicate with international stakeholders. He claims that in 2013, there were 25,000 foreign workers employed in different RMG companies in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh faces two problems as a result of its reliance on foreign workers. A large portion of foreign cash is set aside for salaries and allowances for expats. Additionally, the lack of competent professionals in the country has resulted in the hiring of foreign workers, which has caused local graduates to miss out on career opportunities (Roshid, 2014). In this regard, the Economist (2014) claims that Bangladesh does not have enough academic institutions that give training to develop skilled workers in the garment industry. According to the

research, many RMG companies are looking to local institutions to help them solve this problem by offering courses connected to the garment business in order to train qualified workers for the growing apparel industry.

Every day, there is an increasing need for skilled individuals in the fashion industry who are able to speak English. In the same way, similar positions are being created and eliminated all over the world. Many university graduates in Bangladesh are not proficient in English communication, which puts them at a disadvantage and raises their chances of being unemployed. There is very little research on the language skills that employees in the RMG sector need to have. As a result, I have begun the current study.

1.4 Importance of English communication

A recent study shows that the relationship between globalization and the English language has an impact on people's capacity to find work. Even though the impacts of this association vary by occupational group and country, policymakers are becoming aware of it. This paper aims to investigate the relationship between English language proficiency and employment, which has not been studied before, as well as the success of Bangladeshis living abroad. The goal is to determine how English language skills affect the global job market for people from Southeast Asian countries where English is not the primary language. The research will use an interpretive technique in order to understand how English language proficiency affects the job prospects and career paths of young people around the world. Research shows that being proficient in English has a considerable effect on job opportunities, especially when it comes to the chances of getting a steady and high-quality job. The findings may be useful for educational officials, teacher educators, employers, and career counselors in improving English language learning programs that help students become more employable. Crystal and others (1997)

Improved English communication abilities can lead to a better social life and more job chances in the future. Being able to communicate well is important in all areas of life, including job interviews and the workplace. Being proficient in English means that you can express your thoughts clearly and quickly. English is the most commonly spoken language by interviewers when conducting job interviews. Interviewers make quick decisions and give more importance to first impressions. If you do not have a good command of the language, you may have a harder time finding a job. If you are proficient in English, you are more likely to make a good first impression, which increases your chances of getting the job you want. English is the main language used for writing corporate agreements. In order to successfully manage international business activities, you need to have a good command of the English language. If someone uses the wrong tenses, prepositions, or other similar mistakes, their assertion will be less accurate. As a result, a strong command of the English language is necessary in order to improve one's professional skills (Roshid, 2014).

Employees need to have excellent communication skills in order to be successful in the job market. Employees who want to move on in both local and foreign companies and improve their technology knowledge and skills must be able to communicate in English. It provides a foundation for "process skills," which include problem-solving and critical thinking. These abilities are necessary for working in the fast-changing global workplace, where English is becoming more and more important (Bhatia, 2012).

The globe, and especially our country, is currently undergoing a third industrial revolution, which is specifically known as the communication revolution. This has a significant impact on our business and workplace. English has become the common language in the international business world, overcoming barriers related to geography, society, politics, and religion. It has been designated as one of the six official languages of the United Nations. In the past, people were able to find jobs because they had knowledge in certain sectors. However, in today's job market, specific skills must be paired with strong communication skills.

Graves et al. (2012), citing Rhoulac & Crenshaw (2006) and Donnel, J. et al. (2011), state that certain stakeholders in the industry claim that the communication skills of their graduates are still not good enough. As a result, the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (2008) requires that graduates show "the ability to communicate comprehensive engineering principles both within the profession and to society at large." Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are examples of these skills. Other examples include the capacity to interpret and write effective reports and design papers, as well as the ability to offer and execute clear instructions successfully.

It is important to prioritize the improvement of English communication skills in order to ensure that job searchers are able to find fruitful jobs. This study aims to emphasize the importance of English in a variety of fields, ultimately addressing the demand for employability (Imam, 2005).

In recent years, English has become increasingly important, especially when it comes to the globalization of job prospects. Over time, its importance as a means of communication has grown at both the international and national levels. Spoken English is far more important because there are many situations in which a person has a

lot of information about a topic but has difficulty communicating it well. As a result, it is important to practice speaking English. There are many opportunities to learn English in a setting where it is not the local language. In the modern business world, the ability to communicate effectively is considered more important than having technical skills (Briguglio, 2005).

English is widely recognized as a means of improving one's chances of getting a better education and finding a job. The English language is crucial for bringing the globe together as a single, unified entity. In almost every country where English is not the main language, it is considered a subsidiary language. The main goal of language acquisition is to reach a level of competency that allows for effective communication in daily conversations (Casale, 2011).

When a communicator has the knowledge and skills to express ideas in a competent, straightforward, clear, truthful, and dynamic manner, effective communication takes place. Communication is crucial for maintaining intimate, sympathetic relationships within a society, as well as for the movement of people, materials, and ideas from one place to another. At this stage, the initial reception and response provide as feedback. As a result, communication is inherently participatory. It is increasingly required to be proficient in English not only for political reasons, but also for scientific and technological reasons. English has gone beyond its British origins and has become a global lingua franca that is crucial for communication. It is now one of the most commonly spoken languages in the world. English has become a global lingua franca, serving as a unifying language, the language of modern science and technology, and the language of all competitive assessments, including local, national, and international assessments. It is used in advanced fields such as computer science and aerospace studies. We currently live in the field of information and communication technology, whether we realize it or not (Dudley-Evans, 1998).

At the end of the twenty-first century, English started to become a widely spoken language. It has a lot of support in the social, economic, and political areas. There has been a major shift in the way people view the use of English. In our country, the middle class does not isolate itself by ignoring the importance of the English language. It is not possible to master communication skills in just a day or two. For people who do not have good communication abilities, the situation at school is rather confusing. As the globe moves toward economic globalization, it is important to emphasize the use of English so that the general public may stay informed about global issues. The continuous growth of the English language is not impeded by barriers of race, color, or faith. According to Crystal (1997), it is a language that looks to the future.

In order to integrate into society, people need to have a favorable attitude toward English as the national language. Everyone agrees that the English language is important. A person can quickly become a global citizen if they are proficient in English. The media makes considerable use of the English language. It has been used for communications between states and for broadcasting. The impact of English is not only lasting, but it is also growing (Babcock, 2001).

1.5 The Present Circumstances in Bangladesh

English has become a new need in Bangladesh in order to meet both global and local norms. English is an important resource for a country to develop and prosper. The government appears to be more committed than ever to promoting the English language in order to build a nation and a trained workforce that can address the problems of globalization. Because the current levels of proficiency in English communication skills are insufficient to meet the requirements of the labor market, especially in corporate sectors that are becoming more involved in the global clothing industry, it is important to examine the demand for English communication skills from both a global and local perspective. to solve the existing problem of workers in Bangladesh lacking English communication skills by examining the communication needs of the workplace and gathering important feedback from key stakeholders in the workplace. This provides a compelling reason to do research in the garment industry in Bangladesh or in any other industry where English is spoken (Hamid et al., 2010).

The garment industry in Bangladesh has become a major player in the global market as a result of globalization and trade liberalization. The garment business is becoming increasingly connected to other parts of the world as a result of the movement of money, products, and people. Additionally, it has turned into a location where young people can search for employment. The garment industry in Bangladesh is gradually becoming a national industry and a commercial sector that is mainly focused on exports in the global market, with English being the major language of communication. The garment industry in Bangladesh has had a substantial growth (Ford, 2016).

1.6 Objectives of the Study

If anyone works in the garment industry or wants to work in that field, it is essential to speak English in order to improve their career in any country in the world. The objectives of the study are to determine the obstacles that hinder individuals who wish to work in the garment industry from becoming proficient in English and to investigate possible solutions to these obstacles.

2.1 Research Gaps

On the basis of the studies of literature the following gaps have been found out:

2.1.1 Limited Focus on Regional Contexts: While much of the research highlights the importance of English communication in global business contexts, there is limited exploration of how English proficiency impacts businesses at a regional or national level, especially in non-native English-speaking countries like Bangladesh. A closer examination of the garment industry in Bangladesh and its unique challenges with English communication could provide more localized insights.

2.1.2 Lack of Specific Studies on the Garment Industry: While there are references to the garment industry in the literature, there is a lack of detailed studies focusing specifically on how English language proficiency affects day-to-day operations within the garment business, such as in negotiations, marketing, and trade. Future research could delve into these areas to better understand the practical application of English skills in this particular sector.

2.1.3 Impact of English Proficiency on Employment and Career Advancement: The literature suggests the importance of English in career success but lacks a deep investigation into how English proficiency directly affects employment opportunities and career progression in specific industries like the garment sector. Research could explore how English language skills contribute to promotions, salary increases, and global market competitiveness in this context.

2.1.4 Impact of Globalization on Language Proficiency in Business: While studies mention the influence of globalization on language development (Hariharasudan et al., 2017), there is a gap in research that explores how different aspects of globalization (e.g., digital trade, multinational partnerships) have specifically changed the way businesses in Bangladesh adapt to English in their communication strategies. Understanding these dynamics could offer insights into the evolving role of English in business practices.

2.1.5 Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) in the Garment Sector: There is limited research on the practical implications of BELF (Business English as a Lingua Franca) in the garment sector, especially in relation to intercultural communication and conflict resolution. Future studies could investigate how professionals in the garment industry from Bangladesh use English to overcome language and cultural barriers, focusing on the challenges and solutions they encounter.

2.1.6 Relationship Between English Proficiency and Business Success: Though many studies mention the importance of English proficiency for success in international markets, there is a lack of empirical studies that demonstrate a direct correlation between English language skills and tangible business outcomes (e.g., revenue growth, international partnerships) in the garment sector. A study examining this relationship could provide more concrete evidence for businesses to invest in language training for their employees.

2.1.7 Sociopolitical Influence on English Education in Bangladesh: While Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) briefly mention the sociopolitical factors influencing English education in Bangladesh, the literature does not explore how the political climate and education system in Bangladesh specifically affect English language learning for business professionals. This is a potential area for future research that could influence policies and business practices related to language education.

2.1.8 Technological Integration in Business Communication: Ferguson (1983) touches on the role of communication technologies in language growth, but there is limited discussion on how modern technological tools (e.g., AI-based translation software, online business platforms) are influencing English communication in the garment industry. Investigating the impact of these technologies on communication efficiency and language proficiency could add a contemporary perspective to the literature.

2.1.9 Cultural Considerations in Business English: The existing literature focuses heavily on the technical aspects of English communication but lacks depth in cultural factors that affect communication in international business, especially in cross-cultural negotiations in the garment sector. Research could investigate how understanding cultural nuances in English communication influences business success in the garment industry, particularly in markets with diverse cultural backgrounds.

By addressing these research gaps, future studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of English language proficiency in the garment industry, particularly in non-native English-speaking contexts like Bangladesh.

3. Methodology

A questionnaire survey was conducted to gather pertinent insights from professionals and academics within the dynamic apparel sector. The study aimed to capture diverse perspectives on current trends and challenges within the industry. A total of 95 individuals participated, representing a cross-section of expertise and educational backgrounds.

The academic group comprised 22 instructors from various institutions, each specializing in courses directly connected to apparel and textiles. Their insights provided valuable perspectives on the theoretical underpinnings and educational landscape of the field. Additionally, 32 Master of Business Administration (MBA) students, enrolled in merchandising programs with a specific focus on the garments and textiles industry across different universities, contributed their perspectives on business strategies and market dynamics. Furthermore, the survey included 27 Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) students specializing in textile engineering, offering a technical viewpoint on material science and manufacturing processes.

Complementing the academic representation, the survey also included 14 staff members actively employed by various Ready-Made Garment (RMG)-related businesses. These industry professionals brought practical, real-world experience to the study, enriching the data with insights into the day-to-day operations and challenges faced within the apparel manufacturing and supply chain. The collective responses from these diverse groups aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state and future direction of the apparel industry.

The subjects were asked to answer a survey that had only one question. The subject was: "In the garment industry, having a good command of English is crucial for long-term career growth." One-question surveys can be helpful for specific purposes, even though they have their limitations. For instance, they can be used to calculate Net Promoter Score (NPS), which is a single question that measures how likely customers are to recommend a product or service (Reichheld, 2003). After that, there were five options to pick from, which are listed below (as per Likert scale (1932):

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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3.1 Findings

Table 1: The table shows the number of various types of respondents and their responses

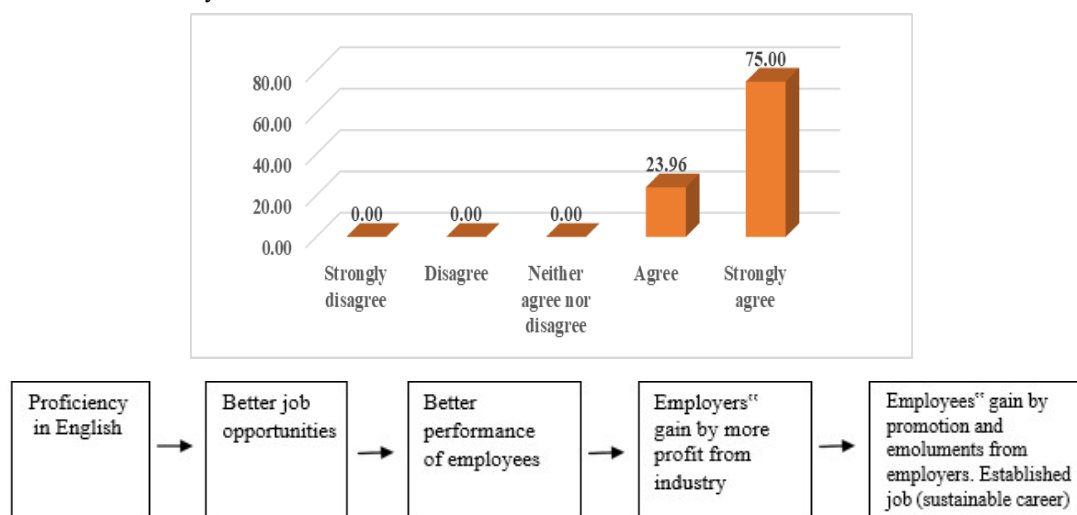
Category of respondents	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Academician	0	0	0	4	18	22
Students of MBA	0	0	0	8	24	32
Students of Textile Engineering	0	0	0	11	16	27
Employees of RMG sector	0	0	0	0	14	14
Total	0	0	0	23	72	95

Table 2: The percentage of the opinions.

Opinion	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	0	0.00
Disagree	0	0.00
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0.00
Agree	23	24.21
Strongly agree	72	75.79
Total	95	100.00

Of the respondents, 72 selected "strongly agree," 23 selected "agree," and none selected any other response. According to statistics, while 24 percent chose "agree," almost 76 percent of respondents strongly agreed that "English Proficiency is vital for sustained career advancement in the garment sector." However, whether "strongly agree" or "agree," 100% of respondents in both categories have voted in favor of the English language requirement for long-term career development in the garment sector.

The importance of English proficiency for long-term career development in the garment business was examined in this article. A diagram of the research concept is shown below in figure 2 to help clarify the conceptual framework of the study.



People who learn English and use it more effectively are given higher work chances, as seen in Figure 1. Next, they will perform better at work since they are fluent in English. Better employer gains from earnings and goodwill will result from their improved performance. Employees receive promotions and higher pay if the companies gain something. And this is how having a strong command of the English language helps one develop a long-lasting career in the RMG industry.

4. Discussion

The existing body of scholarly work and the findings derived from survey data unequivocally underscore the critical importance of robust English communication skills for employees operating within the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry. In today's interconnected global corporate environment, the ability to articulate ideas, comprehend instructions, and engage in effective dialogue in English is not merely advantageous but a

fundamental prerequisite for professional success. RMG specialists, in particular, must possess a comprehensive understanding of their competitors within the broader international business landscape. This necessitates the capacity to analyze market trends, interpret international business reports, and engage in meaningful exchanges with global partners, all of which are heavily reliant on English proficiency.

The potential ramifications of inadequate communication are significant. A business relationship, often built on intricate negotiations and shared understandings, can easily falter if the involved parties lack the capacity for clear and unambiguous communication. Even partial comprehension can lead to costly misunderstandings, eroding trust and jeopardizing collaborative endeavors. Given the promising and thriving nature of the RMG sector in Bangladesh, the ability of its experts to communicate fluently and confidently in English with international colleagues, clients, and stakeholders is paramount. This linguistic competence facilitates seamless collaboration, fosters stronger international partnerships, and enhances the overall efficiency of operations.

Consequently, it is a logical and well-supported conclusion that RMG employees who cultivate strong English communication skills, alongside achieving other relevant professional milestones, are significantly more likely to thrive in their careers. Their enhanced effectiveness and ability to navigate the global business environment directly contribute to the growth and prosperity of the nation's economy. By fostering a workforce proficient in English, Bangladesh's RMG sector can further solidify its position as a key player in the international arena, attracting more investment, securing more lucrative deals, and ultimately contributing more substantially to the country's economic development.

5. Recommendations

In order to increase the position of Bangladesh's RMG sector in the global market, the government and business leaders must prioritize improving English language instruction and learning in the RMG sector. A strong command of the English language is necessary for successful communication with international consumers, understanding market trends, and navigating the complexity of global business. Universities around the country, both public and private, can make a big contribution by offering specialized courses in Business English or English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that are specifically designed for the RMG workforce. Furthermore, partnerships between the RMG industry and educational institutions could assist in the development of training programs that are applicable to specific employment opportunities. It would also be helpful for persons who wish to better their job prospects if specialized English language schools or training centers that focus on the apparel industry were created. To accommodate a wide range of students, these schools could provide flexible scheduling, online possibilities, and materials that are relevant to the field. If there is a concentrated effort in this area, it would considerably increase the competitiveness of Bangladesh's RMG sector.

6. Conclusion

English's pervasive global presence and widespread comprehension render it an indispensable tool for fostering cooperation and seamless coordination within the realm of international commerce. In an era characterized by escalating economic interconnectedness, the ability to communicate effectively transcends mere convenience; it forms the very bedrock upon which successful trade and thriving businesses are built. Strong and enduring business relationships are cultivated through the medium of clear and precise communication, acting as the linchpin that ensures the efficient flow of business operations, cultivates mutual trust among stakeholders, and fortifies partnerships that extend across geographical and cultural boundaries. Consequently, English has ascended to the status of the lingua franca of the corporate sphere, holding particular significance within industries that boast a substantial international footprint, such as the dynamic garment sector.

For individuals aspiring to forge stable and prosperous careers across a diverse spectrum of commercial fields, proficiency in English transcends the definition of a mere skill; it represents a strategic asset of considerable value. The capacity to communicate adeptly in both written and spoken English empowers professionals to excel in critical areas such as negotiation, the crafting of persuasive proposals, and the nuanced interaction with clients and colleagues hailing from diverse national backgrounds. Within the garment industry, where interactions with international buyers, global suppliers, and various overseas stakeholders are commonplace, a strong command of the English language unlocks a wider array of opportunities and significantly bolsters avenues for professional advancement and career progression.

Therefore, within an increasingly competitive global marketplace, professionals who dedicate time and diligent effort to the mastery of English significantly enhance their prospects of securing desirable employment and making meaningful

contributions to the advancement and globalization of their respective industries. The investment in English language proficiency yields substantial returns, equipping individuals with the communication prowess necessary to navigate the complexities of international business, foster collaborative relationships, and ultimately drive success in their chosen fields.

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